

**THE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES**  
**And Prof Zethu Nkosi, Executive Dean: College of Human Sciences,**  
**UNISA cordially invite you to**  
**PUBLIC LECTURES**

**Ashla'a: Body Bags, Body Parts/Remnants and  
the Genocide in Gaza**

**Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian**  
*Queen Mary University of London*

**&**

**Resisting Settler Solidarities and the Colonial  
Cult of Death: Palestinian Grief and the  
Perseverance of Beauty**

**Professor Devin Atallah**  
*University of Massachusetts Boston*

**13** May  
2024  
14h00 – 17h00

**Constitution Hill  
(Women's Jail,  
Room 2)**

**Respondents**

**RSVP: [morkejm@unisa.ac.za](mailto:morkejm@unisa.ac.za) by 24 April 2024**



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# Ashla'a: Body Bags, Body Parts/Remnants and the Genocide in Gaza



Prof Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian  
*Queen Mary University of London*

Criminalities in spaces of death, the lauded evidence of body bags, body parts and wounded Palestinian flesh/lives in Gaza poses the question of what is the political place given to brutal state killing, and the colonized scattered, smashed, wounded flesh, what is called Ashla'a in Arabic? What is the political work of brutalizing the Ashla'a, the unchilding even of the newborn's decomposed dead flesh. Staging Ashla'a at the center of my argument sheds the light on the relation of force and the racial hierarchies in the settler colony, imbricated in biopolitical and necropolitical domains of the racial command over the dismantled torn flesh. I argue that Ashla'a, the scattered body parts, the wounded and dispersed flesh, reveal the insatiable appetite of the colonizer to make it impossible for the Palestinian to be a WHOLE, to rise above the wounded "organ", the torn pieces of the flesh to BE. The savage encroachment of power taking in Gaza today, I argue, facilitates domination preying on the starved to death, incarcerated in the rubble, wounded and scattered decomposed flesh. In this economy of racial culmination of inhuman unliving - even as Ashla'a - the global failure to stop the genocide is founded on the delivery of wounded flesh and life, on body bags, and body parts. In this economy of genocidal racial unliving, predicated on the figurative capacity of Palestinians wounded and dead bodies and souls, my talk will provide an opportunity for self-reflection and exploration of the genocidal terror. The demonstrations, performances, and enactments of power of the Palestinian Ashla'a make the dehumanized decomposed flesh the vehicle for the master's power/truth unless defied. The talk builds on Palestinian voices from Gaza that created possibilities of life and livability against genocidal domination.

# Resisting Settler Solidarities and the Colonial Cult of Death: Palestinian Grief and the Perseverance of Beauty



**Prof Devin Atallah**  
*University of Massachusetts Boston*

Genocide is made possible by the linkages across militarized states transnationally. How do we understand and undo such powerful and violent colonial networks of domination and settler solidarities? I am naming these hegemonic forces of domination as a “colonial cult of death” because of the scale of the violence that it takes to work with such determination on collaborating in the eradication of the Palestinian people in Gaza, and transnationally in other settings such as Sudan, alongside the fact that no enactments of life-affirming solidarities have thus far been able to effectively stop the colonial violences in these settings in lasting ways. First, I examine the violence that settler solidarities wage against colonized communities, using the genocide against Palestinians as an example. In doing so, I seek to offer reflections on what these settler solidarities expose to us about settler colonialism. I argue that the Israeli genocide of Palestinians teaches us that a central focus of colonialism is not simply the annexation and accumulation of land and resources, but is also the transmission of anguish and grief inscribed into the bodies of the colonized. In other words, settler society works to accumulate native lands and to enforce an agonizing affect of loss across the landscape. Second, I share my reflections on Palestinian grief in the face of this colonial weaponization of loss, which I have come to understand as the ‘perseverance of beauty’. I develop these conceptualizations based on two decades of ethnographic research and decolonial psychology practice transnationally. As I theorize Palestinian grief as enduring beauty, I draw on decolonial psychology praxis and Black and Indigenous studies transnationally while sharing examples of ways Palestinian grief defends our vitality while resisting the deathscape designed by the settler solidarities that weaponize loss against us. Our grief as the ‘perseverance of beauty’ exists not only in-between our loss and our rage, our pain and our despair: our enduring beauty is rooted in our land-based knowledges, radical kinships, and our intergenerationally flourishing beyond the vice grip of collective trauma and the colonial cult of death.