Excerpt from the book

PATHOLOGIES OF POWER: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor

By Paul Farmer

This book is a physician-anthropologist’s effort to reveal the ways in which the most basic right – the right to survive – is trampled in an age of great affluence, and it argues that the matter should be considered the most pressing one of our times. The drama, the tragedy, of the destitute sick concerns not only physicians and scholars who work among the poor but all who profess even a passing interest in human rights. It’s not much of a stretch to argue that anyone who wishes to be considered humane has ample cause to consider what it means to be sick and poor in the era of globalization and scientific advancement.

For well over a decade, I have grappled, as have many others, with conditions that could only be described as violent – at least to those who must endure them. In this book, as elsewhere, I use the term “structural violence” as a broad rubric that includes a host of offensives against human dignity: extreme and relative poverty, social inequalities ranging from racism to gender inequality, and the more spectacular forms of violence that are uncontestedly human rights abuses, some of them punishment for efforts to escape structural violence.

The “neoliberal era” – if that is the term we want – has been a time of looking away, a time of averting our gaze from the causes and effects of structural violence. Whatever term we use to describe our times, we cannot avoid looking at power and connections if we hope to understand, and thus prevent, human rights abuses. And when we look at and listen to those whose rights are being trampled, we see how political rights are intertwined with social and economic rights, or, rather, how the absence of social and economic power empties political rights of their substance.

The central thesis of this book is that human rights abuses are best understood from the point of view of the poor. Referring to violations of social and economic rights as well as civil and political ones, I ask questions about death by starvation or AIDS in central Haiti; about death from tuberculosis within Russian prisons; about the causes and consequences of coups d’état and low-intensity warfare in Chiapas, Haiti, and Guatemala; and about the practice of medicine in settings of great structural violence.

When it is a matter of telling the truth and serving the victims, let unwelcome truths be told. Those of us privileged to witness and survive such events and conditions are under an imperative to unveil – and keep unveiling – these pathologies of power.

Lessons from Chiapas

On January 1, 1994, the world’s attention was drawn to the Mexican state of Chiapas. Before dawn, masked rebels took over the administrative offices in San Cristóbal de las Casas, a small city nestled in the high limestone mesas of
southern Mexico. Any visitor to the lovely city of San Cristóbal de las Casas is struck by the deep divide—manifest in speech, dress, and station—between the poorer *indígenas* and the European-featured elite. The Zapatista offensive, which targeted the town halls of San Cristóbal and six other cities and also an army barracks, was launched on the very day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed. The Mexican government responded, as one might expect, with fire: within days, clashes between army units and Zapatistas had left scores dead. But the rebellion was not so easily suppressed. First, the rebels’ campaign had been years in the planning. Second, the Zapatistas had generated considerable sympathy elsewhere in Mexico and, indeed, around the world. Their supporters had access to electronic mail, and their mysterious and mediagenic spokesman, Subcomandante Marcos, issued volley after volley of trenchant communiqués.

Scholarly observers tended to frame the rebellion as an ethnic uprising. Was this “ethnic revitalization”—most of the Zapatista rebels were indigenous people—or a broader movement for social and economic rights? “Anthro lite” seemed to abound among those who cheered for ethnic pride while ignoring, or being confounded by, the rebels’ calls for social and economic rights for the poor, regardless of ethnicity.

Poor health figured strongly among the complaints of the peasants in rebellion. In a declaration at the outset of the revolt, the Zapatistas noted that, “in Chiapas, 14,500 people die a year, the highest death rate in the country. What causes most of these deaths? Curable diseases: respiratory infections, gastroenteritis, parasites, malaria, scabies, breakbone fever, tuberculosis, conjunctivitis, typhus, cholera, and measles.” The declaration further noted that all of this misery was expanding right under the noses of tourists and others who visited the region: “While there are seven hotel rooms for every 1,000 tourists, there are 0.3 hospital beds for every 1,000 Chiapanes.”

Since the uprising, the Mexican government has greatly increased its military presence in Chiapas: up to seventy thousand troops have been stationed there, and new...
fortifications have been built. Human rights organizations have documented the effects not only of the militarization of the region but also of its “paramilitarization.” Armed groups known as guardias blancas, with close ties to the PRI and the police, have harassed peasant groups thought to be sympathetic to the Zapatistas and have also engaged in persistent persecution of the church and its local representatives.

In mid-November 1997, I traveled to Chiapas with questions: Had three years of conflict been hard for its most impoverished residents, the ones we’d been working with through Partners in Health? How had the violence affected our sister organization? What was the scale of this violence? Who was orchestrating it, and against whom was it directed?

Moisés Gandhi and the Struggle for Social Justice

The road to Moisés Gandhi leads through a heavily militarized zone; to reach the village, one must pass through a newly created army post, and then a buffer “peace camp” staffed by a couple of Europeans. Just beyond these two encampments is a small chapel where our co-workers, all of them community health workers, were gathered to conduct a training session. Two months earlier, Moisés Gandhi and the surrounding communities had declared themselves part of a new “autonomous zone” – El Municipio Rebelde Ernesto Che Guevara.

Over a meal of rice, beans, potatoes, and tortillas, the health workers told us their stories. Tomás was compact and hale, and his hands and arms bore the marks of hard labor. He explained quietly that he, his father, and his grandfather had all “worked like slaves” on land that had been appropriated from his forebears. From the way Tomás spoke, it was clear that local interpretations of current events emerged directly from the region’s troubled history. Past wounds were not forgotten; in Tomás’s telling, even tribute obligations to the Spanish Crown still chafed. The anthropologist George Collier, who has spent three decades studying agrarian change in Chiapas, and to whose understanding of these processes I am much indebted, underlines the need to “look at the bitter history of the indigenous people and their subjugation under the Spanish conquistadores, a legacy of injustice that continues to taint present-day relations between indigenous and non-indigenous Mexicans” (1994).

But was the 1994 revolt only about respect for indigenous people? Our hosts spoke mostly about land, food, and social services, as had the Declaración de la Selva Lacandona, which, strikingly, mentioned health care even before food and education. Whether the oppressors were representatives of the Spanish Crown, the local elite, the ruling party of independent Mexico, or wealthy indígenas, the poor had always fared poorly. This account may sound ahistorical. But in reality Tomás was reminding us of the continuity of forces that had kept his people in poverty. Students of indigenous Maya “folklore” – and anthropology, certainly, has no shortage of them – have shown that many local stories of subjugation, epiphany, and liberation are, in fact, related to real events in the post-conquest period. That history becomes paradigmatic of the long subjection of the local poor, regardless of ethnicity.

Our hosts made it clear that the Zapatistas had opened up a new era in their own largely patient and long-suffering quest for dignity. The people of the municipio Che Guevara call their group of health workers “multiethnic” (pluriétnicos) to mark a departure from a past of ethnic strife, which had trammeled efforts to organize the rural poor. “The government creates and foments divisions,” they explained, taking particular advantage of an “unorganized peasantry.” The only option, argued the health workers, was to organize their communities, to forge a new identity as full citizens. Said Tomás: “Somos chiapanecos, somos mexicanos.”

Chiapas is the only Mexican state in which more than 50 percent of the people identify themselves as indigenous. Many of its people are of Mayan descent whose first languages are other than Spanish. Linguistic divides are just one index of the inequalities that characterize the state; it trails the rest of Mexico in almost every indicator. Its health indices are discouraging, and Chiapanes are less likely to have access to clean water, electricity, and education than are Mexicans in general. But, as one of the health workers in Moisés Gandhi observed, “It is not true that Chiapas is poor. Chiapas is rich in natural resources. It is the people of Chiapas who are poor.”
This observation -- Chiapas is rich; its people, poor -- has become something of a slogan among the Zapatistas and their supporters. In a declaration made at the outset of the revolt, the Zapatistas observed that the region’s poor bore a grotesque burden of treatable pathologies, many of them infectious diseases.

Tomás and others explained that they had repeatedly petitioned the federal government for basic public services and for an end to the militarization of their region, but their requests had gone unheard. In September 1997, they had joined other communities in declaring an autonomous government. A month later, paramilitary forces loyal to the PRI -- guardias blancas -- sacked and burned the administrative offices of the autonomy movement.

The Struggle for Health

In the morning of our second day in Moisés Gandhi, we went to visit the two clinics built by the people of the Municipio Rebelde Ernesto Che Guevara. They were small, clean, and square. While they showed us the clinic, several of the health workers asked about the conditions of the Haitian poor and the U.S. poor. Was there much poverty in these places? In what ways was poverty in a rich country different from poverty in a poor country?

As we talked, they eagerly showed us every little room. We were moved, and impressed, but I felt an unspoken dread. Two clinics, built with little more than sheer force of will, now needed to be stocked and maintained. I thought about our clinic in Haiti; our experience there had taught us that the physical plant is only the beginning. Maintaining a steady flow of medicines and supplies causes far more headaches than constructing a clinic. “We have the clinics,” the president of the comisión municipal observed wearily, as if reading my mind, “but we have no medicines other than the plants we grow. And some of that knowledge is lost.”

What will come of the noble efforts of the women and men of Municipio Rebelde Ernesto Che Guevara? What price will they pay for autonomy from the government, given that they desperately need the public services that are, according to Mexican law, their due? What hope can the promotores offer to the destitute sick of their highland hamlets? What ancient lore will help them when a young woman faces arrested labor and needs the assistance of a skilled obstetrician? Will there be still more killings, displacements, malnutrition, and tuberculosis?

Although we’re often told that we live in a time of limited resources, the numbers suggest that, to the contrary, we live in a time of unprecedented wealth. If Chiapas has a lesson for the rest of the world, it’s that the world’s resources must be more evenly shared. Human rights are respected when everyone has food, shelter, education, and health care – and the poor of Chiapas are claiming these rights. Chiapas is marked by tension and violence but also, I found, by a persistent, hopeful resistance.

References cited


Paul Farmer is Professor of Medical Anthropology at Harvard Medical School and Founding Director of Partners in Health, a not for profit dedicated to serving the destitute sick in the United States, Siberia, Peru, Chiapas and Haiti. He may be reached at paul_farmer@hms.harvard.edu. Pathologies of Power is published by University of California Press.

SANA Anti-War Resolution

In March, the SANA Board passed the following resolution: The Society for the Anthropology of North America opposes the Bush administration’s waging pre-emptive war against Iraq. We believe that warfare will be devastating for both the people of Iraq and the U.S. Iraqi civilians will bear the brunt of the attacks, and working class people, especially people of color are already paying the price economically in loss of jobs and public services as well as bearing most of the military casualties. But all Americans are already experiencing a loss of civil liberties. More than most, this is a war for the rich fought by the poor and visited on the poor across the globe. SANA is proud to join the voices of peace and justice around the globe.
FROM THE EDITOR:
The Uses of Dialogue

By Alisse Waterston

North American Dialogue (NAD) is a truly wonderful forum for North Americanist scholars, activists and practitioners to share their thoughts-in-process and works-in-progress. The newsletter provides a place to disclose information, raise issues, describe fieldwork, and offer political and theoretical analysis as it is happening. Here, there is no need to wait until fieldwork is fully completed or until every relevant reference has been examined. On these pages, readers learn what their North Americanist colleagues are worrying about now and working on today.

NAD offers a rare opportunity for us to see connections between each other’s works and therefore be more likely to develop new “communities of interest” around common themes and critical topics. For example, in this issue Sue Hyatt offers a description of her research in Philadelphia on Hope VI, a policy of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Developments (HUD). Last fall, we featured Susan Greenbaum’s report on Hope VI in Tampa, Florida (2002).

Both authors frame Hope VI as neoliberal development policy. Their research examines the consequences of these policies for residents of public housing, including their displacement and dispersal. We hear from public housing residents about the high social cost of moving. Hyatt, who teaches at Temple University and Greenbaum, who teaches at the University of South Florida, have each engaged students in their Hope VI ethnographic research.

A dialogue has begun; perhaps it’s the start of a new coalition. How many other scholar/activists are similarly working on Hope VI projects across the U.S.? What are they finding? What cuts across differences of geography? By means of neoliberal policy, HUD enables much-needed funds to flow into these communities. How can we help address the contradictions that result? What impact do local activists have on how Hope VI housing gets built and who lives in it? What will happen to the research findings? Once the data is in, for example, can the results be pooled in a position paper and delivered to HUD?

The Neoliberal Era

Nearly all the essays in the past two issues reflect on consequences of neoliberal development policies for people in the U.S. and in Mexico. Paul Farmer writes, “The “neoliberal era” – if that is the term we want – has been a time of looking away, a time of averting our gaze from the causes and effects of structural violence.” Contributors to NAD are looking squarely at neoliberalism. Articles by Sue Hyatt, June Nash and Paul Farmer in this issue complement those that appeared last fall by Susan Greenbaum, Shari Feldman, Wendy Hathaway and Ann Kingsolver who wrote on NAFTA Stories: Fears and Hopes in Mexico and the United States.

In her topical report from Chiapas, June Nash confirms that outside the United States, people are distraught and dismayed by America’s arrogance and aggression. The fallout from the U.S. invasion of Iraq on top of its liberal trade policies is being felt everywhere by everyone: Mexican farmers, maquila workers, and some anthropologists who are now being viewed by some indigenous groups as suspect.

People are afraid, and rightly so. Nash warns that “the history of instant development through ‘off-shore’ industrial operations on the northern border stands as a warning for development plans in Mexico.” Nevertheless, two years ago Mexican President Vicente Fox launched a neoliberal development plan to bring new maquiladora zones, agricultural modernization, hydroelectric projects, highways, ports, and telecommunications infrastructures to the southern states of Mexico. Nash reports, “Indigenous people are expressing deep concern about losing control over their lands, asserting they will never realize any returns from the abundant energy resources in oil and hydroelectric power, especially in the state of Chiapas.”

Farmer keeps us focused on the political economy of neoliberal development, among a “continuity of forces that keep people in poverty.” Neoliberal development policies fit neatly with the dominant socioeconomic and political structures which are responsible for poverty and structural violence. The agenda is set by corporate and military interests, not by the needs or interests of people. And we know that the agenda does not include the health and well-being of the vast majority of the people in the world.
Agendas for Change

Regardless of where we do our research or on what particular topic, so many among SANA’s members have in common a profound and passionate concern for the world’s poor. The articles in this issue of NAD each reflect this concern and what Farmer considers “the most pressing matter of our times – (that) the most basic right – the right to survive – is trampled in an age of great affluence.” As scholars, activists and practitioners, we contribute towards understanding the processes that produce and reproduce this condition.

Farmer’s words might also move us to make another kind of contribution. He describes his fear and worry upon arriving at two clinics constructed by the people of the Municipio Rebelde Ernesto Che Guevara: “…built with little more than sheer force of will, (the clinics) now needed to be stocked and maintained. I thought about our clinic in Haiti; our experience there had taught us that the physical plant is only the beginning. Maintaining a steady flow of medicines and supplies causes far more headaches than constructing a clinic. We were moved, and impressed, but I felt an unspoken dread.”

We can help ease the dread. In forums like North American Dialogue we don’t generally think in these terms, yet our dollars can help stock clinics, support a vaccination campaign and serve patients with high-quality medical care in places like southern Mexico. Partners in Health (PIH) established 16 years ago, has the infrastructure as well as the affiliated staff and volunteers to provide direct health care services to the poor. Sending funds to PIH to support these efforts would prove another good use of dialogue (http://www.pih.org/donate/index.html to donate online; or mail to Partners in Health; 641 Huntington Avenue, 1st Floor; Boston, MA 02115).

MEXICO TURNS SOUTH FOR ITS FUTURE

By June Nash

Chiapas, Mexico, April 17, 2003 -- News of the United States war with Iraq has accelerated popular pressure in Mexico to reorient trade and political alliances from its northern neighbor and turn to the South. The erosion of the country’s ability to feed its own people is blamed on United States liberal trade policies that favor exogenous development. In the mid 1980s, the International Monetary Fund set conditions for repayment of the debt which contributed to the implementation of these trade policies. The reaction of small plot farmers against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), or Free Trade Treaty (Tratado de Libre Comercio, TLC) grows stronger each year since it went into effect in 1994, as Mexican farmers find it increasingly difficult to compete with low priced, subsidized U.S. agricultural products.

When I arrived in Mexico in January 2002 leaders of campesino organizations were accusing the U.S. of “dumping” surplus products, especially corn and beans. A year later these charges have grown louder as campesinos gained support from political leaders for their campaign to revitalize subsistence cultivation.

Land “Reform” and the Sounds of Resistance

The goals of the 1910 Revolution to ensure land for those who cultivate it and to provide for the nutritional needs of all Mexicans, began to erode in the 1970s with a turn to capital intensive agriculture. The Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) lost sight of its own commitment to these revolutionary goals when their Harvard-educated candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gotari won the 1988 presidential elections. Salinas proceeded to further advance the neoliberal policies initiated by his predecessors. Under his watch, Salinas dealt “a death blow” to the Land Reform Act, Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution by maneuvering the “reform” of Land Reform in 1992. The “reform” effectively ended the government’s commitment to collective credit. Marketing assistance for small plot cultivators was abruptly discontinued, and the agronomists who assisted cultivators in marketing

Alisse Waterston is Associate Professor of Anthropology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. She may be reached at awaterston@jjay.cuny.edu.
their cash crop harvests (e.g., coffee) were cut off from federal funds in 1993.

Corn farmers in Chiapas declared “Basta!” on New Year’s Eve when NAFTA was to go into effect in 1994. The countryside, especially in the southern states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Chiapas with large indigenous populations, has long resisted these economic doctrines and the neoliberal regimes that pose them. For the indigenous people, corn cultivation is a central metaphor of life itself, deeply rooted in their cultures.

Today, we are seeing a renewal of the anthropological debate between the campesinistas and the descampesinistas. In the 1980s, scholars such as Rudolfo Stavenhagen and Arturo Warman argued for the viability of small-plot cultivation against such descampesinistas as anthropologist Roger Bartra. With NAFTA and free trade practices devastating the countryside, economists who have supported the cause of nutritional self-sufficiency and the effectiveness of small plot farmers to ensure sustainable agricultural development are gaining the attention of policymakers.

Clearly, a new era of agrarian policy is emerging in Mexico. When I arrived for my annual sojourn to Chiapas in February 2003, I found the country immersed in a dialogue between campesinos and politicians.

In the year since I had last been in Mexico, a new alphabet of organizations emerged alongside established groups. Most of the new organizations claim to be autonomous, with no ties to parties or to government agencies. AMUCSS, ANEC, CEPCO, CNOC, FDCCH, FNDCM, and MOCAF have formed a new alliance within the movement called “The Countryside Can Endure No More.” The National Confederation of Campesinos (CNC) survives, but it is no longer the favored corporate adjunct of government that it had been when the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) monopolized power. The independent Center of Agricultural Workers and Campesinos (CIOAC), the National Coalition Plan of Ayala (CNPA), and the National Union of Regional Organizations of Autonomous Campesinos (UNORCA) that had emerged in opposition to PRI policies in the 1980s continue to oppose the Fox government. These groups are united in the call for a new relationship between the countryside and the government, for re-negotiation of the North American Free Trade Alliance, and for promotion of sustainable development policies to ensure the country’s food supply.

Throughout the month of February 2003, this new movement organized assemblies to reinforce alliances among campesino groups and industrial workers in efforts to achieve “nutritional sovereignty” in food and energy production. Opposition to NAFTA stood at the center of discussion, stimulating debate about the causes and consequences of free trade policies. The new movement gained the support of the transnational World Social Forum that grew out of the Porto Alegre meeting in Brazil, and is launching a hemispheric plan to curb free trade in the Americas. The alliance also urged participants to consume local and national products and boycott imported goods. Throughout the discussions, activists invoked the “moral economy” as against the “free market economy,” calling for a reorientation in economic development to balance growth with equity and human welfare.

The National Indigenous and Campesino Front in Mexico City carried out parallel actions with “The Countryside Can Endure No More” movement. The Mixtecas called for new credit lines, for new technology and training programs in agricultural production. In Chiapas, Zapatista and independent campesino groups such as the CIOAC, launched campaigns for lower electricity rates since hydraulic power is one of the chief resources of the state, generating 52 percent of national electricity and is an important export product to Guatemala.

Members of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) are still disgruntled that President Fox has not yet gained the support of the federal Congress to pass the Agreement of San Andrés granting autonomy in regions where indigenous people constitute a majority. At the Congress of the National Indigenous and Campesino Front in March 2003, the unifying theme was endogenous development policies directed toward supporting small plot cultivators who have ensured food self-sufficiency in the crisis conditions brought about by the global economy. Both Indian and indigenous organizations oppose President Fox’s Plan Puebla Panama
(PPP), a scheme to link transportation and communication facilities oriented to port cities on the east and west coast and to promote maquiladora assembly plants in rural areas throughout the southern states of Mexico and Central America.

**Development and its Consequences: From Maquilas to MegaProjects**

The impact of global investments in maquiladoras (foreign controlled assembly plants on the northern frontier) has given pause to many Mexicans about the wisdom of direct foreign investment in “footloose” and tax-free industries. We now have a history of maquiladoras since the late 1970s when M. Patricia Fernández-Kelly was the first anthropologist to study them. Her book, *For We are Sold, I and My People*, shows how conditions for irresponsible labor practices developed as the Mexican government granted foreign, tax-free status to investors and provided guarantees that no unions were to organize in the maquilas (1983). More recently, border scholar Melissa Wright has written about the connection between what she calls women’s “stilled lives” and the “reproduction of value” in maquila factories (2001).

During the week of preparations for the Day of Women this past March 8, feminist organizations working with national and international human rights groups raised serious questions about the murders and disappearances of women in Ciudad Juárez where many maquiladores are concentrated. Since 1993, over 300 young girls and women have been murdered, and over 4,476 have disappeared. They had in common the characteristics of being poor, young (between teenage and thirty years of age) dark-skinned, and many were workers in the maquilas. In the past, the owners of the maquilas have ignored requests by women’s rights groups to ensure safe passage to and from work, and to install lighting in the vicinity of the maquilas.

The murders and disappearances of the women were ignored or treated in a desultory fashion by Mexican border police. This year, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and grassroots women’s groups have stepped up the pressure on the police to carry out more extensive investigations so that these crimes will no longer go unpunished (*La Jornada* March 7 and 8, 2003). Records kept by Casa Amiga, a rape and abuse crisis intervention center, indicate a rising incidence of violence against women in Ciudad Juárez, with 973 cases of domestic abuse, 55 of incest, and 49 of violation of adult women reported for the year 2002. In the vast majority (85%) of these cases, the women and girls seeking assistance in Casa Amiga for abuse and sexual violence relate a history of incest in their past. Pointing to how social fragmentation can erupt into mass psychosis, Casa Amiga founder Esther Chávez Cano said, “Here the social fabric is so damaged that the danger is as great inside the house as outside.” Rosario Acosta, co-founder of Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa explains: “The maquiladoras are a big part of the problem. Here the transnational corporations have all the rights and no obligations. Up to now they do not ensure the safe return of their employees to their homes. These local companies are also responsible; they are the first to which the crisis has turned like a boomerang” (*La Jornada* March 8, 2003:49).

The history of instant development through “off-shore” industrial operations on the northern border stands as a warning for development plans in Mexico. Nevertheless, President Vicente Fox launched his *Plan Puebla Panama (PPP)* for regional development of the southern states of Mexico and Central America in 2001, a program that has been generating some favor among big business interests in the southern states of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero. Included in the PPP are plans for new maquiladora zones, agricultural modernization, hydroelectric projects, as well as highways, ports, and telecommunications infrastructures.

Indigenous people are expressing deep concern about losing control over their lands, asserting they will never realize any returns from the abundant energy resources in oil and hydroelectric power, especially in the state of Chiapas. Molly Doane’s study of Chimalapas in the Oaxaca rainforest illustrates the conflicting interests of indigenous and external investment groups (Nash, ed., forthcoming). Indigenous settlers in the southern frontier zone of the Lacandón rainforest held a meeting in February 2003 to discuss the PPP. Here they registered their strong objection to the projected maquiladora manufacturing plants and to the projected dams for harnessing hydroelectric power. Chilar Kabo’ob of the
indigenous cooperative Society of Beekeepers, envisions the PPP as a “second conquest” with tourism and maquiladoras replacing organic agriculture, forestry, beekeeping and sustainable cattle raising (La Jornada March 4, 2003:44).

**American Empire: The View from Mexico**

Indigenous groups are becoming ever more sensitized to biopiracy and other enterprises they consider theft of cultural properties. Unfortunately the charges made by competing groups are not always fully investigated nor adequately substantiated. In December 2000 a team of ethnobotanical and ethnomedical researchers, led by American anthropologists Brent Berlin and Elois Ann Berlin, was censured by the Organization of Indigenous Doctors of the State of Chiapas (OMIECH) because of fears the project might result in patents restricting the use of the medicinal plants discovered. OMIECH condemns the World Trade Organization’s treaty on Rights of Intellectual Property in Commerce (Aspectos sobre Derechos de Propiedad Intelectual Relacionados con el Comercio) which they claim gives patent rights for the investigation, commercialization, and control of the use of plants that would prevent their use by traditional doctors and midwives. This interpretation is contested by legal scholar Rosemary Coombs who has reviewed the literature on the writing of the patents and the court interpretations of them. The project was summarily terminated without a full investigation, and the team, which included 18 indigenous researchers who were learning new skills of computer technology, plant cataloguing and preservation, were fired.

The censured project, financed by the National Science Foundation, was a joint endeavor of the Maya International Cooperative Biodiversity Group, composed of ECOSUR, the University of Georgia, and Molecular Nature, Ltd. in Wales. The objective of the project was to promote traditional knowledge of the flora and ecological expertise for the benefit of the Indian people, including an interchange of herbal medical knowledge among the Indian towns involved. Patents were to be divided equally between the three members of the group and the Indian community involved (25% for each), and gardens of herbal medicines were to be created in various communities.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq has come amid these tensions, providing another focus for anti-American sentiment in Mexico. Many student, campesino, Catholic, and other civil society groups held protests throughout Mexico in the first two weeks of March, with daily demonstrations and road blockades of cars honking horns in front of the United States embassy. The pressure on President Fox to support the war was intense. For one, a Mexican holds the presidency of the United Nations Security Council. Second, President Bush had dropped hints that Mexico’s refusal to support the war would result in the loss of many trade benefits, and would also cause considerable delay in getting any immigration reform law past the U.S. Congress.

For Mexico, the war has two faces. Mexicans honor the Mexican Americans who were among the first fatalities, even while President Fox was forced by popular pressure to reject President Bush’s attempts to gain Mexico’s support for the war. The mother of the first Mexican to die in combat in Kuwait expressed her own ambivalence when she told a reporter for *Reforma* “I am always thinking of how the President [Fox] did not approve the war, and I give thanks to Fox for helping Mexicans say that they do not want the war. The only thing that really makes me angry is that President Bush sent the troops with so many innocent and young Mexicans to the front, but then, someone has go to the front” (March 27, 2003:15A).

In Mexico, widespread criticism of the war was manifested in cartoons, plays, poetry readings, and in the annual “Judas” contests held on Saturday of Easter Week. In San Cristóbal de Las Casas, the winning entry in this year’s contest for the best representation of Judas was a papier-mâché triptych of George Bush, Osama Bin Laden, and Saddam Hussein as contest runoffs for the most evil Judas.

**Agendas for Anthropology**

Anthropological debates in the new millennium are taking shape in the controversy over development (through megaprojects in the southern frontier) versus the push for self-sustaining small plot agriculture. Zapatistas and their supporters in highland indigenous townships strongly oppose Fox’s Plan Puebla Panama, and support the revitalization of subsistence cultivation. The Zapatista uprising was a meteor
that provoked visions of revitalized pluricultural communities as an alternative to capitalist globalization processes that threaten to engulf the world. Those communities that adhere to this vision of autonomous development reject the projects for tourism, maquiladora assembly plants, transcontinental highways linked with canals, and oil and hydroelectric energy enterprises. They fear these development projects will eradicate the remnants of Mayan culture that have persisted in the area for the past two and a half millennia and will destroy the remaining generative base for recreating Mayan society.

The creativity of contemporary Mayan communities is revealed in the anthropological literature coming out of Mexico’s southern frontier in recent years. One trend is apparent: the community as the unit of anthropological analysis is still central, though now it is seen in a regional and historical context. Monographs published since the turn of the millennium, such as that of Sonia Toledo Tello (2002), Gracia María Imberton Denek (2002) and Anna María Garza Caligaris (2002) demonstrate the many ways communities take on and transform deeply rooted themes and practices from their indigenous, conquest, and independence contexts, and apply these to the current conflicts between diverse religious, political, and economic groups. Other studies provide ever broader vistas on which to map our ethnographic frontiers, including regional studies encompassing highland and lowland indigenous differences in the state of Chiapas (Nash 2001), works that depict the range of political struggle in indigenous social movements in Oaxaca (Stephen 2002) and the Lacandón rain forest (Legorreta 1998), as well as those that document the extent of Indian autonomy movements in the nation (Díaz Polanco 1997) and provide an historical trajectory of ethnohistorical and anthropological studies (García de León 2002).

The resounding success of Robert Laughlin’s publication of a Tzotzil-Castellano and Tzotzil-English book, *Mayan Hearts* and *Diccionario del Corazón* is testimony to the growing interest in indigenous cultures in Mexico. Robert Laughlin received the Chiapas Prize of 2002 in Science for his “contributions to Indian linguistics and for social work in the creation of Mayan literary studies,” as demonstrated by his publications and activities with the Mayan Writers Group.

Laughlin states that the significance of *Mayan Hearts* lies in the revelation of how indigenous people locate thought and emotion in the heart. This belief, still pervasive in Mayan communities, contrasts with that of the Spanish conquerors who sundered thought and emotion, localizing “reason” in the brain and “feeling” in the heart. The book has much to teach us about how to bring emotion and reason together, and what that could mean for the future.

**References cited**


June Nash, Distinguished Professor Emerita at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, has worked intermittently in Chiapas, Mexico since 1957. She may be reached a junenash@earthlink.net.
FOUNDING MYTHS OF MONTERREY

By Susan L. Warshauer

Origin myths serve multiple purposes. For individuals, they may provide a sense of connection to his or her “essence,” to the natural world or to a higher authority. For groups, origin myths may provide explanation about where they have come from or how current conditions have come to be. Joseph Campbell explains that myths can also be sociological, “linking you to a particular society. You are not simply a natural man, you are a member of a particular group” (Campbell and Moyers 1988:23). This essay seeks to describe the origin myths of the people of Monterrey, capital of the northeastern industrial state of Nuevo Leon, Mexico. The residents of Monterrey are known as Regios, and they consider themselves different from other Mexicans. While they share many cultural beliefs with their Mexican counterparts, Regios believe they have unique cultural norms which they tie to their business acumen, and which they locate in beliefs about their own origins and character traits.

There are observable differences in style between businessmen in Monterrey and those in the center of Mexico. In general, those in Monterrey’s business sector appear to be less risk adverse and more direct in their verbal style than are those from central Mexico. Moreover, relations between employees evidence less power distance that what is found elsewhere in Mexico (Geert Hofstede 1984). In daily interaction, Regios are more direct in their form of speech and are more likely to get to the point than are business people in Mexico City who are less likely to do business with those they do not know personally or with women, and are more likely to execute a business deal without a written contract. In the popular Mexican imagination, the specific cultural traits inherent to Regios make them unique and “successful.”

In the course of my fieldwork in Monterrey, I asked many residents of Monterrey why they consider themselves different from other Mexicans. Regios generally give one of two main explanations: “we have Jewish blood in our veins” or the “environment has made us tough.”

Many Regios believe that they and their city are “successful,” evidenced by the wealth and industry found in Monterrey. They attribute this success to Jewish cultural traits which they trace to the founding families of the city. Though the “Jewish question” in Monterrey is not yet resolved, many Regios believe this is the cultural origin of the most powerful families. They point out that the surnames of some of the most successful families are not “traditional” Mexican names (family based business conglomerates or grupos are the basis of much of Mexican industry). The Garza-Sada family, for example, which controls many of Mexico's largest steel, glass, and petrochemicals corporations, is popularly understood to have Jewish origins. Many believe the Sada family name had been shortened from the purportedly Jewish name “Sadat” in an effort to hide their Jewish origins. Other powerful Mexican clans have surnames that refer to animals or other natural phenomenon (for example, the name “Lobo” which translates to Wolf). Many Regios offer this as further evidence of Jewish origins, as conversos (Christians who converted from Judaism) “were known to take these sorts of names.” Others believe that Monterrey was founded by interlocking families working together to establish strong companies. They see this as a “typically Jewish ghetto” mentality, and therefore further evidence of an early Jewish presence in the city.

Most Regios believe they are more industrious and hard-working than are other Mexicans. They attribute these traits to the natural environment in which the city of Monterrey is situated. The city lies in a desert region where subsistence agriculture is difficult. Regios understand it is easier to grow crops in the areas around Mexico City and Guadalajara where “they can just reach up and pluck and banana from a tree. That’s all they have to do to eat. We, on the other hand, we have to struggle for our food.” According to Regios, “Chilangos” (an unflattering term for residents of Mexico City) are “slower, lazier and more conservative” especially when it comes to business activities as compared to Regios. Environmental adversity has made Regios stronger and they feel this is the secret to their success. This toughness has translated to business acumen and the ability to work hard.

Many scholars from the U.S. and Mexico believe Monterrey’s unique characteristics have much to do with its proximity to the United States. Indeed, Regios are consumers of American goods and are culturally fluent in American
ways. Over the past 300 years, Regios and Texans have been in constant contact which has had an influence on the cultures and daily lives for people on both sides of the border. Borderland theorists have noted that people living on either side of the border will have more in common with each other than they would with non-border citizens of their own country (Rosaldo 1977, Azaldua 1987, and Hannerz 1997). It is undeniable that in Monterrey, the orientation of most middle and upper class Regios is more towards their neighbor, the United States -- two hours by car to the north, than to their country’s capital, Mexico City -- eight hours to the south.

In my view, Monterrey’s unique characteristics have much to do with the nature of capitalist development in the region. Monterrey expanded under “free market capitalism,” while the rest of Mexico developed under what Loveman refers to as “Hispanic capitalism,” a term he applies to capitalist development in post-colonial Chile (Loveman 2001). In Monterrey, the founding families created businesses staffed by a wage labor force which also provided a consumer base for the goods being produced. In contrast, Mexico City and Guadalajara are classic colonial cities, established to facilitate the transfer of wealth from the native population to the Spanish empire outside. In Monterrey as in Mexico City and Guadalajara, the transition to capitalistic relations of production took different forms, combining economics, politics and tradition.

References cited


Susan Warshauer is an applied anthropologist in market research who completed her Ph.D. at the University of Florida in Gainesville. She may be reached at susanlw99@hotmail.com.

REPORT FROM THE FIELD
The Death and Rebirth of North Central Philadelphia

By Susan Brin Hyatt

Much recent work on the revitalization of contemporary urban environments is calling attention to how cities are implementing what Ruben and others term “the neoliberal development model” (2001:436). Like those policies associated with neoliberalism more broadly, the neoliberal development model is a market-driven strategy targeting particular neighborhoods often located in downtown districts for private investment and business ventures. In cities across the U.S., the outcome has most often been a commodification of particular urban spaces as small- and large-scale projects seek tourist dollars from both suburban and out-of-town visitors at the expense of peripheral and minority neighborhoods. Just as the neoliberal development model creates inequalities between neighborhoods, so has it produced disparities within neighborhoods, even in those communities once thought to be largely beyond rehabilitation.

Uneven Development in Philadelphia

This past Spring 2003, graduate and undergraduate students at Temple University have examined uneven development within such a neighborhood through their ethnographic research on the blocks immediately contiguous to Temple’s main campus. This project has greatly benefited from our fruitful partnership with a local community development corporation whose dynamic leader has worked with the students and me to facilitate the semester-long project we call “The Death and Rebirth of North Central Philadelphia.”

North Central Philadelphia, where Temple University is located, has long suffered the reputation as a desolate wasteland of burnt-out, abandoned buildings, crumbling row-houses, empty lots and crime. Before the 1950s, the area was dotted with the small factories and manufacturers that had produced Philadelphia’s reputation as a “workshop to the world.” Later, it had been home to some of the most vibrant institutions in the African American community. Riots
devastated a major east-west thoroughfare in 1964 and a number of local merchants abandoned their businesses. From the 1950s to the 1970s, deindustrialization took its toll, leaving behind empty factories and vacant lots. In addition, by the 1960s, North Central also boasted the largest concentration of public housing in Philadelphia.

The trend began to reverse in the 1990s. Waves of gentrification spread outward from Center City and from a neighborhood just east of North Central. Only a few years ago North Central had seemed a remote outpost; in recent years it has become a target for private investors seeking opportunities for capital investment in this new urban frontier.

North Central is now being heralded in the local media as the latest among Philadelphia’s “comeback kids.” There is new investment along the major commercial strips and public housing developments are receiving varying degrees of attention: high-rises have been imploded, low-rise garden apartment developments have been remodeled, and the Richard Allen Homes -- the oldest public housing project in Philadelphia -- is being turned into a Hope VI mixed income community (see Greenbaum; and Feldman and Hathaway in NAD 2002 for a perspective on the effects of Hope VI in Tampa).

The contrasts between “old” North Central, with its empty factories and aging housing stock and this “new” North Central rising from the ashes, speak to the degree to which the neoliberal development model has become the only strategy local residents imagine for bringing resources to their beleaguered community. As Maskovsky explains, “Accordingly, the ‘ghetto,’ a pathological, isolated and unproductive place is now being recast as a potentially productive space…” (2001:221; emphasis as in the original).

The local patterns of uneven development in North Central Philadelphia provide illustration of Maskovsky’s analysis of how “neoliberal governance is constituted at the level of the grassroots” through the adoption of market-based ideologies by local civic activists (Maskovsky 2001:218).

In this Report from the Field, my goal is to share some preliminary insights provided by the students’ excellent ethnographic fieldwork, and to explore what we have learned about the assumptions that underlie current neighborhood development initiatives in low-income neighborhoods. One such assumption is the emphasis on “growth as an economic and moral imperative” as Maskovsky puts it (2002: 225). The other is a philosophical stance that emphasizes the need to create environments that are believed to foster mixed-income communities. As the students have discovered, North Central Philadelphia has, in fact, always been a mixed-income community, and spatial proximity has not necessarily promoted meaningful social relationships. It is this last point that provides rebuttal to a particular strand of social science research that has supplied the rationale for much of the urban redevelopment currently being undertaken in poor neighborhoods.

**Challenging Theories of Social Isolation**

The application of the neoliberal development model to low-income neighborhoods is in part driven by the assumption that it is the poor themselves, and particularly the black poor, who perpetuate the cycle of poverty. William Julius Wilson, for example, has been very influential in policy circles. He posits that in the post-Civil Rights era, the isolation of poor black families from working and middle class “role models” has created a situation in which the poor enculturate each other with negative values and behaviors that keeps them trapped in poverty (1987, 1996). Similarly, Anderson (1999) argues that ghetto dwellers have socialized one another to practice counter-productive behaviors that he refers to as “the code of the street.” Accordingly, a major goal of urban development is to “break up” large concentrations of poverty believed to foster such pathological values and behaviors. This precept lies at the center of HUD’s Hope VI program which aims to create mixed-income communities in place of “failed” public housing.

The Richard Allen Homes is one of five contiguous public housing projects along Temple University’s eastern border that is now being redeveloped as a Hope VI community. In 1941, actor Bill Cosby’s family was among the first tenants to move into the newly built Richard Allen apartments. In the 1990s, these buildings were demolished to make way for the suburban-looking duplexes and town houses characteristic of Hope VI. Where there were once 1,324
apartments, the new Richard Allen will only have 314 units, most of them designated for market-rate renters.

Bill Cosby attended the ribbon-cutting when the first two tenants moved into their new homes this past March 27th. Recalling his own experiences growing up, Cosby said public housing was where you “move in, move up and move out,” and cautioned new tenants: “These buildings can be ruined in no time. It can be made to look like it’s a war zone… This is your home and I want you to be the caretakers and paint if you’re allowed. Say, ‘this is my home’ and as you move out, welcome in those who are not as fortunate” (Schaffer 2003). Carl Greene, Director of the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) said the new Richard Allen will “overcome the architectural mistakes of the past… and bring dignity and suburban design to inner city communities.”

Yet most of this new housing will be enjoyed by market-rate renters and homeowners. A long-standing tenant activist from the community noted that only 36 of the 600 families displaced by Hope VI will ever be able to return. At a meeting with the student-researchers, the activist also questioned the goal of creating a “mixed income community:”

Public housing has always been mixed income: working people, welfare, SSI, you name it it’s here. The unwritten definition of “mixed income” is really “mixed color.” They no longer want to have an all white community or all black community. All public housing developments are on prime land. Richard Allen is close to Center City, to the convention center, Penn’s Landing and Delaware Avenue. Everything is in walking distance from here. So, they figure they can market it as, “Why not work in Center City and walk home?” But no matter how you change these communities around one thing is for certain: it’s still public housing. We still have a stigma and it’s not going to change. I don’t care if you make this place look like the Taj Mahal, it’s still public housing and it’s still Richard Allen Homes.

Back in 1985 the city passed a resolution that said public housing could no longer be called “projects;” they were to be called “developments.” But, to this day, they still call them the projects. What did Bill Cosby call them when he said that people should just get up and move and give someone else a chance? And I said to Bill Cosby, “You have just lost your mind. We were here for the good the bad and the ugly and we ain’t going nowhere.”

In conversations with tenant-activists in other public housing developments, the students began to question the commonplace explanations for the “failures” of public housing. In talking with students, these activists emphasized their attachment to their community and the strength of long-standing bonds that connect people to one another. Several leaders disputed the popular claim that high-rise apartments are necessarily an undesirable style of architecture. As one tenant put it, “We used to bring the kids out and sit all together. One day, it all changed — we were sitting downstairs with the kids and they were robbing us upstairs.”

Several of the tenants interviewed were deeply offended by Bill Cosby’s remarks that they should “move in, move up and move out.” For them, these public housing “projects” are not just temporary places to live; they are home. “This is where I have my roots,” one woman told us. In addition, the political savvy and skills demonstrated by the tenant-leaders belie Wilson’s and Anderson’s claims that inner city residents have become pathologically “isolated” from mainstream institutions. Each activist provided for us dazzling presentations on the history of the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), the complexities of raising funds for capital development, and the multitude of negotiations they regularly navigated with a range of public agencies and bureaucracies.
Discovering Communities

In conducting their interviews, the students were instructed to ask each interviewee: “Do you believe that there has, in fact, been a ‘death’ in North Central Philadelphia? If so, when did it occur and why? Is there a rebirth going on now?” A range of responses greeted these questions. The students found that the “death and rebirth” theme resonated most with residents and tenants of public housing, all of whom traced the “death” back to the late 1970s when the drug trade began making its insidious incursions into their communities as other economic opportunities disappeared, when the level of maintenance and investment provided by PHA declined precipitously, and when young men in the community seemed to spiral out of control. Some felt there is, indeed, a “rebirth” underway as manifested in the renovation of public housing; others fear that the “rebirth” is more cosmetic than anything else.

In addition to public housing, however, North Central is also home to a number of privately-owned and managed apartment complexes, built in the 1950s and ‘60s for working and middle class African American community residents. In contrast to the degradation of public housing, these apartments and townhouses have been remarkably stable and, accordingly, members of these communities seemed offended by our “death and rebirth” questions. They resented the assumption they felt underlay this line of inquiry: that is, that the neighborhood had become a uniformly impoverished space.

Differences in responses to our question have pointed us toward examining long-standing class divisions in the neighborhood. Discussions with neighborhood residents revealed that tensions between private renters and public housing tenants have enjoyed a long history. One woman who had grown up in public housing and who now lives in a resident-owned complex next door, recalled not being allowed as a “public housing” child in the ’50s to play on playgrounds designated for families living in one of the private apartment complexes. This past spring, resentments have flared anew as young people from public housing have been identified as responsible for several acts of vandalism, perpetrated primarily against the private apartment-dwellers and homeowners.

Over ten years ago, Brett Williams noted that important ethnographic work by black anthropologists, from Cayton and Drake’s 1940s study in Chicago through studies done in the 1960s, had revealed that spatial proximity does not necessarily result in meaningful cross-class social ties even in multi-class “ghetto” communities (1992: 167-168). The class dynamics we have observed support this analysis. Indeed, one theme we have followed in our research is how particular constituencies are responding differently to current redevelopment initiatives, depending on whose interests they believe are really being served.

Temple University as an institution also figures into this dynamic. Over the past ten years, Temple has become a more residential campus with almost 50% of undergraduates now living on or near to campus, and with plans to build more student housing. The long-standing history of hostilities between the university and residents is re-emerging with a new vehemence.

The portrait that has emerged from our collective ethnographic research is of a community rife with internal differences and political conflicts, indeed, much like any other community. This work has sharpened our attention to the ways in which communities of color are often mistakenly glossed as uniformly impoverished spaces rife with social pathologies, when, in fact, many continue to be characterized

“The Rebirth of North Central Philadelphia” photo by Matthew Durington
by significant internal class differences, even in this post-Civil Rights era (see Gregory 1998 for a similar discussion). Our travels through North Central have revealed to us that the appearance of uniformity, embraced by the media and by many other outsiders, is indeed only skin deep. All of us on this project have become far more sensitive to both the socially-constructed boundaries and the physical borders that separate different parts of the community from one another, and to the ways in which social relations are actively shaped by these barriers. We have also come to appreciate the nature of people’s attachment to “their” community however they define that term for themselves, and to understand potential threats to the future of working class and low-income neighborhoods posed by processes like urban renewal and gentrification.

The Future of the “Hoodburbs”

In media portraits and political rhetoric, the new Richard Allen Homes has become emblematic of a North Central Philadelphia “reborn.” One resident described the new housing as “the hoodburbs” an apt expression for the New Urbanist style characteristic of Hope VI architecture (Smith 2003). Just south of Richard Allen, a “Nehemiah” housing development, based on a model developed by community groups in New York and intended to provide affordable homes for home ownership, is also being built in the New Urbanist style, heightening the sense that one has, indeed, entered the “hoodburbs.”

Despite the hype about the rebirth of North Central, our interviews with community activists have disclosed their serious reservations about the future, even as they also anticipate some of the positive changes, brought about in part by their own persistence and political action. For example, many are eagerly awaiting the opening of a long-anticipated supermarket and a new drugstore coming this summer. At the same time, activists also worry that long-time working class and low-income residents will be displaced as private developers seek fresh and fertile grounds for “growing” their capital.

North Central Philadelphia is one example of the effects of the neoliberal development model as it is playing out within the context of an African American community inhabited by low-income, working-class and modest middle-class residents. This model’s promise is to advance the financial interests of its private investors upon whom it has staked its very future at the expense of protecting the rights of its most vulnerable citizens. Neoliberal development also favors the interests of homeowners and private renters over the concerns of those who remain dependent on public provision, and who refuse the charge to “move up and move out.” I look forward to continuing work on this project with new groups of students in future semesters, and to witnessing alongside neighborhood residents the next chapter in North Central’s history.

Acknowledgements: Many thanks to Paula Taylor-Peebles of the Renaissance Community Development Project, and to all the students in both courses. Details on the opening of Richard Allen homes were drawn from the fieldnotes of Karen Malandra and Dorothy Summers.

Susan Brin Hyatt is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Temple University and Co-Director of the Neighborhood Action Research Project. She may be reached at susan.hyatt@temple.edu.

References Cited

IT HAPPENED IN HALIFAX:
THE SANA/CASCA CONFERENCE 2003

By Molly Doane

More than three hundred anthropologists from Canada and the United States converged in lovely Halifax for the annual SANA/CASCA conference, May 8-11, 2003. The mild and sometimes rainy weather, the ships in port, and the steady diet of beer and fish and chips provided a wonderful backdrop to the anthropological business at hand. The conference was held at Dalhousie University and hosted by local anthropologists Lindsay DuBois, Pauline Gardner-Barbieri and Brian Noble who organized a waterfront banquet complete with music and dancing. Their kindness, the competence of the student volunteers led by Christine Hughes, and the frequent appearance of new supplies of coffee and cookies between sessions made for a truly enjoyable conference.

Building on relationships built through our previous joint ventures in Montreal (2001) and Windsor (2002), this year’s conference was a great success, amply demonstrating that SANA and CASCA have established a vibrant and lasting alliance committed to progressive scholarship and activism. SANA Keynote speaker Laura Nader gave voice to the feeling that “something important is happening here” when she remarked to a large and rapt audience, “I see I have been going to the wrong conference all these years!”

The theme of this year’s conference “On Edge: Anthropology in Troubling Times” was conceived in the context of an imminent war in Iraq, a number of corporate scandals and recent victories of the political Right in the U.S. policy arena. Our Call for Papers noted that “anthropologists have long positioned themselves in sites of social change and struggle, often in relation to imperial projects... We have difficult choices to confront in the face of shifting power relations and competing claims about globalization, the market, rights (including indigenous and property rights), identities, histories, the environment and technologies.” The invited and volunteered sessions beautifully explored and deepened these themes.

The joint SANA/CASCA Plenary session “Globalization and Capitalism: Crisis and Response” was particularly successful in raising a number of concerns in interesting and complex ways and across ethnographic fields. Belinda Leach discussed the changing sites and meanings of work under globalization in the Midwestern U.S.; Marie France Labrecque explored the crisis of both nature and traditions under capitalism in Mexico; Lynn Bolles focused on the local challenges posed by corporate tourism in Jamaica; and Neil Smith “centered” and “de-centered” the United States as an imperial power. John Clarke’s witty and intelligent discussion entertained as well as drew together the multiple strands of these wonderful talks.

The joint CASCA/SANA Plenary, entitled “Indigenizing the Global: Anthropology and Fifty Years of Aboriginal Struggles for Self-Determination” brought some of the most notable anthropologists whose work pertains to indigenous rights, together with indigenous leaders and activists who are forging new strategies in the context of international laws and trade agreements. Distinguished anthropologists June Nash, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, and Marc-Adelard Tremblay joined Chief Arthur Manuel, the spokesperson for the Indigenous Network on Economies and Trade, to discuss the past and the future of activism for indigenous rights. Michael Asch and Marie Battiste led a lively and involved discussion that continued as a roundtable later that afternoon.

In addition, the journal Critique of Anthropology in the person of editor David Nugent, kindly sponsored an additional Plenary on Science and Technology. We were honored that Rayna Rapp agreed to be our featured speaker. Her talk “Genetic Citizenship” explored the ways in which activists challenge and reproduce traditional notions of rights while advocating for legislation and services for loved ones or clients with genetic illnesses. Her talk was discussed by Janice Graham and Harriet Rosenberg.

The SANA Keynote by Laura Nader was arguably the climactic event of the conference, and elicited a standing ovation from the audience. Her talk, entitled “Breaking the Silence” advocated the importance of an Anthropology of Law capable of discerning, on the one hand, the ways in which particular societies express themselves through laws, and on
the other, the ways in which laws can be imposed against the basic organizing principles of a particular society and its populace. She concluded with a call for a media-savvy and public anthropology, remarking that what our discipline needs is “an anthropological Michael Moore.” After observing that she had “a hard act to follow” SANA president Karen Brodkin proceeded to deliver a commentary that was a match for Nader’s talk.

CASCA sponsored a number of wonderful keynotes and invited sessions, including a provocative address by Gerry Sider, “The Production of Race, Culture, and Citizenship: An Anthropology.” Michael Lambe delivered the Hawthorne Lecture. Other featured CASCA sessions included a series of panels that constituted a festschrift tribute to the distinguished psychological anthropologist, Alexander Leighton. CASCA conference organizer Lindsay Dubois organized a series of panels building on the work of the late William Roseberry with the participation of a number of his former students. Richard Lee was a major force for CASCA. His “Intergenerational Perspectives on Anthropology and Social Advocacy/Activism: The 1960s and Forward” ran as a full day of panels. During the course of the conference, Dr. Lee encouraged participants to join a new email list that will serve as a contact point for progressive anthropologists.

As usual, it was not the invited sessions that floated the conference. The quality of the volunteered sessions and papers at this conference was unusually high. Sessions included several on medical anthropology, such as “Health Care on Edge: (Under)Serving the ‘Undeserving’?” with papers by Michael Nunley, Linda Hunt, Anastasia Hudgins, and Betty Wolder Levin and Cheryl Mwaria. Two excellent sessions on environmental anthropology were co-sponsored by Anthropology and the Environment (A&E).


Participation by graduate students was tremendous this year, both in terms of the number of contributions and the quality of the presentations. Having successfully carried off our second major conference, we are already beginning to plan next year’s SANA conference. Don Nonini and SANA president-elect Lee D. Baker have graciously volunteered to host the 2004 Spring conference which will be held at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. SANA program committee member Dana-Ain Davis will coordinate next year’s conference, taking over for Molly Doane. Stay tuned to the SANA web-site for more details.

Next year, CASCA will hold their conference separately in London, Ontario. Although we will not be holding a joint conference, we hope many CASCA folks will come to the SANA conference in North Carolina, and likewise, SANA folks are encouraged to participate in CASCA’s program in Ontario. We will come together with CASCA once again for a 2005 SANA/CASCA conference in Merida (Yucatan, Mexico). We look forward to seeing everyone in North Carolina in 2004!

Molly Doane served as the 2003 SANA Conference Chair. She is Assistant Professor at Marquette University and may be reached at molly.doane@marquette.edu in the fall.
GRADUATE STUDENT REPORT: STUDENTS MAKE STRONG SHOWING AT CASCA; TRAVEL GRANTS AVAILABLE SOON

By Matt Thompson

CASCA’s 30th annual conference, this year in joint session with SANA, featured many excellent volunteered papers by graduate students. For students in the U.S., the SANA/CASCA conference provided a unique opportunity to become acquainted with the sophisticated work being produced by our colleagues to the North. Some U.S. graduate students chose CASCA as a practice run for papers to be delivered at AAA this fall and many were presenting for the first or second time. Several panels were filled mostly, if not entirely by student presenters, which made for a less competitive and more understanding atmosphere. Additionally, looser time limits allowed many presenters to go on slightly longer than originally expected, allowing speakers to put back those few paragraphs that had been cut or to spend more time interacting with the audience.

Many of the U.S. grad students found the CASCA atmosphere to be more congenial and less overwhelming than the sometimes stressful AAA conference. The comfortable facilities at Dalhousie University and our gracious hosts insured that a good time was had by all. The Grad House pub, an on-campus coffeehouse and bar staffed by Dalhousie grad students, was a great place to grab a burrito or Jamaican meat pie in the middle of the day. And it filled up with thirsty anthropologists at night! It was there, over a couple bottles of Molson Export or pitcher of local brew that some differences between Canadians and Americans could be explored. One Canuck, upon hearing my paper was on the topic of race, queried, “What is it with you Americans and race? You’re obsessed!”

CASCA provides an excellent opportunity for graduate student professional development. To encourage student participation in such events, SANA provides four $500 travel grants for students wishing to attend the annual AAA conference and four $200 travel grants to cover expenses for the SANA/CASCA conference.

The travel grants are intended to ease the financial burden on graduate students who might not otherwise be able to attend the AAA and SANA meetings. They are available to members of SANA who are presenting at the conference for which they are requesting the travel grant. Most likely, the grants will be awarded to those graduate students who have been members of SANA for the longest period of time. Preference will be assigned to those who have applied for the grant previously and did not receive it, but applicants may not receive travel grants two years in a row.

The SANA board will soon decide on ways to streamline access to these grants, and to establish the rules for distribution of the funds. SANA will soon take steps to advertise the availability of these travel grants, so check the SANA website and North American Dialogue for updates. If you are a prospective applicant and would like to be in the loop about these decisions, feel free to email me. In addition to these travel grants, the SANA board will decide on funds for a graduate student social event at the upcoming AAA conference.

Matt Thompson is Graduate Student co-Representative to the SANA board and is a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He may be reached at thompsmd@email.unc.edu.

What’s Your Preference?

North American Dialogue on Paper or PDF?

Recently, we sent a letter by email to the SANA membership asking whether you prefer receiving NAD electronically (PDF via email) or hard copy form. It would really help the SANA budget to cut back on production costs in printing and mailing NAD. As a cost cutting measure, other AAA Sections are now sending their newsletters to members via email attachments in PDF format, and we are considering doing the same.

The email was sent to 417 members and 32 responded. That’s a terrible return rate of 8%! All but one said they would like to get NAD in PDF. Since so few responded, we will continue to send NAD in hard copy form.
Dear AAA,

I am a member of the AAA. Please enroll me as a member of the Society for the Anthropology of North America. Enclosed please find my $10. annual membership fee.

NAME: ____________________________________________

AFFILIATION _________________________________________

ADDRESS: __________________________________________

ADDRESS: __________________________________________

EMAIL: _____________________________________________

Society for the Anthropology of North America
c/o Surveys Unlimited
1971 Palmer Avenue
Larchmont, New York 10538