

I've seen segregated highways  
But I've never seen al-Quds  
Even though I live ten miles away.  
And if you lock me in your prison  
For demanding equality  
You won't stop people from riding  
Toward a day when we're all free.

Hear the song at <http://theonlydemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/FreedomRide.mp3>

[Statement of the Palesti#58A5FA](#)

#### Other Resources

Who Profits [www.whoprofits.org](http://www.whoprofits.org)  
Jewish Voice for Peace [http://theonlydemocracy.org/http://www.btselem.org/freedom\\_of\\_movement/alternative\\_roads\\_for\\_palestinians](http://theonlydemocracy.org/http://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/alternative_roads_for_palestinians)

A Just Peace in the Land They Call Holy  
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## Advent 2 (Mark 1:1-8)

Create a Highway for Our God or  
Toward the Day When We are All Free



*The beginning of the good news of Jesus the Christ, the son of God.  
As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,  
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare the way;  
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
“Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.”  
Mark 1:1-5*

No, this is wrong. We should not “make his paths straight.” Straight isn’t the gold standard in matters of sexuality or road making. Why? Because being straight is not better or higher than being gay and the only straight roads in the West Bank are the roads for Israeli settlers, the roads that lead from one illegal settlement to the other. Let’s sing instead, “A voice cries out in the wilderness, create a highway for our God.”

Once on the way to the village of Nahalin, my Muslim friend Jihan made the comment that the road was bumpy and torn up because it was a Palestinian road and only the settlers had nice smooth straight roads. She said if they fixed this small twisted road it would be saying you believe in the apartheid road system. She was proud of this rocky winding road. It was a symbol of non-cooperation to use Gandhi's language.

This wasn't one of those "fabric of life" roads either funded by our very own USAID. These are the lower roads for Palestinians only that connect villages and communities through a series of circuitous routes under existing routes reserving the main roads for Israelis to travel from settlements to Israel undisturbed. The plan is to remove all Palestinians off the main roads like Road 60, the road that connects Bethlehem to the southern West Bank. The plan is to make the Palestinians use these new segregated "fabric of life" roads instead of the main roads even if it means adding hours onto travel time or separates farmers from their lands. The plan is to restrict Palestinian movement and facilitate greater movement for Israeli settlers.

A voice cries out in the wilderness, "Separate is not equal." It echoes with voices we have heard before in our own country back when our own southern roads were segregated under Jim Crow, when Blacks and Whites could not ride together on public transportation.

And so on November 15, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Freedom Riders that helped de-segregate the south, six Palestinian activists boarded a settler only bus as a way to call attention to the de facto apartheid system. They boarded bus #148 which connects the illegal settlement of Ariel to Jerusalem. They boarded with signs that read "Justice," "Freedom," and "Dignity." After a few miles they were forced off the bus by the IDF and arrested under the eyes of 100s of international reporters. The Riders were joined by others throughout the world who sang songs in protest and solidarity with lyrics like "I've seen walls and I've seen checkpoints but I've never seen Al-Quds eventhough I live 10 miles away."

A voice is crying out not only in the wilderness but on paved over segregated roads, on segregated buses, on windy back roads. I no longer believe we are called to fill in the valleys or level the mountains. We prepare the way by holding ourselves and those in power accountable for policies or laws that create or maintain unjust economic, social, or political systems. We prepare the way by refusing to give up our seat or pave the road. We say yes to God's coming by saying No to Empire's death dealing ways. We prepare the way, by allowing God's way to meet and guide us.

### **Prayer**

Creator God, we confess that only you can create the fabric of our lives. We confess that our country through its unconditional military aid and its misguided foreign aid supports the occupation and all the injustices and human right violations it creates in its wake. We repent and ask for your forgiveness for having confused being separate for being equal, for thinking that security is the same as peace, that love could be anything other than "Justice" "Freedom" or "Dignity" for all your people. Our confession is our preparation for your coming. We welcome you with all our crooked, rough, and unsmooth hearts. We welcome you by crying out No. We welcome you by creating a highway for your Yes.

### **Freedom Rides Song**

*To the tune of "Can the Circle Be Unbroken"*

I was standing by my window  
I saw that bus for Jerusalem  
And I wanted so bad to go  
But they said you can't get on.

**(chorus) Can the occupation be broken  
Freedom Ride, yeah, Freedom Ride  
There's a better future waiting In a free, free Palestine**

Well I told that bus driver I won't stand for apartheid  
Because separate is never equal I'm gonna ride, I'm gonna ride.  
I've seen walls and I've seen checkpoints