

## Academic Minute

“Reciprocity” - the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit.

In Nadya Hajj’s “Networked Refugees”, she brings up the point of reciprocal activism – the action of giving something to those in need with the expectation of receiving something in return. Throughout the piece, she makes the argument that a reciprocal action is not always completely material in nature, but rather one that can constitute emotion instead. For instance, Hajj makes mention of the predicament of Palestinian refugees and the humanitarian crisis that affects them. In giving to them (whether it be money, goods or whatever else), a person of a more fortunate nature does not necessarily have to receive another material good in return as part of this reciprocal exchange. Hajj mentions Palestinians abroad who live a more favorable lifestyle and the expectation that they send “financial remittances” back to their family in Palestine. The online forum that is used in the modern day and age has allowed near instant communication between Palestinians both home and abroad, and one end of the “exchange” that Palestinians abroad take part in is not material in nature. While those abroad give money or goods, Hajj mentions the Palestinian custom of *‘ayb* or shame, which is used to influence those abroad to give to kin back in Palestine. This exchange is not one purely of material, but one concerning the emotional constitution of the Palestinians abroad. Those in the Palestinian diaspora who have a certain emotional tie to their homeland and the people there feel an emotional satisfaction in giving back, and that in and of itself is something they gain in return for donating.

This is a concept that is not limited to just Palestine, but also many from around the world who immigrate to more affluent countries. While my family in India does not suffer from anything remotely near the Palestinian crisis, my parents definitely feel a similar pressure to

contribute, financially and otherwise, to their family back home. In my family's specific case, my grandfather actually passed last month. Similar to the concept of shame that Hajj mentions, there was a certain play on emotions for my mother to take care of many logistics in the immediate aftermath. I actually had to travel to my grandparent's hometown because the eldest male relative (non in-law) is required to perform the "last 12 days of rites" for the deceased. The bit about shame that Hajj mentions is definitely something I felt here, especially when it came to making a decision about traveling abroad suddenly.

Overall, Hajj brings up the point of how reciprocal exchanges are crucial in sustaining the futures of less fortunate countries and areas across the world. She brings up many examples of how these reciprocal exchanges exist and what people receive in return, and many of her concepts can be and are applied throughout the globe.