



Unsettled Belonging: Educating Palestinian American Youth after 9/11

By Thea Renda Abu El-Haj

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Unsettled Belonging tells the stories of young Palestinian Americans as they navigate and construct lives as American citizens. Following these youth throughout their school days, Thea Abu El-Haj examines citizenship as lived experience, dependent on various social, cultural, and political memberships. For them, she shows, life is characterized by a fundamental schism between their sense of transnational belonging and the exclusionary politics of routine American nationalism that ultimately cast them as impossible subjects.

Abu El-Haj explores the school as the primary site where young people from immigrant communities encounter the central discourses about what it means to be American. She illustrates the complex ways social identities are bound up with questions of belonging and citizenship, and she details the processes through which immigrant youth are racialized via everyday nationalistic practices. Finally, she raises a series of crucial questions about how we educate for active citizenship in contemporary times, when more and more people's lives are shaped within transnational contexts. A compelling account of post-9/11 immigrant life, *Unsettled Belonging* is a steadfast look at the disjunctions of modern citizenship.

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Editorial Review

Review

“This is a highly original, extremely important, and compelling account of transnational citizenship. With her focus on Palestinian American youth and by fleshing out the concept of transnational citizenship, Abu El-Haj offers a unique book that will significantly push the anthropology of education forward and will take its place as one of the great educational ethnographies of our time.”

(Andrea Dyrness, author of *Mothers United: An Immigrant Struggle for Socially Just Education*)

“Revealing the work of nationalism in the racialization of Palestinian American youth, *Unsettled Belonging* is an important read for scholars interested in immigration/migration and citizenship in the twenty-first century.”

(Stacey J. Lee, author of *Unraveling the Model Minority Stereotype: Listening to Asian American Youth*)

“Abu El-Haj has spent years working closely with Palestinian American high school students to better understand how they understand themselves. Educators across the nation should pay attention to what she has uncovered. By investigating how schools reproduce a reflexive ‘everyday nationalism’ through their curricula and instruction, Abu El-Haj shows us how Palestinian American students are routinely misunderstood, maligned, and marginalized by faculty, administrators, and other students alike. But she also offers paths to progress in this valuable study. She proposes solutions where education and citizenship work together to alleviate injustice and inequality, both at home and abroad.”

(Moustafa Bayoumi, author of *This Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror*)

“This inordinately resourceful education text, while focused on the trials in the lives of Palestinian high schoolers since 9/11, is alternatively an examination of globality. In the current matrix of questions surrounding emotional/psychological belonging and physical juridical citizenship/non-citizenship, educational anthropologist Abu El-Haj provides readers with the contours. Immigrant parents from countries in turmoil actively seek to instill in their children a belonging to the ancestral home and its political history and current reality, while they are expected to use opportunities in the United States. Living two lives is a quagmire for these young people. Exploring the United States as a society with its own national imagery, ongoing empire building, and racism, Abu El-Haj addresses a national educational philosophy that is increasingly unable to accomplish the realities of globality. Though there is an acknowledgment of American voices espousing that this is precisely the problem, there is a retreat from giving them equal significance. One major question is how do the radical citizens actually participate in all aspects of a society that provides a cherished set of opportunities that rely on more than juridical citizenship. A must-read for educators and the general public. . . . Essential.”

(*Choice*)

About the Author

Thea Abu El-Haj is associate professor of education and an educational anthropologist at Rutgers University. She is the author of *Elusive Justice: Wrestling with Difference and Educational Equity in Everyday Practice*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Diana Castillo:

Your reading 6th sense will not betray you, why because this *Unsettled Belonging: Educating Palestinian American Youth after 9/11* reserve written by well-known writer who knows well how to make book that may be understand by anyone who all read the book. Written in good manner for you, leaking every ideas and composing skill only for eliminate your own hunger then you still question *Unsettled Belonging: Educating Palestinian American Youth after 9/11* as good book not simply by the cover but also through the content. This is one book that can break don't determine book by its cover, so do you still needing an additional sixth sense to pick this particular!? Oh come on your reading through sixth sense already told you so why you have to listening to a different sixth sense.

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