

All Walls Must Fall by Olivia Furber and Ramzi Maqdisi

1) Intro - Palestine

Hello, can you hear me?

(*self consciously*) It's strange talking to you in this way, when I'm so far away...

But I know exactly where *you* are standing. You are next to an ancient wall, a tourist attraction, surrounded by so much green. I hope it's not too windy today. (*as if she is smiling or joking to herself*) I've heard what the wind can be like in Northumberland!

Even though Hadrian's wall is now just a harmless pile of stones but, for me, it is still something *brutal*. Because walls like this symbolise a *complete* lack of compromise.

I am talking to you from where I stand; in Palestine. Perhaps you know that there is a wall here, much higher than the one you are next to. Maybe you have seen pictures of it. It is an ugly scar on the land, constructed in 2002.

Since the occupation started, my family, like most Palestinians, are scattered across the globe.

When our land was first taken it was as if we were seeds and a gust of wind blew us away whilst we waited to see where we would land.

Many of my family blew away too, to Germany, America, Chile...but I remained.

If you have a few minutes, I would like to tell you about my family's unfortunate experiences with walls. Perhaps you can put yourselves in our shoes.

First, I would like you to hear from Habib, my son, who moved to Berlin in 1975.

2) Germany / Berlin

Greetings from frozen *West* Berlin mother,

I'm still settling in by performing my usual routine of walking without purpose, day in day out, until I have memorised the city.

Berlin is a city full of stones; monuments, statues - the signs of a world that is so sure of itself.

The other major landmark made of stone, if we can call it that, is the wall that divides East and West. I knew about it before I arrived but as I approached it for the first time I felt my muscles tense.

There was a soldier stood in a wooden tower behind the wall who fixed his eyes on me, his gaze filled with suspicion. He raised his rifle, I suppose mostly just to demonstrate that he had one, and was ready to use it...

I turned on my heels and walked away from the wall, desperate to lose myself in the city again. After a few moments I looked behind me, mostly to check that the soldier had lowered his weapon and surveyed the apartment buildings on the other side of the wall. Those living above the 3rd floor could see out into the world beyond the wall. From one window on the fourth floor, I saw the light flickering on and off, in a kind of offbeat rhythm. They must have been communicating in code to someone on the other side.

After I returned home that night the wall stayed inside my mind and even appeared in my dreams. It was haunting me, even though, logically, it poses no threat to me. I'm on the '*better*' side.

However, what is perhaps more terrifying than humanity's ability to physically divide people is our ability to normalise the absurd.

I can tell you, regretfully, that after a few weeks, I integrated the wall into my psyche, barely noticing it at all. I no longer felt any reaction, no tensed muscles, no disdain.

But my reaction has disturbed me, and it's made me think twice about whether I should be here at all...

3) Palestine

In 1989 the wall in Berlin was toppled. From that moment on every Westerner celebrated its fall, the triumph of good over evil. But something much worse than the Berlin wall is in Palestine, and nobody is talking about it.

Before the wall, every morning I would walk down my street a few metres to buy bread from Abu al Abed, the baker. His bread was amazing.

However, when the wall was built, it split our street in two, cutting me off from parts of my own family.

But I refuse to let go of aspects of my normality. So, what did I do? I discovered a small gap in wall, too tiny for a human to pass through but large enough for flat pieces of bread. From here I

continued my daily routine of buying from Abu al Abed. He would slide the bread through, one piece at a time, still hot from the oven and fresh! I managed to save my morning routine, but I have never again seen the face of Abu al Abed. The gap is too small.

Time passed and we continued to fight for our existence in Palestine. Then my grand-daughter, who had been born in the UK, took a job in the University in El Paso in America, where she discovered another wall.

4) USA/Mexico

So One thing I've been struggling with here is that, outside of the bubble of my comfortable life, there is an enormous wall being built.

You can imagine how repulsed I feel about this 'thing' existing, given our family's experience. But I felt a need to see it. I tried to resist but one day I went out on a hike and I felt an urgent power in my legs propelling me towards it.

And do you know what was the first thing that came to my mind when I saw it? Wow, their wall is much nicer than ours in Palestine – as if I was jealous or something! It's 'nicer' because it is made from slabs of metal, placed at an angle, so you can see the other side.

Whilst I was paused, you know, taking it all in – I saw something moving, ever so slowly, in the tiny space in between the metal slabs. I saw a tiny hand, which indicated to me, this is a human moving. I got closer and saw it was a child, a boy, he looked

Central American. He couldn't have been more than 8 years old, but he was so slim that he was gradually managing to slip himself through the crack like a letter through a letterbox or – you know the image that came to my mind – like the flat pieces of Abu al Abed's bread.

I must have made a noise because suddenly his eyes darted up to meet mine, and I froze. He looked terrified and I wanted to say something to reassure him.

I grasped for my basic Spanish but Lots of words from the other language I've learnt just flooded into my mind.

Then I heard a car, a patrol vehicle. Finally, at the crucial moment the right Spanish words came into my mind – vete a la izquierda, aganchate y vete vete

I told him to stay left whilst I went right, towards the patrol car.

I faked a limp and screwed up my face, hoping the sweat dripping down my forehead could be mistaken for tears, and headed towards the vehicle with an intention to distract them for as long as possible with my feigned injury.

Who knows what happened to him, or where his parents were...

I fear that, in this country he will come to see that his people can be freely beaten and expelled and that no professor of ethics of priest will ever come to be beaten in their place.

5) The end

There is a Chinese proverb I like, "When the wind rises, some people choose to build walls. Others build windmills." You are

stood as witness in front of the 'choice' of a historical regime. And you have heard from my family about the other structures it has inspired.

But I have hope, a hope that comes from knowledge that ALL walls must fall.

I have overcome my fury that these walls confront me. Instead, now I see the wall as a personal challenge. it is not there to tell me that you are 'out', it is there as an incitement – will YOU be the one who cares enough to knock this down?

© Olivia Furber & Ramzi Maqdisi