

Berkeley, January 2019

Dear Visitor,

Do you know in what time you are living? Is it a time that is better than the one you once knew, or is it much worse, filling you with pessimism? We know the homilies that claim that this is the best and worst of times, but the fact is that we cannot really answer this question. The reason for that is that the world as we know it exists in several temporalities at once. I am not saying that there are backward societies and forward ones. That framework of time belongs to a colonial order that imagines itself to be the end of all historical striving. No, there is no reason to return to that kind of colonial framework of time in which the so-called backwards people are cultivated to become part of a proper modernity. That was the strategy of the "whitening" practices of Australia as it sought to "modernize" the Aborigines, and it has always been the strategy of colonial education that seeks to impose its own norms on the societal norms of the Global South. If we resist these strategies, we are surely "backwards" from the perspective of that developmental story. So, if our resistance is "backwards" then we can have cross-regional alliances that are, yes, backwards from one perspective, but opening up a new sense of future from the perspective we affirm—and so, also, forwards.

We do live in a world in which there are several temporalities, some of them converging, and some of them parallel. It depends on whether you belong to a nation emerging from dictatorship, or slavery, or still struggling to become free of colonial rule. The timeframe for history is then full of pasts, presents, and imagined futures that belong to specific histories of oppression and striving. We go back along the routes of many paths toward greater freedom and equality to understand how people resisted under conditions of severe oppression. Those stories remain our stories, even though our stories will be different. But no story that leads toward a greater sense of equality and freedom, a more acute sense of justice, will proceed without history. History is not that

which is gone, but which remains, within the present, a resource and potential, an alliance across temporalities. We find a struggle in one part of the world relies upon the struggle in another. The Kurdish women who have lost their families ally with the Argentinian families who still demand to know the history of the disappeared. Those who oppose violent war in one part of the world borrow and animate the language, strategies, and ideals of another. That solidarity requires a translation not only among languages, but across temporal zones, histories of oppression, fear, and hope.

So in the best of times our historical struggles are inter-connected. If many temporalities register with us as we form solidarity and undertaken action, then we no longer live only within the time of the nation, or the time of our language, or the time of our own history. We are transported by the time of another struggle, and so it is a good sign if we do not know what time it is. For there is, in the world of struggle, not simply the now or the future, but the convergence of distinct historical temporalities into a struggle that we then may call "global."

Yours, Judith