

## The Feeling and Practice of Solidarity

It only took three swift kicks for the glass to shatter. One minute, a crowd of frustrated students stood outside the locked doors of the main administration building at San Francisco State College, pounding on the glass to the rhythm of their chant, “Hell no, no suspensions!” The next minute, ISA member and SF State undergraduate Khosro Kalantari smashed a hole in the bottom of the door with his foot and stepped carefully through the jagged opening. Hundreds of students filed in behind him, their cheers and chants echoing as they marched through the hallways.<sup>1</sup> This spontaneous building occupation, occurring on December 6, 1967, marked a steep escalation in the conflict between students and administrators that would erupt in a mass student strike less than one year later. As it happened, once Khosro broke through the glass, there was no turning back.

Iranian and American protesters had gathered that day to oppose the arrest and suspension of six members of the Black Student Union (BSU) and to denounce racism on campus. The six were involved in an altercation with the college newspaper staff over its disparaging coverage of Muhammad Ali and the Nation of Islam, as well as its editorial attacks on new affirmative action policies governing college admissions.<sup>2</sup> Student support for the six BSU members intensified when news spread that the administration had decided to reverse the unrelated suspensions of several white students. Outrage over this unequal treatment drew a politically heterogeneous group to the December rally, at which differences emerged between those

who emphasized the lack of due process in the suspension proceedings and those who saw these suspensions as symptomatic of structural problems plaguing the institution as a whole. The Iranians were in the latter bloc. According to Hamid Kowsari, a member of the ISA's Northern California chapter and an SF State undergraduate at the time, they were hoping for a direct confrontation with the college authorities. Hamid summarized how he saw the ISA's role as the movement unfolded: "Our influence was to radicalize it, to be honest with you, to keep the strike going, not to compromise." I read this statement not as an effort by an Iranian to take credit for the strike, but rather as an illustration of the revolutionary affects that circulated between ISA members and some of the other activists around them, making possible a shared orientation toward confrontation and away from concessions.

The converging radicalisms of different groups of students was exactly what the college administration feared. Local news footage of the December 6 rally shows a staff member locking the building's doors from the inside and posting a "Closed" sign before the student protestors arrived—preemptive measures against the very occupation that Khosro would instigate. President John Summerskill was so shaken by the militant turn of the day's events that he decided to shut the entire campus down, telling a press conference that the students' behavior was "verging on civil insurrection."<sup>3</sup> Just prior to Khosro's brazen act, another ISA member also made a bold move to occupy the administration building, one that was not caught on camera. Parviz Shokat, an undergraduate at Hayward College, scaled the side of the building and climbed in through an open second-story window, hoping to find a way to let the protestors in. He did not expect campus police to be waiting just inside. They quickly grabbed him and escorted him downstairs. From the other side of the glass, Khosro saw the police holding his friend Parviz. "That's when [he] kicked in the door," Parviz said, "and they all came in, and the cops let me go."

Khosro's actions on this day foreshadowed the role he would play during the course of the strike. In what has become an iconic photograph of a mass mobilization on campus, Khosro stands in the front lines alongside Asian American, African American, Chicano, and other student leaders (figure 4.1). When the SF State strike committee issued a satirical leaflet in defense of leading activists, they included Khosro's name on a short list of those "WANTED FOR CRIMES AGAINST the STATE," warning the public about "these rebels . . . known to be extremely dangerous to society" (figure 4.2).<sup>4</sup> Among the list of crimes are "continual opposition to such key government



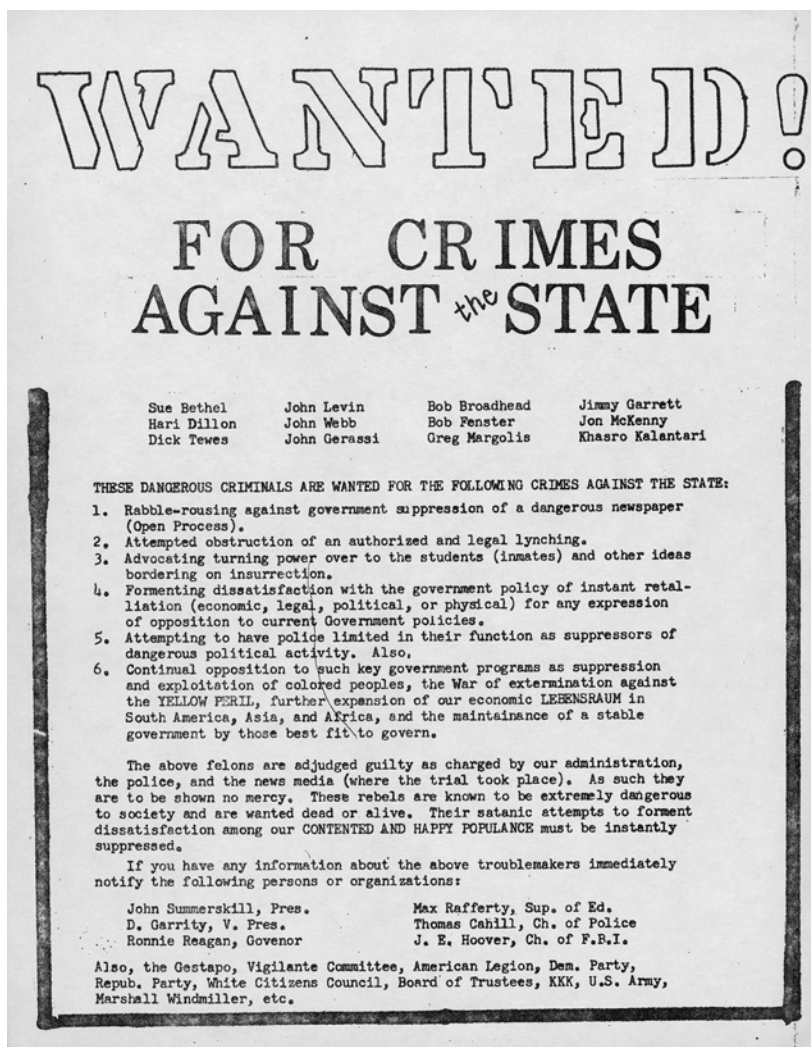
programs as suppression and exploitation of colored peoples, the war of extermination against the YELLOW PERIL, further expansion of our economic LEBENSRAUM in South American, Asia and Latin America.” This flyer was just one example of how the strike was framed as an act of solidarity linking the fight against racism in the US to the fight against the racist logics of US imperialism. The inclusion of Khosro’s name was just one indication of the extent to which ISA members, and their critique of US support for the Shah, were part of the Third World student Left of the era.

The white American activist Margaret Leahy, who was an SF State undergraduate affiliated with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), remembered Khosro well: “People trusted him. He had no fear standing up for what he believed in. We were afraid for him because we knew if they arrested him, they would put a deportation hold on him and send him back.”<sup>5</sup> The previous year, the ISA had successfully defended Khosro from a coordinated effort by SAVAK and the INS to deport him for violating the terms of his student visa by failing to maintain enrollment.<sup>6</sup> Those efforts, along with ongoing campaigns to free political prisoners in Iran,



**Figure 4.1** Mass strike rally at San Francisco State (undated). Khosro Kalantari appears in the second row, third from the right. Social Protest Collection. Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

had successfully educated American activists such as Leahy about the harsh conditions facing Iranian dissidents under the Shah's regime. She remembered hanging out at *Khane-e Iran*, the ISA's organizing base in Berkeley, eating tangerines with Khosro and other Iranian activists and listening to them talk about what was happening in Iran. Through such informal gatherings, she came to understand the risks Iranian activists in the US faced due to cooperation between local law enforcement, immigration officials, and SAVAK. This knowledge proved indispensable when the police launched a series of campus invasions at SF State to suppress the student uprising. Along with thousands of other student strikers, Hamid, Parviz, and Khosro dodged police batons and ran for their lives as police on horseback charged into the demonstrations. "You would see blood everywhere around the campus," Hamid remembered. On January 23, 1969, the police arrested hundreds of students, including Khosro. Hamid, who was not himself arrested that day,



**Figure 4.2** SF State Strike flyer. Social Protest Collection. Bancroft Library, uc Berkeley.

said that these students were placed in jail cells with the heat turned off and were sprayed with water hoses.

According to Margaret, Khosro was subjected to even worse abuse. As the person in charge of bailing out students arrested during the course of the strike—negotiating bond fees and raising money from supporters nationwide—she vividly recalled the mass arrests and extraordinary circumstances surrounding Khosro’s imprisonment and release:



I was down at the bail office for three days working to get people out. Joe Gooden worked in room 201, which was the place that filed all the papers. We had become friends because I was always going in trying to get bail reductions. He called me and said, “Margaret, they’ve let the SAVAK into the jail. They’ve got Khosro. They’ve got pins up his gums and in his fingernails. Get him out now!” He had really high bail. Khosro had felonies on him, of course. He had hit a cop. My parents had left me a house when they died. They died when I was really young. I said, “I can cosign with my house.” I never saw Khosro again because, when he was released, the Iranians drove him to Canada straight away. [The authorities] never foreclosed on my house. [The bail bondsman] said, “We got enough money from you guys.” I never heard from Khosro again. Someone said they saw him in Paris one day. He was really worried about my house and offered to come back so I wouldn’t lose it.<sup>7</sup>

Margaret’s decision to place her own financial and housing security in jeopardy may have saved Khosro’s life by preventing his deportation and further persecution in Iran. This willingness to sacrifice for another was one crucial manifestation of the revolutionary affects that moved between and among men and women from different racial, ethnic, and national backgrounds, and that made acts of solidarity both possible and deeply compelling.

This chapter investigates how the affects of solidarity described above shaped the everyday practices that made Third World internationalism into something lived and felt, a way of being in the world in relation to others. By focusing on the under-analyzed role of Iranian student activists in the movements that marked the heyday of Third World leftist organizing in the US, I highlight Iranian diasporic connections with other racialized populations as a vital part of the history of Iranians in the United States. These affinities challenge the “Persian imperial identity” that has held sway over the mainstream of the Iranian diaspora since 1979, and that relies on racial and class hierarchies to dissociate Iranians from poor and working-class people of color, especially Black people, Arabs, and other Muslim immigrants (see introduction). Aware of this current tendency, Ahmad Taghvai, who was active in the ISA’s Northern California chapter, explained how much things have changed. “The image of the Iranians at that time was that they were all on the side of the civil rights movement,” he said. “Not like now, when the image of Iranians is very conservative here.”

Jalil Mostashari, a founding member of the ISA at Michigan State University in East Lansing, also offered his own experience of student activism

as a counter to today's diasporic mainstream. "First I participated with the NAACP, then with CORE, and then the DuBois Club," he recounted. When I asked him what drew him to those organizations, he replied emphatically, "The Black struggle was part of the total international struggle for me!" He then went on to say, "You would be surprised to know that I was deputy chairman of the Muslim Students Association at Michigan State. The chairman was Pakistani." I asked him why he joined this group and he explained that he felt "an identity connection, a future, our future was to be the same. What does that have to do with religion? They knew that I'm not a Muslim. I was also a member of the Arab Students Association, an honorary member." Although Jalil came from a religious Muslim family, he became a communist as a teenager in Iran, part of a generation of young leftists who gave the ISA its decidedly secular character, as discussed in chapter 1. And yet, his ideological investments did not prevent him from identifying with and participating alongside Muslim students engaged in anticolonial organizing. Jalil's affective attachment to self-determination for Iranians also attached to self-determination for African Americans, Arabs, and Pakistanis. The circulation of affect made possible a set of relations based on ways of feeling about oppression. While experiences of oppression were always tied to specific conditions, histories, and identities, the affects that remained transcended the particular and found expression as Third World internationalism.

### **Affects of Solidarity, Coalitions across Difference**

Affects of solidarity—by which I mean affective attachments to the liberation of others—are necessary for the emergence and sustainment of mass movements seeking systemic change. Drawing on interviews, student and mainstream media coverage, movement periodicals, and other activist ephemera, this chapter tracks the connections between the ISA and three major sites around which Third World internationalism coalesced: Black liberation, Palestinian liberation, and Vietnamese liberation. The Black liberation movement and the movement against the war in Southeast Asia became the most influential vehicles in the US for popularizing an analysis of the links between racial oppression at home and imperial domination abroad. The Palestinian movement was closest to home for Iranians, decisive for the fate of the region as a whole. The ISA played a role in connecting all three of these areas of struggle by bringing to the attention of American activists the Shah's crucial role as a watchdog for US interests in the Middle East and Africa.

Although the memories of ISA members who were active in Florida, Texas, Michigan, and Philadelphia enter into this discussion, large and long-standing ISA chapters in two locations—Northern California and Washington, DC—provided the most significant opportunities for Iranians to participate in the three movements and to experience them as interconnected. Northern California, the birthplace of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, was an epicenter of Black Power and anti-imperialist organizing against the Vietnam War. There were Palestinian and other Arab students actively organizing in support of Arab self-determination on campuses there as well. Washington, DC, a majority Black city with a politically active Palestinian minority, was significant as the site for national convergences of the mass movements against racism and war.

I approach this history of shared feelings and futures using a methodology of possibility to explore how the revolutionary affects of disparate groups overlapped and combined to generate powerful affects of solidarity. This era—marked by the Bandung conference of “nonaligned” nations in Indonesia in 1955, and punctuated by the Tri-Continental conference in Havana in 1966 and the formation of the Organization of Solidarity of the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America—popularized Third World Marxism as an amalgam of antiracism, anti-imperialism, and anti-capitalism that urged a united front against US imperialism. This genealogy of Third World Marxism branches out from China, Cuba, Algeria, Congo, Vietnam, Palestine, and many other locations in what is now more commonly referred to as the Global South. By the late 1960s, Third World Marxism, sometimes referred to as Marxism-Leninism or Maoism, became the dominant political idiom for the student Left in Europe and North America, including the active cadre in CISNU.<sup>8</sup> Opposition to the Soviet Union worked to unite Iranian leftists with the US Third World Left, as many different organizations concluded that both superpowers were hostile to the socialism of colonized and formerly colonized peoples. Most of all, Third World Marxism articulated a shared hostility to the US government, which at the time backed authoritarian regimes in Iran, in the Arab world, and in Vietnam, while enforcing police state conditions in Black and Brown communities in the US.

This context enabled the popularization of the old Communist Party theory that racialized Americans constituted internally colonized peoples, sharing much in common with people in the Third World. As Cynthia Young has argued, the ability of Americans “to imagine and claim common cause with a radical Third World subject involved multiple translations and substitutions; it required the production of an imagined terrain able to close



the multiple gaps between First and Third World subjects.”<sup>9</sup> While the political ideology that provided these activists with a shared vocabulary has been examined previously, this chapter breaks new ground by looking at the role of affect in the production of that “imagined terrain” and offers a much-needed counterweight to the disillusionment, division, and co-optation that characterizes our current neoliberal era.

This analysis builds on the fact that, as Gayatri Gopinath points out, “generations of feminist and more recently queer scholars have long critiqued such pan-Third Worldist projects for their exclusions and hierarchies, both in their cultural nationalist and state nationalist forms.”<sup>10</sup> Feminist and queer scholars have also extended these critiques to consider *internationalist* forms of Third World solidarity, revealing, in the words of Vanita Reddy and Anantha Sudhakar, an “almost-exclusive focus on men as political and historical actors in the construction of cross-racial solidarities.”<sup>11</sup> *Bandung*, in a word, functions like a synonym for this era among scholars because the conference in 1955 articulated the project of solidarity as “a brotherhood of nations.” However, as Abdel Takriti points out, the notion of “sister revolutions” was also popularized as a way of describing solidarity and interconnection.<sup>12</sup> Thus the gendered language of biological kinship was embedded in anticolonial movements and in the gender and sexual politics of the postcolonial states that made up the Non-Aligned Movement, which promoted particular gender roles for men and women as part of their nation-building programs.<sup>13</sup> Celebratory accounts of Afro-Asian solidarities have tended to romanticize or ignore the ways that male domination and compulsory heterosexuality structured these alliances and limited the meaning of freedom.<sup>14</sup>

Gender and sexual oppression within antiracist and anticolonial movements would propel the development of new forms of revolutionary feminism, including from within the Iranian leftist experience (see chapter 6). What is often lost in the circulation of this critique, however, is the fact that Third World feminism and women-of-color feminism would not have been possible without the mass participation of women in revolutionary movements. Rather than representing a rejection of revolutionary politics, Third World and women-of-color feminisms sought to develop, deepen, and expand revolutionary praxis to center the liberation of racialized and colonized women. As the Combahee River Collective Statement famously argued, “If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression.”<sup>15</sup> Such feminist interventions emerged as much from negative experiences of sexism, homophobia, and racism within movements as they

did from ongoing attachments to the project of making a revolution. Third World and women-of-color feminisms thus rejected separatism as a political strategy and devoted tremendous energy to theorizing and building coalitions across difference. My exploration of affects of solidarity contributes to this genealogy of revolutionary feminist theorizing about how people who do not experience oppression in exactly the same ways might yet recognize the need for a common struggle against systematic injustices that are “interlocking.”<sup>16</sup>

Informed by feminist and queer critique, this chapter rejects both celebratory narratives and narratives of failure as inadequate ways of engaging with the legacies of 1960s and 1970s Third Worldism. Instead, I investigate how affective attachments to the liberation of others generated new capacities for relating across difference. My argument here is that Third World solidarity was just as compelling for women as it was for men. Despite the pervasive male domination within the revolutionary movements and politics of the era, there was nothing inherently masculinist about militancy, outrage, defiance, and hope—even if male revolutionaries imagined there was. The affective rewards of mass resistance were not for men alone. Iranian women, like African American, Palestinian, Vietnamese, and white American women activists, were just as invested in the affects of solidarity that made large-scale social transformation feel possible. By tracking the circulation of affects of solidarity between Iranian and other liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter offers insights into the relationship between affect, subjectivity, and politics that may yet be crucial for the project of forging feminist and queer internationalisms today.

As Grace Hong and Roderick Ferguson have argued, “women of color feminism and queer of color critique profoundly question nationalist and identitarian modes of political organization and craft alternative understandings of subjectivity, collectivity and power.”<sup>17</sup> This critique also highlights the uneven incorporation of some minority groups into the mainstream “norms of respectability” at the expense of others, such as the inclusion of imperial model minorities in higher education and the exclusion of many poor, racialized US citizens.<sup>18</sup> Using a methodology of possibility, I revisit the era that gave rise to minority nationalisms and homogenized notions of identity as a basis for revolutionary activity and argue that other ways of imagining affiliation and collective struggle were also present, even if they were not discernible as theoretical and political models at the time.

A closer look at the events at SF State forces us to question the dominant understanding of the strike as a coalition of distinct, internally homogeneous

racial and ethnic groups. One of the strike's most celebrated innovations was the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), which consisted of the BSU, the Latino Students Organization, the Filipino-American Students Organization, and the Mexican student group, *El Renacimiento*. This coalition understood the genocide of Native peoples, the enslavement of Africans, the direct and indirect colonization of Latin America and the Philippines, and the exploitation of Asian immigrant labor as linked by a common cause—the need to satisfy capitalism's insatiable lust for land, labor, and resources—and by the overlapping racist logics used to justify and perpetuate the horrors that ensued. These interwoven legacies continued to marginalize historically oppressed populations, in this case by denying them access to higher education and input into the content of the education on offer. Both the TWLF and the BSU issued strike demands that aimed to transform the college into a place where faculty and students of color could produce radical knowledge—new tools for dismantling the master's house.<sup>19</sup>

The ISA did not join TWLF. Unlike other non-white students at SF State, Iranians did not see themselves as a minority population struggling for the right to education. As imperial model minorities, access to education was the basis for their presence in the US. As noncitizens, they did not seek rights within broader US society based on their racial, ethnic, or national background, and they were always planning to return home. Strike demands focused on greater inclusion of racial minorities and minority perspectives within the college, issues that did not concern Iranian foreign students. “No, we didn't have those demands,” Hamid said. “They were mostly for African American, Chicano, and Asian students.” Iranians were not directly affected by the regimes of racism and dispossession that spurred other non-white students to action, but by forms of Cold War imperial intervention that were either covert or wrapped in the seemingly benign packaging of economic development and civilizational progress. A narrow perspective that views the SF State strike only as a domestic struggle over minority rights to equal citizenship renders ISA activism at the college invisible and obscures the influence of transnational and diasporic anticolonial movements on radical Americans of every background.<sup>20</sup> It also misses an opportunity to unpack and theorize the non-identitarian basis for Iranian solidarity with the strike.

By taking seriously shared affective states as a basis for joint organizing, new ways of understanding solidarity and difference emerge that do not rely on having the “same” experience of oppression. Rather than sharing common experiences of racism and exploitation in the US, Iranians and racialized Americans shared an affective response to unjust power. An affective

approach to the revolutionary solidarities of the 1960s and 1970s emphasizes the open-ended capacity of bodies to respond to encounters with repression and resistance and the capacity for revolutionary responses to emerge from subjectivities marked by incommensurate histories and structures of oppression.

Affects are relational, circulating in unexpected ways, generating moods that shift how people see themselves, as well as those around them, and shaping a “common sense” about what is politically possible.<sup>21</sup> As Jonathan Flatley argues, “it is on the level of mood that historical forces most directly intervene in our affective lives and through mood that these forces may become apparent to us.”<sup>22</sup> For revolutionary activists in the 1960s and 1970s, connections between domestic and imperial forms of domination generated a feeling and practice of solidarity, even without a deep historical understanding of the differences among those mobilizing together. Members of the ISA were drawn to the militancy of the TWLF because it resonated with their own oppositional feelings. By the late 1960s, the ISA had dispensed with hopes for “reforming” the Shah’s regime (see chapter 2), and their revolutionary orientation pushed them away from mainstream civil rights organizations. The antiracism to which ISA members were attracted was not simply concerned with addressing the legacies of historic wrongs through greater minority representation and inclusion, but about fundamentally challenging the way power and knowledge circulated as a stepping-stone to systemic change. The revolutionary affects and convictions of Black and Brown student radicals resonated with the Iranians at SF State and elsewhere, inspiring them to take risks to help the movement succeed. It is to these sensed and felt dimensions of Third World solidarities that I now turn in order to further explore possibilities for mobilizing across multiple sites of difference.

### **Melancholia and Militancy**

Militancy describes an affective response to the losses wrought by systemic oppression. As Douglass Crimp famously argued in the context of the AIDS crisis and debates over the appropriate activist response, “For many of us mourning *becomes* militancy.”<sup>23</sup> Crimp argued for a form of militancy that permitted grief, that allowed activists to openly engage with multiple sites of loss under conditions in which new losses were being created all the time and activists often had to contemplate their own imminent deaths. Rather

than pathologize melancholia as a malfunctioning of the subject's ego, David Eng and David Kazanjian have argued that the losses generated by "historic traumas and legacies of, among others, revolution, war, genocide, slavery, decolonization, exile, migration, reunification, globalization and AIDS" might be "full of volatile potentiality and future militancies," where militancy becomes both a force generating alternative futures and a reckoning with "what remains."<sup>24</sup>

Building on these formulations, I understand militancy as a revolutionary affect, a response to loss that is also an orientation toward ongoing injustices that continually produce new losses. As an affective orientation to loss, militancy encompasses a range of emotions, including grief, anger, joy, and hope, which contribute to a rewarding, collective mode of confronting the causes of loss in the context of social movements. Militancy registers and expresses the bodily intensities of that confrontation, circulating, resonating, and moving people toward and away from each other. Affects of solidarity might also be described as overlapping militancies, enabling very different people to identify with each other's losses and take action together. Affects of solidarity are thus a collective expression of melancholia, an affective response to "the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland, liberty, an ideal, and so on."<sup>25</sup> Members of the ISA refused to get over the depressed and fearful mood of the postcoup police state, creating an affective resonance with the freedom struggles of others who insisted on remembering the losses of genocide, slavery, colonization, and migration.

When describing their relationships with other movements, former ISA members spoke passionately, and sometimes wistfully, about their feelings of connection with other people's freedom struggles. Mohammed Eghtedari, an ISA member in Washington, DC, described what he considered a high point of his years as a student activist in the US. "You'll be amazed," he began:

At All Souls Church in Washington, DC, Iranian Students Association is preparing for a demonstration [against the Shah's visit to the White House] and here are the chiefs of Indian Nations, maybe about twenty of them, sitting there with all the clothing special to them. They accepted us because we supported their activity. Anywhere that there was an injustice, we were in sync with it. They had come to Washington for their own issues and then when they noticed that Iranian students had a demonstration planned, and they knew that we are at All Souls Church, they all came there.<sup>26</sup>

As he spoke, Mohammed's facial expressions and gestures conveyed delight and surprise as if reliving that first encounter with the chiefs. The apparent pleasure he took in the act of remembering brought forth a form of Iranian diasporic subjectivity that has been marginalized since 1979. Feelings of connection and solidarity between a diasporic national liberation movement and an indigenous decolonization movement became possible because Iranian activists refused identification with the settler colonial state that had promised to transform them into imperial model minorities and to embrace them as the latest recruits to the civilizing project launched by Europeans centuries earlier. Instead, ISA members affiliated themselves with the ancestors of people who had been resisting that project since its inception. Mohammed narrates this memory without bothering to explain the political analysis that brought these groups together. Rather, he focuses on the unexpected joy he felt at the sight of the elaborately adorned chiefs assembled to support the ISA. What he remembers and wants to convey is that these very different people felt they had something in common and that this feeling meant that they would do things for each other even without being asked.

As Mohammed said, "Anywhere that there was an injustice, we were in sync with it." To be "in sync" with injustice as it manifests across time and space, one must be open to it, affected by it. This coincidence of reactions and responses occurred when the revolutionary affects of Iranian imperial model minorities attached not only to the anti-Shah movement but to other liberation movements as well. This process was not automatic but depended on the ability of Iranians to come into contact with other activists who felt similarly about the injustices that affected them, allowing them to experience a synchronicity. These affective, emotional, and political encounters had the potential to expand what Flatley calls an "affective map"—that is, a cartography of connections between people who share a melancholic relationship to loss.<sup>27</sup> Flatley argues that dwelling in loss, and attempting to understand the historical forces that have created the loss, can become "the very mechanism through which one may be interested in the world."<sup>28</sup> "Affective mapping," therefore, refers to "the historicity of one's affective experience" and is a means by which the intimate, personal effects of oppression can become recognizable as collective, political problems.<sup>29</sup>

The following example illustrates the work of affective mapping in forging solidarities. Zohreh Khayam, who joined the ISA in 1971 as a graduate student at Howard University in Washington, DC, related how a shared reaction to loss became the basis of joint organizing. "In 1973, when the coup against Allende in Chile happened, it was a no brainer," she said. Zohreh was from



a middle-class family in Tehran and was unusual in that she had been a high-school exchange student in the US from 1965–66, as described in chapter 1. Despite the conservatism of her American host family, Zohreh had turned against the US war in Vietnam. Later, as an undergraduate in sociology at Tehran University, she became part of the student opposition. When she returned to the US for graduate school, she began at the University of Maryland and then transferred to Howard. Shortly after her arrival, she became an active ISA member and ace leaflet writer, eventually serving on the ISA's International Relations Committee. This was the committee responsible for outreach and solidarity with other organizations and movements. She described her participation in meetings and marches protesting Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet's power grab: "It was a repetition of history for us. The same way the Americans had a coup against Dr. Mosaddeq, now this time they had it in Chile and it really was heartbreaking." A melancholic attachment to the pain and loss of the 1953 coup in Iran fueled shared affective and emotional responses to the pain and loss of others. For Zohreh and other ISA activists, "heartbreak" traveled along affective cartographies that were not based on ethnic, racial, or national identity, but on a militant response to the cruelties of economic restructuring and state repression in Chile as well as in Iran.

It is important to emphasize that militancy and melancholia describe states of heightened activity that can be intensely joyful. Indeed, as Freud noted, one component of melancholia is sometimes "mania," a situation "characterized by high spirits, by the signs of discharge of joyful emotion, and by increased readiness to all kinds of action" that can occur "when a man [*sic*] finds himself in a position to throw off at one blow some heavy burden, some false position he has long endured."<sup>30</sup> Fanon's writings on violence in the anticolonial struggle as necessary and transformative for the colonized, as a release of tension that is also a way of claiming one's full humanity, can also be understood as a melancholic response to the multiple losses produced by the colonial system.<sup>31</sup> For Iranian student activists, the ability to throw off the burden of living inside the Shah's police state, and to abandon the "false position" of an imperial model minority by joining the ISA, was exciting and produced an exuberance for organizing that was also present among other marginalized young people who joined activist movements. Indeed, what Émile Durkheim called "the euphoria of being in the streets" aptly describes the elation that can come from realizing one is not alone and from the hopeful feeling that one is participating in changing the world.<sup>32</sup>

Iranian foreign students, like Zohreh, who were unable to align themselves with the US-backed police state in Iran often found themselves in a

parallel relationship to racialized and dispossessed Americans who could not tolerate the brutal status quo of US society. Under the conditions of social and political upheaval that prevailed on many college campuses, militancies converged like overlapping coordinates on an affective map of loss. Shared feelings of grief, indignation, and a persistent longing for freedom expanded these maps, charting new routes of connection and mutual concern. Each CIA-backed coup, each arrest of a political activist, each act of police violence brought new losses that were distinct yet also embedded in longer histories. Melancholic attachments to who and what was lost were imbued “with not only a multifaceted but also a certain palimpsest-like quality.”<sup>33</sup> This meant that a melancholic attachment to one loss could reverberate with the militant remains of other losses occurring in different times and places to different groups of people.

One memory of the joint organizing between Iranian and Chicano/a activists that occurred in Texas in the 1970s helps to illustrate how affects of solidarity circulated and drew different communities together.<sup>34</sup> Kate, a white American leftist who organized with the ISA and dated an ISA member in Houston, commented on what she viewed as the typical process of assimilation for foreigners in the United States: “The first immigrant lesson was how to be a racist. That didn’t happen in the Iranian community.” She recalled an embattled demonstration against the police killing of a twenty-three-year-old Chicano man named José Campos Torres in Houston in 1977: “In true Iranian spirit, my boyfriend and I drove straight to the riot.” This “true Iranian spirit” described the affects of solidarity through which Iranian student activists developed a reputation for supporting other people’s struggles. Outrage about SAVAK torture and persecutions in Iran spilled over into outrage over police assaults on vulnerable populations in the US. The ISA’s refusal to accept state violence in Iran flowed into support for others who wanted to stop state violence in the US. This dynamic helps explain how it was that some Iranians, who knew almost nothing about the history of racism in the US, felt a flash of recognition when they encountered Black people resisting racism.

### **Afro-Iranian Connections**

Ahmad Taghvaei joined the ISA shortly after arriving in Berkeley in 1968 and enrolling in Richmond College. It was “because of the problem of dictatorship in Iran that [Iranians] would become attracted to the civil rights

movement,” he explained, reflecting on an affinity he said was widespread among ISA members in Northern California. For Ahmad, however, there was also an additional, personal motivation for his feelings of solidarity: “What always really attracted me to the civil rights movement in America was this experience I had as a child. They kicked me out of school for being Sunni. They harassed us. I had to be careful all the time not to get run over or beat up. So when you leave home and you see such a movement of minorities for civil rights, you quickly become drawn to it.” He could not help but feel affected by the injustice against Black people he witnessed, as it resonated with his own memories of mistreatment by a Shi’i majority who perceived him as inferior. Ahmad carried with him the visceral, firsthand knowledge of what it felt like to be the target of violence that is both institutionalized and dispersed into the vigilante actions of the dominant group; hence his use of *they* to refer to both school authorities and his Shi’i neighbors. The affective charge of these memories drew him toward the Black freedom movement.

Similarly, Sina experienced a powerful feeling of connection to African Americans. It was 1974, and he had just come from Tehran to a small city in the Deep South. “The first thing I noticed when I came to the United States was that Black people respond to police exactly the way Iranians do. We don’t trust them. We consider them the enemy. We don’t go to them. We solve our own problems and try to keep them out.” When Sina agreed to drive a U-Haul for another recent Iranian arrival even though he did not have a license or know how to drive, he accidentally hit a parked car in a Black neighborhood. “I thought these guys are going to come out and jump on me. But these Black guys came out and they said, ‘Go, go! Go before the police comes!’ And I said, ‘Oh, these are my people!’” This characterization of Iranian attitudes stemmed from Sina’s experience living in the poor and working-class areas of southern Tehran. He proudly recounted his teenage years in Meydan-e Shush, a neighborhood scarred by poverty and neglect, where he “quickly picked up the language and demeanor of a *lotti*.” The figure of the *lotti*, akin to the ruffian or gangster, can, in its more politicized iterations, also be considered an Iranian corollary to “the brothers on the block,” evoking countercultural and subversive connotations of self-organization, irreverence toward official authority, and sexual appeal. Listening closely to his description of young African American men, the echoes of the *lotti* of south Tehran are also discernible: “In their swagger, I see a political figure of emancipation. In their swagger, I see an attitude about capitalism. I see an attitude about the whole arrangement and structure of the world, and I like that. It’s not always pleasant when it’s addressed at you, but, in and of itself, it’s a beautiful

thing.” While Sina may have been indulging in a sweeping generalization, he nonetheless expressed feelings of recognition, admiration, and respect. The body language and “attitude” he described were familiar, a different version of the affects he had embodied as a young man, first in the streets of a heavily surveilled neighborhood in Tehran and later as a student activist in the ISA.

These reflections highlight the forms of revolutionary masculinity that were dominant at the time and that facilitated identifications between men across other sites of difference. The “swagger” Sina described and also knew intimately, manifested a bodily response to injustice unavailable to most women at the time, whether African American or Iranian. The aggressiveness, the hints of violence in that embodied “attitude about capitalism” resonate with Fanon’s writings about the social transformation that “exists in a raw, repressed, and reckless state in the lives and consciousness of colonized men and women.”<sup>35</sup> Gender certainly impacted the embodied form that this “attitude” could take, and the gendered performance of militancy became a source of recognition and affiliation for some Iranian men, including Sina.

Just as the “brotherhood of nations” described the way people from different Third World countries were supposed to feel about their interdependence, so the language of brotherhood also expressed affects of solidarity among men from different racial, ethnic, and national backgrounds. In Northern California, Hamid joined the BSU as an undergraduate at SF State in 1967. He recalled an incident in which Stokely Carmichael held a meeting on campus exclusively for Black students. “I went over there and the guy at the door didn’t know me. Then some others came along, and they said, ‘Hey, that’s Brother Iranian. Let him in,’” Hamid recounted, laughing. “That’s what they called me.” Then he paused to reflect on how it felt to be welcomed into such a space of fraternal affection: “I wish I could live ten years like that and die and never find out what is reality,” he said. The affects of solidarity that allowed him to feel a sense of belonging among a group of Black revolutionaries still resonated deeply with Hamid, expressing his melancholic attachment to the revolutionary energies and vision gathered in that room, which would dissipate a few years later. His honorary membership in the BSU came as the result of the credibility and trust he accrued through regular participation in antiracist protests. The first protest he ever attended in the US was at the San Francisco Sheraton Palace Hotel, where activists were staging sit-ins to demand good jobs for Black people.<sup>36</sup> During the 1968 SF State strike, Hamid would fight side by side with other BSU members in bloody clashes with police who routinely invaded the campus. These actions mobilized his own revolutionary affects, a militancy in the face of

injustice and a desire to participate in mass social movements. Out of these shared affects, a feeling and practice of solidarity was forged.

The activists of the ISA became known for their ability to mobilize on short notice and their willingness to fight the police and go to jail. The first time Parviz was arrested was at a rally to free Black Panther cofounder Huey Newton in Oakland, California. “It was after the demonstration,” he explained, “a policeman was hitting a very young girl on the street. We used to have these round wooden shields. I took one of those shields and hit the policeman on the back, and he fell on the street, and the woman got away and I got away.” Rather than leave the area, however, Parviz joined a neighborhood patrol in Oakland that was monitoring police radios. He heard the cops say they were looking for him minutes before Oakland’s “blue minis,” the nickname for the Special Forces, turned up. “We went to Santa Rita [prison],” he said, “and there I refused to shave my beard, so they put me in solitary confinement. They poured water over me. It was twelve days.”

Encounters with different forms of police violence, incarceration, and torture generated affects of solidarity connecting Iranian dissidents with the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. The ISA’s own experiences of surveillance and harassment by US law enforcement agencies, by the INS, and by SAVAK operatives in the US transformed a theoretical understanding of the limits of American freedom and democracy into something lived and felt. Members of the ISA were not persecuted by the United States in the way the Panthers and other Black activists were. They were not murdered in their beds by police or locked in prison for extended periods of time. However, the ISA was deeply concerned with the persecution of dissidents in Iran by SAVAK, some of whom were members of CISNU. One such case involved five CISNU members who had returned from studying in the United Kingdom in 1965, only to find themselves accused of plotting to assassinate the Shah.<sup>37</sup> They were thrown in military prison and threatened with execution. Thus there was a real and severe threat hanging over the heads of ISA members if they were deported or dared to return home. Iranian student activists always made sure to expose the links between torture in Iran and American foreign policy. Solidarity with the Panthers expressed the transnational circulation of revolutionary affects, attaching to political prisoners in Iran and to those in the US.

While a combination of political and material connections fueled Iranian activists’ animosity toward US law enforcement, more immediately relevant were the shared feelings of responsibility toward jailed activists and indignation in the face of state repression. These feelings were reproduced

and disseminated through constant campaigning to free political prisoners, making it possible for the Panthers and the ISA to regularly send members to each other's rallies and meetings in the Bay Area. As mentioned earlier, the ISA participated in the campaign to free Huey Newton, mobilizing for a mass protest on the first day of his trial.<sup>38</sup> In New York, ISA member and artist Nicky Nodjoui recalled another means of showing support: "at the time when [leading Black feminist revolutionary] Angela Davis and [Black Panther cofounder] Bobby Seale were both in jail, I made a poster for them. You could see Bobby Seale's and Angela Davis's portraits. We spread it out, posted it everywhere. Gave it to all the political organizations" (figure 4.3).

Like other revolutionaries, Iranians looked to the Panthers as a source of hope and inspiration. An ISA message of solidarity in the January 1970 issue of the *Black Panther* describes the "momentum of the Black liberation movement" as one that "will not only mobilize the masses of Black people, but also all progressive people in US [*sic*]."<sup>39</sup> Midway through, the article abruptly shifts into an almost prophetic register: "Think of such a force; what power can withstand a force of millions of revolutionaries refusing compromise, and determined to destroy that which has denied their basic rights?"<sup>40</sup> This rousing, strident language contains more than just a message of solidarity; it expresses the hopes and desires of the Iranian student movement and of every other liberation movement underway at the time. While the article does not mention US support for the Shah or explain the link between foreign and domestic repression directly, the reader can *feel* the connection, for the author's own overwhelming desire for victory is bound up in the conviction that the Black movement must succeed.

Affects of friendship, as well as a confrontational approach to state power, helped to foster a working relationship between members of the ISA and the Black Panther Party. "I met Bobby Seale on the demonstrations," Parviz recalled. "We [in the ISA] were often the mediators; we were in between [not Black or white], and we had a lot of trust because we were very well organized and we were always showing up to the demonstrations." Bobby called me one day and said, "Parviz, we need your help." There were a bunch of Panthers surrounded, under police surveillance, and they needed some weapons and other supplies. He said, "We can't go anywhere near them or we'll be arrested.' So I had this little Volkswagen, and I brought the stuff over to them." Here, affects of solidarity manifested not in rhetorical flourishes but in the delivery of material support, as Parviz placed himself at risk to transport weapons and supplies to a group of Panthers under siege. The





**Figure 4.3** ISA poster. Original artwork by Niki Nodjoumi.

racial ambiguity of Iranian foreign students enabled Parviz to move freely through streets in which a Black person could not. Without any pretense to a shared racial experience, the militancy and discipline ISA members displayed in their political commitment to solidarity became the basis for trust and respect between the two organizations.

Parviz recounted another incident in which he was asked to play a supporting role. “Muhammad Ali was coming to speak at a rally in San Francisco. The Panthers wanted to stand behind him as he spoke, you know with their berets and the whole thing. Muhammad Ali didn’t want this level of affiliation with them.” According to Parviz, Seale turned to his friends in the ISA. “It was finally agreed that I would stand behind Ali during the speech and hold a poster for the Free Huey campaign,” Parviz said. “And this is what I did.”

The ISA also appealed to African American and other activists to support and identify with the Iranian freedom struggle. This is how an ISA leaflet from 1970 made the case:

STOP ALL POLITICAL REPRESSION IN IRAN!!

Political repression is not abstract. We have all been exposed to this, the most blatant form of repression. We need only name a few: The Los Siete, Chavez, the Panther 21, Bobby, Ericha, Angela; there are thousands more within this country. We all know this system is to blame, but few of us realize the manner in which this system manifests itself in the so-called underdeveloped countries—countries like Iran.<sup>41</sup>

This list of Black and Latino political prisoners, presumed to be of shared concern to Americans and Iranians, includes several women who are given prominence because of the persecution they faced as revolutionaries, not because of any particular concern with issues of gender justice or the impacts of racism on women of color. Instead, this list evinces the ways that solidarity moved along an affective map, charting connections with others who shared revolutionary responses to injustice. This could be a political strength and a political weakness at the same time, making mass movements possible while marginalizing important sites of difference that women of color feminists would identify as central to human liberation.

The leaflet goes on to describe the arrests of four Iranian students “awaiting execution for attempting to cross the border to join the Palestinian Revolution” (members of the “Palestine Group”) and the arrest and “savage torture” of former ISA member Haj Rezavi in Iran.<sup>42</sup> The leaflet declares: “We need support in order to expose the fascist regime of the Shah and to save the 4 and the others in prison. . . . We invite all concerned people to join

us.”<sup>43</sup> In this way, the ISA positioned itself on the same side as the liberation movements of people of color in the US and attempted to mobilize the affects of solidarity circulating around them toward Iran and Palestine as sites of identification and collective action.

At least in Northern California, this strategy seems to have been effective. In 1971, when forty-one ISA members were arrested for occupying the Iranian consulate in San Francisco, UC Berkeley’s BSU got involved in the defense campaign. The BSU sent a telegram to the Iranian embassy in Washington “deplor[ing] and condemn[ing] the oppressive tactics initiated against the students by the San Francisco Tac Squad, and sustained against them by the system with threats of prosecution, deportation, etc.”<sup>44</sup> The San Francisco Tac Squad was the same force called in to beat up students at SF State during the strike just two years earlier, and it was notorious for routinely targeting Black Panthers and other activists. In this case, the ISA and the Black liberation movement faced repression from the *same* security forces. The BSU telegram ends with a message of solidarity, shouting in all caps: “WE SUPPORT THE IRANIAN STUDENTS AND DEMAND THE DROPPING OF ALL CHARGES AND THE CESSATION OF ALL IMPERIALIST ACTS AGAINST IRAN.” While much has been written about the connections African American activists made between police repression “at home” and the US war in Vietnam, here we have an example of how a similar analysis informed Black students’ solidarity with Iran. The BSU’s telegram is just one indication of the extent to which the ISA’s critique of the opaque forms of US intervention in the Middle East (coups d’état and the sponsoring of repressive dictatorships) entered the broader US leftist discourse. The telegram’s language, tone, and style project a righteous indignation that nearly leaps off the page. It illustrates how affects of solidarity mapped transnational circuits of state repression and resistance across geographical sites, traversing the geopolitical and intimate scales of human experience.

The BSU telegram was not the only example of how the ISA succeeded in making the plight of political prisoners in Iran resonate with leading Black liberation activists in the US. In March 1972, Angela Davis sent a letter to the Iranian prime minister, Amir-Abbas Hoveyda, expressing dismay over a string of show trials and executions of dissidents in Iran.<sup>45</sup> “We have been closely following the political situation in Iran, and we have been in touch with the Confederation of Iranian Students,” she wrote. The letter ends with the following explanation of her motivation in sending it: “We believe that the struggle to free political prisoners is international in scope, and we feel compelled to express our concern,” she concluded, signing off on behalf of

the National United Committee to Free Angela and All Political Prisoners.<sup>46</sup> Here, feeling compelled to act on behalf of another is not altruism or charity, but a shared affective response to injustice. It is the circulation of the desire for freedom across borders and categories of identity.

In Washington, DC, the ISA was able to connect to the Black anticolonial struggle in ways not possible in other locations. Howard University, a historically Black college, was a hub for imperial model minorities from across the decolonizing world. While the majority of foreign students at Howard came from Latin America and the Caribbean, the next largest group was from the Middle East, followed closely by students from Africa.<sup>47</sup> Younes Benab, a Howard undergraduate in economics and a founding member of the ISA chapter in Washington, DC, related the role that African and other foreign students played in his own development as an activist. “From the time I was involved with Iranian Student Association, I very naturally got in touch and in cooperation with other students from many different countries, specifically from Ghana, Congo, and Ethiopia,” he said. The first time he attended a protest was in 1961, shortly after he arrived at Howard. “African students were demonstrating outside the Belgian embassy because they thought the Belgian authorities were responsible for the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in Congo. Later it was discovered that the CIA did it,” Younes said. Students from many different Third World countries had a similar experience of having their democratically elected leaders overthrown, Younes explained: “In those countries, the leaders who came to power were like Mosaddeq types, they were fairly popular. Like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana was very popular and he was overthrown in 1966. So all these students, they were active at Howard University before the coups in their countries. We were there after the coup in Iran, so we had tremendous sympathy for them.” Younes also highlighted the close working relationship the ISA had with Ethiopian students. They “were like us,” he said. “They were against their king, their Shah, and so we had a lot in common in that sense.” State repression, including CIA-backed coups d’état, generated overlapping coordinates on the affective maps of students from very different places who refused to accept the loss of anti-colonial leaders and the other possible futures they represented.

Like at SF State, ISA members at Howard also got involved in supporting African American student demands for institutional change, joining campus demonstrations and occupations that sought to transform the curriculum and increase the numbers of Black faculty. *Roshanai*, a Persian-language CISNU publication, featured a half-page photograph in 1968 showing Howard students scaling the edifice of the main administration building to hang

a sign renaming their institution “Black University.”<sup>48</sup> This image appeared in a photo spread displaying scenes of student protest around the world from that same year, evidence of CISNU’s sense of itself as part of an internationalist young people’s uprising and of the significance it placed on the US Black student “vanguard.” Indeed, one-time Howard student Stokely Carmichael would become a national—and international—leader of this vanguard as a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Members of the ISA attended SNCC events and demonstrations on and off campus. Zohreh Khayam, a member of the ISA’s International Relations Committee and a master’s student in sociology at Howard at the time, was charged with reaching out to Carmichael to ask for an endorsement from SNCC. He invited her to share the stage with him in Howard’s main auditorium, where she told the audience about the ISA’s work and asked for their support.

The ISA’s critique of the US-Iran “special relationship” also resonated with a broader student interest in charting connections between African and other liberation movements. Howard’s campus weekly, *The Hilltop*, began covering ISA actions in 1971 and, throughout the 1970s, became a forum for connecting the Iranian opposition with African American and Third World freedom struggles. The names of many of the reporters who wrote about the ISA provide additional evidence that, by the mid-1970s, Howard was a politicized Black diasporic location.

On March 5, 1976, Marazere Ubani’s *Hilltop* report on his interview with ISA member and Howard undergraduate Mohammed Eghtedari begins with a discussion of Iran’s role in Africa: “Iranian students in the United States have vigorously protested measures taken by the Central Intelligence Agency-backed regime of the Shah of Iran who they say brutally suppresses the liberties of Iranian people and who overtly aids the apartheid regime in South Africa and Israel. The regime, they contend, is also supplying military hardwares [*sic*] and aircrafts to the military government in Ethiopia to combat the freedom fighters of Eritrea.”<sup>49</sup> Mohammed also told Ubani that Iran was selling oil to South Africa in exchange for nuclear reactors, a central plank of the Shah’s “African policy,” which, he said, “means basically penetration by Iran into Africa.” Mohammed argued that the Shah’s “instigated role” was supposed to supplant what he called “Israel’s dwindling influence in Africa” and that this exemplified Iran’s position as “the second-best ally of the United States in the Middle East conflict.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, US efforts to maintain hegemony in the Middle East were implicated in its efforts to do so in Africa. The stakes of the US outpost in Iran, therefore, were high

not only for Iranians and their Arab neighbors, but for popular movements in Southern and Eastern Africa as well.

Two years later, *Hilltop* reporter Akpan Ekpo contributed to the “Eye on Africa” column under the headline “Shah of Iran: Enemy to Africa.”<sup>51</sup> Ekpo discusses Iran’s complicity with the racist regimes in both Rhodesia and South Africa, where Iran controlled two-thirds of the major oil refineries and ensured that supplies continued to flow. When a group of foreign ministers representing the Organization of African Unity tried to lobby the Shah to stop these oil exports, he refused to meet with them. “The Shah has made a blunder,” Ekpo wrote:

He should have sought the experiences of the Portuguese, the French, the British, etc. in Africa. The national wars of liberation in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau uprooted fascism in Portugal. Shah’s involvement in South Africa may assist in the destruction of fascism in Iran. We support vigorously the struggle of the Iranian people—workers, students, etc. against the dictatorial and fascist rule of the Shah.

SHAH PAHLAVI IS AFRICA’S ENEMY.

The struggle of the Iranian masses is our struggle, their victory is our victory.<sup>52</sup>

Righteous anger at the cruelties of these interrelated oppressive regimes pulses through each sentence, sometimes screaming in all caps, as the author “vigorously” asserts the feeling that Iranians and Africans would rise or fall together.

These and other articles reflect the breadth and depth of the passion and rage that undergirded Third World internationalism. Campus protests by the ISA were charged with this militancy and drew widespread support. A 1977 *Hilltop* editorial praises an ISA protest against President Carter’s hypocritical human rights campaign, noting that Iran “has been exposed as a key link in covert shipments of US military supplies from Israel to Rhodesia, to the illegitimate minority government, to be used against Black freedom fighters. Therefore, the close relations of Iran and the US are important to Blacks in America.”<sup>53</sup> After denouncing Howard University for awarding an honorary degree to the Iranian ambassador the previous year—an act bitterly opposed by the ISA—the editorial concludes: “The time has come for Black people in general and Howard students particularly, to exhibit the dedication and loyalty to freedom from oppression and repression that was demonstrated by the Iranian students and their supporters this week.”<sup>54</sup>



When the Iranian Revolution finally succeeded in toppling the Shah, the *Hilltop*'s Sam Adeboye titled his column "Iranian People Should Be an Example for All" (figure 4.4).<sup>55</sup> The article celebrates the revolution's triumph and then notes, "As we all know, Iranians have been struggling for a long time to end the reign of terror by the oppressive regime of the Shah, which was created in Iran with the help of Western powers."<sup>56</sup> Adeboye's tribute to the Iranian revolution shows the extent to which some Black students had come to identify with the Iranian opposition and to understand it as, in the words of an ISA *Hilltop* column from 1977, part of "an era of the liberation movements of the peoples of the world."<sup>57</sup>

These examples of affinity with Black movements in the US and in Africa dramatically illustrate the overlapping coordinates on the "affective maps" of a generation of young revolutionaries.<sup>58</sup> The articles written by African diaspora students at Howard University transport us to a time when identifications among activists flowed not only from race, religion, nationality, or even the same experience of oppression, but from the visceral feeling that the losses already suffered would only continue to mount until the system of racial capitalism and imperialism was overthrown.

### **Palestine and Beyond: Arab Self-Determination**

The question of Arab liberation was of paramount importance to the ISA in part because Iranian activists understood that the Shah's government posed a significant obstacle to its realization. Consequently, the ISA publicized the covert cooperation between Israel and Iran in its English-language pamphlets. One ISA report from 1973 includes this quote from the Danish new left magazine, *Politisk Revy*: "There also have been reports of an exchange of secret intelligence advisors between the two regimes. Israeli secret police, for example, have been instrumental in the training of Iranian SAVAK agents. The growing ties between the Iranian and Israeli regimes is seen as a first step toward possible joint military actions against independence movements in the Middle East especially in the Persian Gulf area [*sic*]."<sup>59</sup> By exposing the links between Iran and Israel, the ISA made the case that Iranians and Arabs faced the same constellation of repressive state powers. Revolutionary affects of Iranians and Arabs, including in the diaspora, converged in the desire for a region free of colonization and Western-backed dictatorships. For many Iranian leftists, the Israeli occupation of Palestine came to signify the ultimate injustice perpetuated by the alliance between the US and the Shah, the

# Iranian People Should Be an Example for All



At last, the Iranian peoples' revolution has successfully up-rooted the last tap-root of oppression and imperialism in the Persian Gulf.

As we all know, Iranians have been struggling for a long time to end the reign of terror by the oppressive regime of the Shah, which was created in Iran with the help of Western Powers for the purpose of steady and continued economic exploitation.

The success of Iranian peoples' struggle to free themselves from the grips of the Shah and his backers is quite worthy of emulation by all who are still suffering today under the system which can best be described as "Slavery in a refined way." Iranians would not have succeeded if not for their unity and devotion to achieve their freedom at all cost.

They were murdered cold-bloodedly almost everyday by the Shah and also by his tap-root (Shahpour Bakhtiar) whom he left behind when he fled the country. Many were tortured and thrown into detention indefinitely without charges being preferred against them.

But in spite of all the atrocious tactics used against the determined Iranian people, they stood firm, and sacrificed their lives in thousands in order to achieve their political goal—FREEDOM.

They united as one indivisible group in spite of all odds against them. Their student organizations are extremely strong and devoted to the cause of freedom and democracy in their fathers' land. Their democracy was snatched away by the Shah, with the great assistance of those Western governments, some of which happen to be human-rights advertisers.

If we should all look as far back as the era of institution of slavery and try to study the history of those involved in enslaving their fellow human beings, and also follow all the events of our present days, we will all be convinced that the entire western world has certainly projected itself as a great symbol of oppression and imperialism.

Anyone who has been watching the current episode of "ROOTS, the NEXT GENERATION," will be able to figure out the degree of our ancestors' agony.

They suffered because of the color of their skin, which was not of their own-making. They suffered in the new land into which they were brought against their will, the land which later prospered through their sweat and labor. And, yet, they were not qualified to vote.

The same thing has been passed on to us because the present situation in South Africa and Rhodesia are both the carbon-copy of what happened in the "Next Generation of ROOTS." It is now a refined way of slavery, because direct slavery has long been outlawed, but indirect slavery is still existing today.

If you don't believe we are not in the world of indirect slavery, look at it this way:

(1) Direct slavery gave way to Colonialism.

(2) Colonialism gave birth to Economic Exploitation.

(3) Economic Exploitation gave birth to political oppression, and

(4) Political oppression, coupled with economic exploitation, both are equal to a "refined way of slavery."

The whole system seems to be in a cyclical form, a "vicious" circle, if you will.

This reminds me of one historian,

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By  
**Sam Adeboye**

---

J.H. Parry, and his paperback book, titled "The establishment of the European Hegemony." He said that "The colonizing peoples of Western Europe looked out upon the world with eager and greedy confidence." If we look at the records of the Western world from the days of our great ancestors to present, we will see that the Western world still sees the world, through greedy eyes and attitudes of usurpation.

As we all congratulate the Iranian people for their achievement, we should also ask ourselves this big question: When will there be a strong and envious unity among the oppressed Black peoples all over the world?

We should all remember that one of our great leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King, sacrificed his life to restore dignity to the Black race. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (Osagyefo) also did his best to project a positive image of the Black race. Brothers and sisters, when are we going to contribute our own quota to the restoration of dignity to the Black race?

Till then, between the oppressed, and the oppressors, the struggle continues.

Sam Adeboye is a senior in the School of Business, majoring in Accounting.

**Figure 4.4** *The Hill-top*, March 2, 1979, 5. Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Archives.

starkest illustration of what it meant to say, as ISA periodicals often did, that the Shah was a “lapdog” of US imperialism. On and off college campuses, the ISA had ample opportunity to popularize this analysis by making solidarity with Palestine a central part of their movement.

The fall 1976 issue of *Iran Report*, the ISA’s quarterly English-language journal, includes a lengthy appeal to defend the Palestinians and culminates in a list of medicines requested by the Palestinian Red Crescent Society with a bank account number and address where donations can be sent.<sup>60</sup> No fewer than five Palestinian groups sent official messages of solidarity to CISNU’s seventeenth congress in Hamburg, Germany, in 1976, including one from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society’s representatives in New York asserting, “The Palestinian revolution has an organic link with the Iranian armed struggle.”<sup>61</sup>

In Washington, DC, Palestine House and *Khane-e Iran* were located just blocks away from each other in the neighborhood of Dupont Circle from 1968 until 1971, when the FBI shut the former down. Activists moved back and forth between both organizing centers, cosponsoring forums and planning joint demonstrations. At Howard University, an ISA-sponsored demonstration in solidarity with Palestine was the first Iranian activist initiative that made the pages of the *Hilltop*. The 1971 march through campus sought “the support of blacks in America for the Palestinian liberating [*sic*] movement in the Middle East.”<sup>62</sup> During the protest, ISA members distributed a leaflet arguing the case for a “common cause and destiny,” summarizing the plight of Iran under the thumb of Western imperialism, and concluding with a tribute to African American and Native American liberation movements “as an integral part of the world revolution.”<sup>63</sup>

According to Mohammed Eghtedari, who participated in this march, the ISA’s efforts to link revolutionary movements in the US to those in Palestine stemmed from the fact that Iranian anti-Shah students “unconditionally supported the Palestinian movement. Some students would take sides more with the PFLP [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine], or with George Habash [leader of a Marxist-nationalist faction of the PLO]. But in general, the Palestinian Liberation Organization was respected and we fully supported in every sense of the word, in terms of demonstrations. Whenever in a city there were no Palestinians, Iranians would go and demonstrate on behalf of Palestine.” Sometimes, the desire to publicly identify with the Palestinian movement led ISA members to become targets of anti-Arab violence. As Mohammed recalled: “One time we went to New York to make a demonstration for Iranian issues but the majority of our students and

organization in New York had brought slogans in support of the Palestinians. In fact, the Jewish Defense League from New York came and attacked the demonstration and several people got arrested. They thought we were Palestinian! Our slogans were so pro-Palestinian that they got confused.” Sina remembered similar experiences on demonstrations in Philadelphia and New York: “I would usually carry the flag of the PLO. And because I went to *maktab* [religious school for Muslims] and I knew Arabic, I would be [chanting] ‘*Thora thora*,’ ‘Revolution, revolution until victory!’ Many times because of that I was beaten up by Americans.”

A leading Palestinian activist in Chicago, Camelia Odeah, remembered well the ISA’s consistency and dedication. “They were more Palestinian than the Palestinians!” she said.<sup>64</sup> The ISA members’ “fierce love for justice and equity put the Palestinian issue central to their work and their lives,” she continued. “They were very genuine, they practiced what they preached.” After the Israeli invasions and occupations of 1967 and 1973, activism around Palestine intensified among Arabs in diaspora, and many Iranians also felt compelled to act. According to Camelia, it was “the fact that people were uprooted and living in camps. . . . [The ISA] saw the people suffering. They understood what it meant to have Israel in the region for the people in the region; they understood the close relationship between the Shah and Israel, [between] SAVAK and Mossad.”

Camelia recalled traveling to Chicago as an undergraduate at Michigan State University after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War:

We came from all over the region for all night vigils, all night long, and demonstrations. I remember the hunger strikes Iranian students would have in solidarity with Palestinians and in solidarity with Iranian political prisoners. They would do this for days. Those types of activities were continual. If the oppression was the Shah or the Saudis or the Israeli occupation, they were all seen in one camp. In the past people used to say “US imperialism, Israel and the reactionary Arab countries.” It was like one sentence. People would say this all together as the structures of domination that are oppressing our people. Now we don’t even have that language. Back then, there was a deep respect and care for one another. I remember the Gulf students, they really cared about the Iranians and the Iranian students supported the Saudi students as much as they could. Everybody came together around Palestine.

This description of how affects of solidarity manifested as both feeling and practice offers an alternative to the Persian “Aryan” nationalism of the Shah,

which asserted Iranian racial and cultural superiority over Arabs and which still circulates widely among Iranians today. Respect, self-sacrifice, empathy, and care mixed with anger and hope to forge a collective internationalist political culture that crossed national, linguistic, and ethnic borders. The assumption of commonality and connection became, in Camelia's words, a kind of "common sense" that was reaffirmed and reproduced through joint organizing: "You could say it was normal that we were close [Arabs and Iranians] because of our collective cultures from the region. Iranian/Arab divides were more of a joke about what to call the Gulf. Sometimes to be polite an Arab might call it the 'Persian Gulf' and vice versa. The Sunni and Shiite divide wasn't an issue. All these movements were a reflection of Mao Tse-tung or the Soviet Union, these were the ideas that were being discussed in the region. The core of it was liberation, emancipation from oppression, that's what brought people together." Cooperation between the US, the Shah, the Gulf client states, and Israel provided a structural basis for alliances among the diasporic opposition, while ideologies of Third World Marxism offered a common language for their movements. But without a deeply felt attachment to Arab self-determination as a goal in and of itself, it is difficult to explain Iranian participation in "all night vigils," hunger strikes, and demonstrations that subjected them to anti-Arab violence, or to understand their long-standing relationships with Arab foreign student and Arab American activists in cities across the US. Camelia's memories of the "continual" self-sacrifice, friendship, and commitment ISA members exhibited toward their Arab peers illustrate the power of overlapping revolutionary affects to create new forms of diasporic subjectivity and new political cultures of resistance and solidarity.

In this context, the ISA was able to work with many other organizations to make Palestine a visible, central part of the broader student revolt. A 1970 forum at San Jose State College featured speakers from Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Arab Students Association, and the ISA (figure 4.5).<sup>65</sup> In 1973, Israel shot down a Libyan commercial airplane over the Sinai and launched raids into Lebanon that killed Palestinian refugees and PLO leaders. The ISA joined with ten other groups, including the Organization of Arab Students, the Anti-Imperialist Coalition, Venceremos Organization, and the Ethiopian Students Association, to protest in front of San Francisco's Israeli consulate.<sup>66</sup> Later that year, on October 24, 1973, an ISA rally in UC Berkeley's Sproul Plaza was followed by an evening panel discussion and screening of a documentary about life in the refugee camps called, "Revolution Until Victory," which took



APP 22 1970

# IMPERIALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST & THE STRUGGLE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On Saturday, April 25th, a seminar will be held at San Jose State College on: "Imperialism and the influence and penetration of Imperialism in the Middle East", "U.S. Imperialism's stake in Israel" and "The Evolution of the Palestine Question and the struggles of the Palestinian People."

The purpose of the seminar is to further our understanding of Imperialism and the struggles of the Palestinian people against it.

Speakers from the Iranian Students Assoc., Arab Students Association and Students for a Democratic Society.



TIME :: SATURDAY APRIL 25, 1970 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

PLACE :: SCIENCE 142, SAN JOSE STATE COLLEGE

**ARAB STUDENTS ASSOCIATION (S. J. S. C.)**

**IRANIAN STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**

Figure 4.5 ISA File, Social Protest Collection. Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

its name from the PLO slogan.<sup>67</sup> The flyer called for a “democratic, secular state where Jews, Moslems, and Christians can live together in justice and peace,” an expression of hope in a “one-state solution” that was dominant on the Left at that time but that has been marginalized since the 1993 Oslo Accords. The final slogan at the bottom of the leaflet read, “Victory to the national liberation struggles of the Arab and Iranian peoples against imperialism and Zionism.”



Former ISA member Jaleh Pirnazar, a Jewish woman who was an undergraduate at UC Berkeley, could still feel the sense of urgency and outrage that compelled her to take up the cause of Palestinian liberation, even though she alienated her pro-Israeli parents in the process: “1967 had just passed so it was very fresh. Land occupied, Palestinians being homeless and all—there was a very strong sentiment in all of the radical progressive movements. The Confederation [CISNU] embraced this and we worked in very close collaboration with Palestinians.” She recalled the ISA’s celebration of the Iranian New Year, the organization’s annual flagship event, and how she worked to make Palestine central to the program. “I was musically talented in those days,” Jaleh said: “I played the piano and I organized choruses. For our Nowruz [New Year] celebration we had huge parties; this was our major fundraising event [each year], and the chorus was one of the highlights. We practiced for months. We would have songs dedicated to the Palestinian movement. We learned Arabic to be able to sing these Palestinian songs.” Shahnaz, a member of the same ISA chapter who studied at San Jose State College, also remembered these joint musical events: “I organized a choir with our people and with Palestinians, so we sang ‘The Internationale’ in three languages [Arabic, Persian, and English]. This was on campus at Berkeley. The nice thing was that, at the end of it, all of us sang at the same time. It was so beautiful.” These choruses were embodied performances of affective attachments that made solidarity a politically necessary and deeply rewarding way of being in relation to others.

The identification of ISA members with the Palestinian cause can also be traced back to Iran, where a preexisting set of transnational connections already linked elements of both opposition movements. As ISA member and Howard University undergraduate Younes Benab explained:

If you were aware politically in Iran, you belonged to two major groupings, two major blocks. One was communist, the Tudeh Party, and the other one was national liberation, like Mosaddeq and his followers. They were both solidly behind the Palestinian movement. Later, factions that broke away from Tudeh Party [after 1964], they all supported the Palestinian movement. So if you were in [CISNU], naturally you were either with the Tudeh Party or you were with *melligara* [i.e., the National Front, which supported Mosaddeq] or you were with the Revolutionary Organization that had split [from Tudeh]. All of them were supporting Palestine. If they had many, many disagreements on other things, on Palestine everybody competed to say, “I’m more pro-Palestinian than you are.”

If ISA members inherited the pro-Palestinian legacies of the two major opposition tendencies in Iran before 1960, the PLO's turn to armed struggle exerted its influence on a new generation of Iranian activists disillusioned with both the Tudeh and the National Front. This soon led to tragic yet very concrete connections between the two liberation movements. In 1970, the ISA organized a march to protest the arrest of the "Palestine Group" in Iran. "We started from [the offices of the] *Baltimore Sun*, and it was all the way to Washington," Mohammed Eghtedari remembered.

The Palestine Group was composed primarily of university students in Tehran; their name expressed their political affiliations as well as their strategic aspirations—their desire to transport the PLO's organizing tactics to Iranian soil. In 1969, they planned to travel to Jordan or Lebanon to train with the PLO and then return to Iran to launch a guerrilla offensive. Before they managed to leave the country, however, they were discovered by SAVAK and arrested. Seventeen people were given lengthy prison terms. The ISA translated into English the final speech of that group's leader, Shokrollah Paknejad, delivered at his sentencing hearing in Tehran, and printed it in its entirety in a special pamphlet for mass distribution in the US. Paknejad unequivocally defended the group's intentions: "Yes, it is true that we were going to join the Palestinians to fight imperialism, which is responsible for the misfortune of the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Palestine is a turning point in the anti-imperialist struggle in this region; and the secret of the final defeat of imperialism is to be found in these wars of liberation."<sup>68</sup> Here, the entire project of Third World liberation turns on the question of Palestine, a testament to the deep affective and emotional attachments a whole generation of Iranian leftists had to a struggle they understood to be both paradigmatic and exceptional. Paknejad also argues for the intertwined futures of Iranians and Palestinians, whose freedom could only be achieved through a regional revolutionary project connected to global transformations underway. Paknejad thus accused "the Iranian ruling elite" of "putting on trial the solidarity of our people and that of the world with the people of Palestine."<sup>69</sup> The affective capacity for solidarity was the real "crime" the accused had committed, which in and of itself constituted a threat to the ruling order. Paknejad was tortured in prison and given a life sentence, but his words circulated widely in the US and Europe as what Naghmeh Sohrabi deems a "clarion call," articulating the growing sense that the "national struggle against the Shah was inextricably linked to a global anti-imperial one."<sup>70</sup>

Decades later, affective attachments to Palestinian liberation still circulate in diaspora, embedded within the memories of former ISA members. As Zohreh Khayam explained:

It is wrong, these people have been wronged. The irony was that we were all raised in those years, we were all against the Holocaust of the Jews and yet my thinking is when you're against something because it was oppressive and it was not fair, you learn from that experience, and you would become fair in your own behavior and treatment of others. In that case, the Israeli Jews were not, and their supporters were not. You see what I'm saying; it was the sense of fairness, and so there was a huge, huge sympathy for that movement over the years.

Zohreh contested the notion that the Nazi Holocaust necessitated a Jewish-only state; instead, her affective and emotional response to the genocide in Europe flowed directly into her opposition to the persecution of Palestinians.

Jaleh Behroozi, the Jewish woman described in chapter 1 who abandoned her religious faith after reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, used similar moral language to describe her affinity with the Palestinian people. "The impact of [the] Holocaust for me was that religion was the reason that these things happened, these kind of divisions," she said. "I was just thinking of what is right and what is wrong, so defending the rights of Palestinians was significant because it was part of what is right and what is wrong for me." This assertion of "right and wrong" recurred in several discussions of Palestine with former ISA members. Sina put it this way: "What symbolizes everything that is wrong with the modern shape of the world for me more than anything else in the past thirty to forty years is the question of Palestine." He pointed to a pendant around his neck that symbolized his continued solidarity with Palestinians. "If you want to think about the figure of injustice in the modern world, it's that figure that you have to think about," he said. Vida Samiian, who played a leading role in the ISA chapter at UCLA, was also active in the local Palestine Solidarity Committee, along with Arab American and Arab foreign students "because it was the greatest injustice. I mean, the Shah was one thing, but Palestine—the dispossession, the occupation—it was unbelievable!"

While Palestine was the major site of Iranian-Arab affinity, it was not the only one. As early as 1962, the following political resolution was adopted as point four at the annual ISA congress in California: "Support the nationalist movement of the Arab People which with their successes in overthrow of

corrupt regimes in Egypt and Iraq have shown the way and with heroic Algerian Revolution have added a new page to the glorious road of independence and progress [*sic*].”<sup>71</sup> This support would intensify over time along with Iran’s increased involvement in regional politics. By the 1970s, Israel was not the only country to use US-made weapons against an Arab liberation movement.

When the Shah launched military interventions against popular uprisings in the Dhofar province of Oman and in southern Yemen, Iranian student activists in the US sought to publicize and condemn these actions as widely as possible. An ISA-authored opinion piece in the *Daily Californian* explains, “On Dec. 20, 1973, the Shah’s troops, equipped and trained by the US Military Advisory Group, first invaded Dhofar, Oman.” By that time, 90 percent of Dhofar had been liberated by the People’s Front for the Liberation of Oman over the course of a nine-year conflict.<sup>72</sup> The article celebrates the achievements of the revolution, including “the establishment . . . of a people’s government,” cooperative farming, reductions in illiteracy, and equal rights for women and men. It then goes on to explain that the Shah’s intervention in Oman “has been intensified with a renewed and more vigorous attack on Dhofar as well as on the people’s Democratic Republic of Yemen,” an area of southern Yemen that declared independence in 1967.<sup>73</sup> In December 1973, and again in spring 1974, the ISA organized forums and demonstrations in San Francisco outside the Iranian consulate calling on the broader progressive American community to, as one flyer read, “Oppose the Shah of Iran’s US-backed invasion of Oman” (figure 4.6).<sup>74</sup>

To compensate for the lack of mainstream US media coverage, the ISA’s *Resistance* magazine ran lengthy reports in 1974 and 1975 detailing the economic, social, and political history of the country, the legacy of British colonialism, and the value of Oman to the US as a source of oil and as a strategic location from which to exert control over the Persian Gulf region. Written to agitate the conscience and incite people to act, these articles also summarized the decades-long resistance movement and explained how, at the behest of the US, the Shah had become “the gendarme of the region.”<sup>75</sup> More than just acting on US orders, Abdel Takriti has argued that Iran’s “unconditional support” of the Omani sultan reflected its own push to become a regional power.<sup>76</sup> One colorful passage from a 1975 article in *Resistance* describes the transformative effects of US weapons sales to Iran, which were fueling the Shah’s imperial ambitions even beyond the Persian Gulf: “[The Shah] has become a monster turned into a Phantom, a Cobra, an octopus with steel tentacles spreading all over Iran and Oman, the Indian Ocean, and still

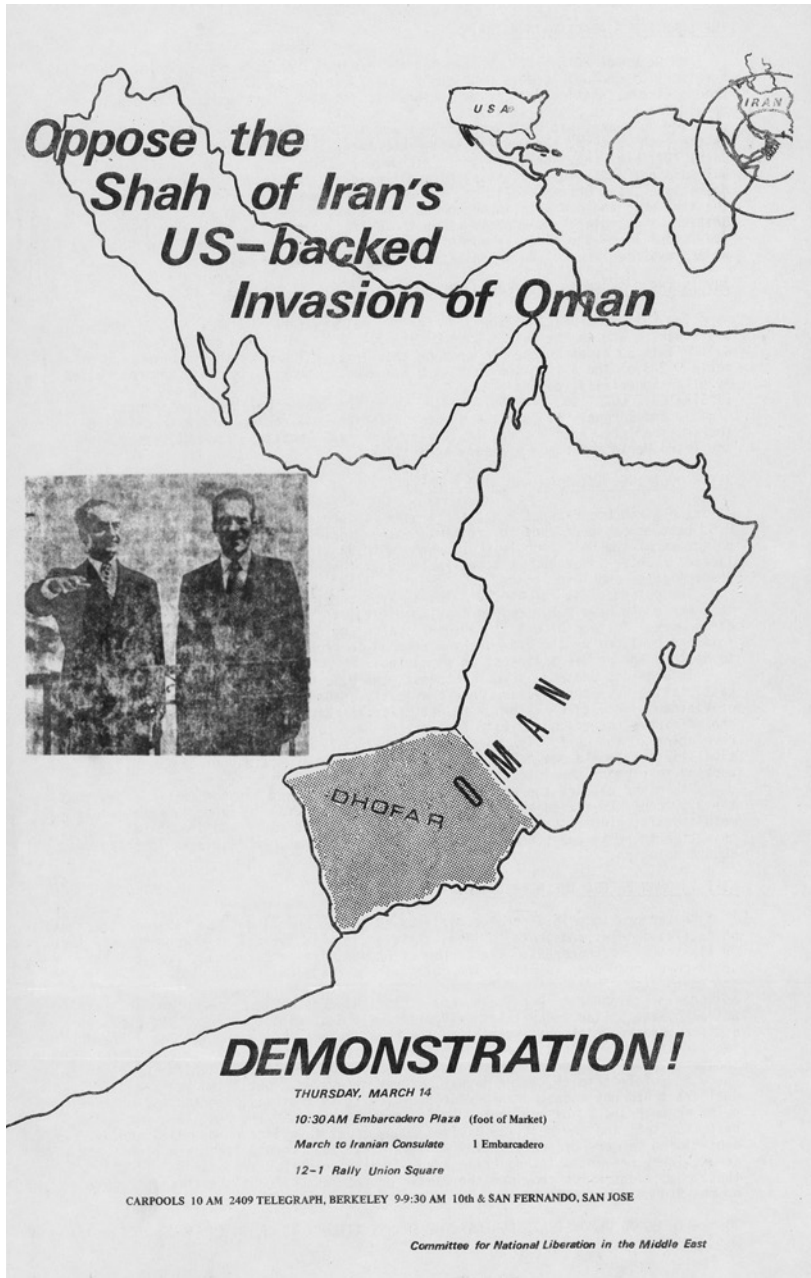


Fig 4.6 ISA Flyer, Social Protest Collection. Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

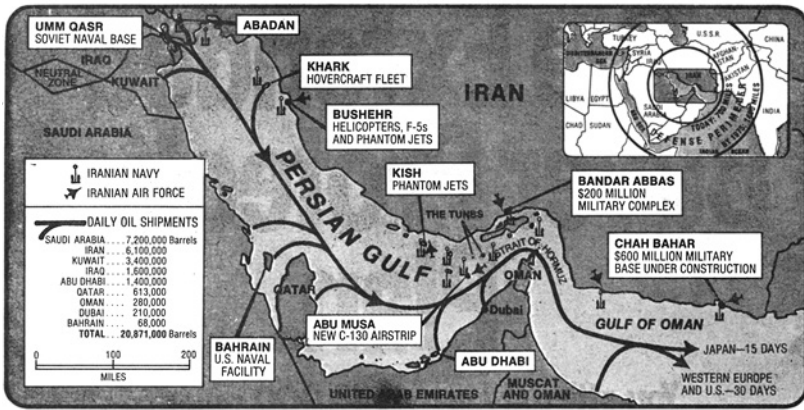


Figure 4.7 Parviz Shokat collection, Box 2, “Resistance Special Issue,” 3, no. 1 (May 1975). Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

expanding, meddling in Jordan and as far away as Ethiopia and Eritrea.”<sup>77</sup> The ISA published a map showing Iran’s role in the “unbridled arms build up raging in the area” (figure 4.7).

The results of a hyper-militarized Iranian regime proved devastating for the people of Dhofar, who were already suffering at the hands of the British-led “Omani” army.<sup>78</sup> As *Resistance* explained, “The Shah’s invading troops have added misery, oppression, looting, raping, burning and destruction to the lot of a people who are already stricken with poverty, disease, and the chains of centuries old reaction.”<sup>79</sup> Leftists inside Iran also felt a commitment to opposing their own government’s regional imperial role. In the early 1970s, Fadaiyan guerrillas traveled from Iran to Dhofar to fight against the Shah’s troops on the side of the Omani resistance. As Maziar Behrooz, historian of the Iranian Left, points out, “this meant that Iranians were fighting and dying on both sides.”<sup>80</sup>

In December 1975, the ISA printed and distributed a one-page appeal from the Omani Red Crescent Society that described the harsh conditions of war and poverty afflicting the people of Dhofar, and asked for “speedy initiatives for urgent aid.”<sup>81</sup> One year later, the fall 1976 issue of *Iran Report* published a letter from the Information Committee of the People’s Front for the Liberation of Oman. “Dear Comrades,” it begins and then goes on to confirm that the Omani Red Crescent Society had received the medicines sent by the ISA. The letter concludes, “we thank you, in the name of the Omani people for this kind support, and as always for your being in support



to [*sic*] our just struggle against US Imperialism, British Imperialism, Shah's dictatorship and Arab reactionaries. Please receive our revolutionary greetings."<sup>82</sup> This list of adversaries illustrates the difference between charity and solidarity; the donation of medicines constituted mutual support for one crucial front in an interdependent revolutionary alliance against a coalition of reactionary state powers.

Given the historical and contemporary obstacles to solidarity between Arabs and Iranians, the legacy of this aspect of the ISA's work is particularly significant. The Islamic Republic of Iran has appropriated Palestinian suffering for more than four decades, mobilizing this issue to further its regional imperial ambitions and to shore up its image as the champion of the oppressed. The current Iranian government's commitment to Palestine is viewed in a cynical light by many Iranians, who are quick to point to the economic mismanagement, corruption, and human rights violations that produce suffering for ordinary Iranians on a daily basis. The unfortunate association of Palestine with the rhetoric and policies of a repressive government in Iran is compounded by longer histories of anti-Arab sentiment that are deeply embedded in the forms of Iranian nationalism promoted by the Shah. The extent to which the revolutionary affects of Iranian, Palestinian, and Dhofari activists overlapped in the 1960s and 1970s and mobilized regional solidarities was a significant blow to the dominant ideology of the Shah's reign. These affinities offer an alternative to the Persian imperial identity that has dominated the post-1979 diaspora.

In Iran, and in diaspora, Iranian leftists placed themselves in harm's way to protest the Israeli occupation of Palestine. They argued that the obstacles to freedom in Iran and in Palestine were directly linked through the US-Iran-Israel alliance and implicated the Shah's regime as a primary obstacle to Arab self-determination in ways that reverberated across the Left in the US. In their appeals to Americans, they made the comparison with Vietnam. The atrocities unfolding in Dhofar, according to *Resistance*, were "crimes which we are familiar with since the experience of US involvement in Viet-Nam [*sic*]. . . . It is the obligation of all freedom loving people to unite and expose these policies in order to prevent other 'Gulf of Tonkin' resolutions."<sup>83</sup> By writing and circulating such appeals in English, the ISA tried to mobilize the powerful affects of solidarity already circulating between Americans and the Vietnamese toward Arab revolutionary movements as sites of immediate concern and mobilization. Indeed, it was the widespread and militant abhorrence of US imperialism in Vietnam that made American support for Dhofari liberation seem possible at all.

## Vietnam and the Defeat of US Imperialism

The ISA participated in antiwar demonstrations beginning in the early 1960s, shortly after it was reconstituted as an anti-Shah organization. In the mid-to-late 1960s, the ISA established organizational and personal ties with SDS. According to Ahmad Taghvai, ISA members in Northern California “had a very, very close relationship with SDS; SDS was an important point in this story. Some of our friends’ girlfriends were from SDS, so it was a close connection.” Friendships and romantic relationships overlapped with study groups, organizing meetings, and coalition-building to integrate the ISA into the left wing of the US antiwar movement. One joint ISA-SDS flyer printed in Berkeley in fall 1969 illustrates this. The leaflet first criticizes the liberal moratorium movement for labeling the war in Vietnam a “tragedy” rather than the result of a deliberate imperialist policy.<sup>84</sup> It then advertises three events: an SDS forum on imperialism and Vietnam, an SDS organizing meeting “to discuss Northern Calif. Regional SDS action with Iranian Student Assoc. against the Shah of Iran and US Imperialism,” and a demonstration “against the Shah of Iran and US Imperialism in Vietnam”—all scheduled within a two-week period (figure 4.8).<sup>85</sup> The demonstration took shape as a rally at San Francisco’s Federal Building followed by a march to the Iranian consulate to protest the Shah’s visit. An ISA flyer for the action reads, “The Iranian people see the struggle of the Vietnamese and the Palestinian people as a just and victorious war against imperialism and pay their full support to these struggles.”<sup>86</sup>

The ISA consistently attempted to link Vietnam, Palestine, and Iran, which was not always welcome in the antiwar movement. Younes recalled an incident from a demonstration in Washington, DC, in 1968:

We, as Iranian student group, we went to join the antiwar movement at McPherson Square. I approached the leaders of the [demonstration]; one was white, the other one was African American. I asked them for permission, if it is possible for us to speak too? They said, “Sure. ISA is always welcome.” So I said, “Well, I will consult with my friends, and we will pick someone to speak on behalf of ISA to make sure that you will know Iranian student movement is hundred percent behind antiwar movement.” So after consultation, I returned, and I asked them is it all right for us at the same time to declare our solidarity with the Palestinian movement. They said, “No, no, that can create a lot of discomfort.” So they were single-issue oriented.

# The Moratorium is a Cover, Not a Solution

by Jay Sargeant, Boston State  
Fred Gordon, NIC  
Cheyney Ryan, Harvard-Radcliffe

'We hope that every member of the academic community, from the youngest freshman to the most august college president and trustee, will move into the breach. The planned one day national convocation of the community of scholars, Oct. 15, is the opportunity. Seize it.'

(New Republic, Sept. 27, 1967)

This quotation puts forward the liberal strategy for ending the war. But will this strategy actually work? Will it fight to get the US out of Vietnam? We think not. In fact we think that though there are many honest people involved in the Moratorium, the basic aim of the Moratorium leadership is to destroy the anti-war movement. In the past few years, a movement has begun to grow which exposes and fights the small group of men that runs this country and are responsible for the war in Vietnam. The growth of this movement has forced the rulers to adopt the strategy of negotiations, talk of phased withdrawals, etc., in the hope of obscuring the real enemy - themselves - and thereby preventing the anti-war movement from really fighting against their attempts to maintain US control of Vietnam. We think that the Moratorium is part of this strategy, an attempt by assorted liberal politicians, businessmen, and college administrators to divert the anti-war movement from the only real solution -- a movement that clarifies the nature of the war and fights to get the US Out of Vietnam NOW! NO NEGOTIATIONS! The liberals' strategy, like all liberal promises ('the war will be over in six months'), must be rejected.

## What Does the Moratorium Say?

The Moratorium sees the war as an 'American tragedy' -- a tragic mistake caused by military advice which has created a futile and bloody conflict. Its National Committee asks for a 'firm commitment to withdrawal or a negotiated settlement' -- never demanding immediate withdrawal.

'One of the world's richest areas is open to the winner in Indochina. That's behind the growing US concern... Tin, rubber, rice, key strategic raw materials are what the war is really all about. The US sees it as a place to hold at any cost.'

(U.S. News and World Report, April 1966)

We disagree on both counts. The long US presence in Vietnam belies the argument that the war is a tragic blunder, its massive military aid to the French from 1945 to 1954 to fight the Vietnamese, its creation of the Diem regime and attempt to put the overthrown landlords back in power, its guiding role in the 'strategic hamlet' concentration camp program, and finally, its open invasion with 500,000 troops -- all clearly show the war has been a carefully planned policy for years. This war is necessary and inevitable -- it is not an accident. We think that it is part and parcel of the system of US imperialism, a system based on the driving need of big business to maximize profits. A system that makes profits primary, people secondary:

(OVER)

SDS FORUM on IMPERIALISM and Vietnam  
-Tuesday, Oct. 14 - 3:00 P.M. (room to be announced)

SDS MEETING - Thursday - Oct. 16, - NOON  
-to discuss Northern Calif. Regional SDS  
action with Iranian Student Assoc. against  
the Shah of Iran & U.S. Imperialism.

DEMONSTRATE against the Shah of Iran & U.S.  
Imperialism in Vietnam - Action called by  
Northern Calif. Regional SDS and the Iranian  
Student Association - October 21 (details later)

Figure 4.8 ISA Flyer, Social Protest Collection. Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

This memory reveals a stark divergence in the affective attachments of Iranian and some American activists, a result of the fact that many US progressives did not view Israel as a colonial project but rather as a manifestation of national liberation for Jews. This incident also situates the ISA on the left flank of a heterogeneous antiwar movement, where anti-Zionism was an expression of revolutionary affects and orientations. It shows how affects of solidarity attach and move in disparate and uneven ways, and illustrates

how affective dissonance, named here as “discomfort,” can be the means through which political disagreements first emerge.

As the ISA grew in numbers and deepened its affective and political ties with like-minded students, it helped to create antiwar activities that reflected its own internationalist outlook. Vietnamese activists were invited guests at ISA-organized teach-ins and forums in Washington, DC, and Northern California. On October 24, 1973, the ISA cosponsored an event at UC Berkeley with the Union of the Vietnamese in the United States and the KPD (Union of Democratic Filipinos). The event was concerned with political prisoners and torture, and featured speakers from all three groups (figure 4.9).<sup>87</sup> An ISA leaflet written to promote the forum asks, “Do you know that there are some 200,000 political prisoners in more than 1,000 prisons in Thieu controlled South Vietnam?”<sup>88</sup> The leaflet goes into detail about who is being arrested, the conditions they suffer, and how political prisoners are being reclassified as “common criminals” in an effort to avoid censure. It then discusses the plight of political prisoners in the Philippines and in Iran, and argues that “the majority of the people” in all three countries are suffering and struggling against dictatorships backed by the US.<sup>89</sup>

The ISA shared with antiwar activists around the world a tremendous hope that the Vietnamese people would succeed in defeating the US and that this would tip the global balance in favor of Third World liberation movements elsewhere. In a leaflet written for the San Francisco Moratorium March against the war on November 15, 1969, the ISA argued, “The struggle of the heroic Vietnamese workers, peasants, and other revolutionary forces has brought US imperialism to its knees.”<sup>90</sup>

As Iranians and Arabs faced off against heavily armed US proxy states in the Middle East, the ISA adapted its immanent critique of US imperialism to address the shifts in strategy and tactics implemented after the Tet Offensive in 1968, namely the “Vietnamization” of the conflict. An ISA leaflet calling for a demonstration in support of the revolution in Oman argues, “The Nixon Doctrine of using the troops of foreign puppet dictators to fight US battles has been used in Vietnam and the Middle East.”<sup>91</sup> In 1975, the *Daily Californian* echoed the ISA’s analysis: “The Vietnamese war exposed the nature of US imperialism worldwide, and politically isolated it, forcing it to formulate a new foreign policy: *the Nixon-Kissinger Doctrine*. In essence what the Nixon Doctrine says is: ‘let the Asians fight the Asians,’ or ‘let the Iranians fight the Arabs.’”<sup>92</sup>

Members of the ISA argued that Nixon’s “Vietnamization” of the war in Southeast Asia was not a regional anomaly but a new imperial modality.

# A QUESTION of POLITICAL PRISONERS

## forum

### PROGRAM :

- \* Franz SCHURMANN  
on U.S. involvement in  
third world countries.
- \* Speakers from IRAN ,  
PHILIPPINES ,  
SOUTH-VIETNAM.
- \* Skit & Songs .
- \* Film :  
" SOUTH-VIETNAM :  
A QUESTION OF TORTURE " .



*thursday 25 october 1973 , 7:30 p.m.*  
*pauley ballroom ( Student Union U.C. Berkeley )*  
*admission free*

sponsored by : union of the vietnamese in the united states  
(iranian students association of northern california  
k.d.p.(union of democratic pilipinos)

Figure 4.9 ISA Flyer, Social Protest Collection. Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

An ISA leaflet from 1973 summarized this analysis: "As the Thieu of the Persian Gulf, the Shah of Iran has been given great responsibilities to protect US and other Western interests there. As part of the Nixon Doctrine, Iran made a \$2-3 billion arms deal with the US."<sup>93</sup> Citing a *New York Times* article from November 10, 1972, *Resistance* reported that "when the US was heavily building up Thieu's arsenal, the Shah's regime along with Taiwan and South Korea gave 116 F-5A aircrafts to the Saigon government."<sup>94</sup> The ISA

organized protests against Nixon's 1972 trip to Iran and the Shah's 1973 visit to the US, linking them to both internal repression and the militarization of the Persian Gulf region.

The fear of "another Vietnam" was palpable for Iranian foreign student activists, who were haunted by the 1953 coup, outraged by the power of the US to thwart self-determination for Third World peoples, and active in the anti-war movement for over a decade. Indeed, there were over 1,000 American "advisers" stationed in Iran by 1973, and the ISA feared their presence could be the prelude to more direct military intervention, as had happened in Vietnam.<sup>95</sup> As an ISA leaflet calling a protest in defense of the revolution in Oman argues, "The potential is for another Vietnam-type conflict in the Middle East. Only this war would have US-trained Iranian pilots, instead of Americans, doing the dirty work."<sup>96</sup> A few paragraphs down, the same leaflet predicts that events could well spiral out of control, beyond the parameters of the Nixon Doctrine into all-out war.

This possibility led the ISA to issue direct pleas to Americans not to allow themselves to be used against the Iranian people's movement. An ISA-authored article in the *Daily Californian* argued: "*The American people have no interest in the oppression of other people and the stealing of their wealth. . . . [A]s the struggle sharpens it is a certainty that the US will directly intervene. Americans may be sent to fight and die, to crush a people's revolution, in order to safeguard the profits of big US corporations. But the American people will never stand for this imperialist war!*"<sup>97</sup> Fear and urgency pulsed through this emotionally charged appeal as did the presumption, or hope, that the affective map of solidarity connecting Americans to Vietnam could extend to include Iran and the Arab world among its legible coordinates.

Jaleh Pirnazar recalled how dire the situation felt at the time. "Iran could easily become another Vietnam. That's how we framed it because the president in Vietnam had asked for American support against his own people. This could easily happen to Iran. And this is Middle East, this is oil, this is so many ramifications way beyond Vietnam." Through the early to mid-1970s, the ISA held meetings and demonstrations across the country under the banner "Iran the Future Vietnam," and called for the US to "get out of Iran."<sup>98</sup> Such efforts constituted a campaign to preempt public support for this future war by arguing for a divergence of interests and identifications between people and states. "We felt compelled to disconnect ourselves from our government [in Iran]," Jaleh explained: "We would in fact demand that from our American friends as well. You are not your government; you are not representing your government. Neither am I. We are people to people, we



have solidarity, we have interests that have been ignored by both of our governments. So that was the connection. That was the bonding.” This bond allowed the ISA to work closely with Vietnam Veterans against the War, in addition to SDS, the Union of the Vietnamese in the United States, and the Friends of Indochina, among other antiwar groups.

When the war in Vietnam officially ended, the ISA joined in the celebration, but with an eye toward the implications for liberation movements across the Middle East:

The victory of the Vietnamese people—the signing of the Peace Agreement on January 27, 1973—has forced Nixon to place all his hopes on the success of US imperialism in the Middle East, particularly in the Persian Gulf. But no amount of military “aid” or gifts of Phantom jets and Laser bombs and no amount of dealing and wheeling such as *détente* will be able to crush the soaring determination of the people’s resistance. Inspired by the victorious struggle of the Indochinese, the people of Palestine, the Persian Gulf and Iran, together with their sisters and brothers in other parts of the Middle East, will continue their struggle against the new efforts of US imperialism and its puppets.<sup>99</sup>

Victory in Vietnam was thus proof that US imperialism could be defeated, but also signaled the need to prepare for an intensification of the Middle Eastern front of US Cold War domination. The ISA’s strategy was to call for unity between Arabs and Iranians and to draw out the lessons of Vietnam for the next round of bloody confrontation with US empire. Attachment to revolution, to “the soaring determination of the people’s resistance,” was reaffirmed as the basis for sustaining and expanding the feelings and practices of solidarity the ISA had been part of for many years. As this passage makes clear, when it came right down to it, solidarity was all the diasporic student Left ever had to offer anticolonial movements in the Third World, and the lesson of Vietnam was that mass antiwar movements in the heart of empire were both possible and necessary.

## Conclusion

Like Khosro smashing through the administration building’s locked glass door at San Francisco State College, the ISA’s involvement in movements against racism, colonization, and war shatters present-day assumptions about Iranian diasporic subjectivity in the US. Rather than ethnic nationalism or

religion, ISA members united around a passion for fighting injustice expansive enough to embrace the “freedom dreams” of others.<sup>100</sup> For Iranian foreign student activists, memories of US-sponsored repression—and decades of resistance—in Iran mixed with the inspiration and influence of other radical activists in the US and around the world into powerful affects of solidarity. The melancholic and militant response of ISA members to the ongoing losses of imperialism and dictatorship resonated with the collective refusal of other racialized and colonized people to accept the conditions of their subjugation. Different but related experiences of victimization by the police and armed forces of the US government, by US-backed dictatorships, and by the US-Israel alliance made it possible for African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx Americans, white Americans, Iranians, Arabs, and other foreign students from across Asia, Africa, and Latin America to imagine themselves working together on a joint project of human liberation. Opposition to state repression, campaigns to free political prisoners, and support for Third World self-determination became mutual sites for the accumulation of affective intensities and attachments, overlapping coordinates on the affective maps of revolutionaries with distinct histories and experiences.

Farid, who was active in Texas and Chicago, recalled with great pride how other activists responded to the ISA and how good it felt to be in a milieu of collective resistance: “The ISA itself was so strong that everybody else wanted to become part of it and have some relation. That’s how we were. It was a mutual thing. You didn’t have to go and beg someone like you do today and defend your cause. They would love to have their name next to your name, whether it was defending political prisoners or against US imperial policy in the Middle East or Vietnam or wherever. They would gladly do it.” The wistfulness in Farid’s words expressed a melancholic longing for a time when association with radical Iranians was an everyday practice. His words also remind us that solidarity often feels good, as people take pleasure in the giving and receiving of support and in a sense of personal connection to the power of mass movements.

Several non-Iranian activists confirmed Farid’s feelings and commented on the ISA’s strength and influence within the broader student movement. Ann Schneider, who was a student activist at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, viewed the ISA as crucial to a successful antiracist campaign on campus in 1979. “It was thanks to the Iranian Students Association that year that brought to power an African American president and vice president of the student government in an alliance we called United Progressives. They were highly organized and had cars, so they drove people to the polls.” Mike

Haire met the ISA on his first day of college at the University of Texas–Austin, and continued to work with the ISA later in Houston. “I didn’t attend one demonstration in the mid- to late seventies that didn’t seem to have an ISA contingent,” he said. “What I love about the ISA and what I learned from them more than anything was solidarity. They were (and are) among the best people I have known.” Kate, who continued to organize with the ISA in Houston even after she and her Iranian activist boyfriend broke up, elaborated: “They launched a bunch of us as leftists. They really broadened the scope of things. They got people to think much deeper. They were here with a purpose, but they were true internationalists.” This formulation, “here with a purpose but true internationalists,” describes a way of thinking about the specificity of the Iranian anti-Shah movement’s demands for national liberation and its investments in the liberation of others as mutually reinforcing. These memories, brimming with affection and admiration after so many years, recuperate affects of solidarity that could incorporate white, American leftists and Iranian foreign students into the same internationalist revolutionary worldview.

This chapter has centered on Iranian involvement in movements for Black liberation, Arab self-determination, and against the war in Vietnam, crucial locations for the coalescing of Third World internationalism as a feeling and practice of solidarity that mobilized people across multiple sites of difference. It is no coincidence that these three areas of struggle also became important locations for the development of Third World feminism and the circulation of affects of solidarity among Black and Brown women. Women were consistently drawn to the fight for large-scale social transformation. The particular experiences of different groups of women activists in the 1960s illuminated the ways that patriarchy, homophobia, racism, and imperialism were indeed “interlocking” and had to be challenged in comprehensive and dynamic ways this side of the revolution. Third World Women’s Alliance was launched in 1968 by women who had been active in SNCC, and the Combahee River Collective was formed in 1974 by women who had been part of SNCC, the Black Panther Party, and the antiwar movement. The participation of Palestinian women in the anticolonial struggle was the context for Arab feminist organizing, including under the umbrella of the General Union of Palestinian Women founded in 1965, while the revolutionary movement in Dhofar was remarkable for its ambitious efforts to center women’s liberation.<sup>101</sup> The US-based movement against the war in Vietnam also became a site from which American women of different racial backgrounds developed various iterations of revolutionary feminism.<sup>102</sup> As Rabab Abdulhadi argues,

there is no single path to feminist consciousness, and for women involved in anticolonial movements, feminism often emerged from the desire to participate fully and equally in mass organizing and from the hope that revolution would upend all the forms of oppression that impacted their lives.<sup>103</sup>

Chapter 5 looks at how these desires played out within the diasporic Iranian student Left in the US. It is noteworthy that the US feminist movement, even its revolutionary Third Worldist iterations, did not become a site of affective attachment and solidarity for the anti-Shah movement as a whole or, with very few exceptions, for its individual members. The following chapter considers how revolutionary affects were mobilized toward gendered forms of belonging for women and men in the ISA. Rather than position the Iranian experience as exceptional, I take the ISA as a case study of the contradictory experiences of women involved in the making of Third World internationalism.