KEYNOTE ADDRESS
SANA Annual Conference Spring 2004

Global Inequality, War, and the American Scene
By Micaela di Leonardo  Part 1 of 2

Abstract: The worsening national and international scene requires we examine shifting political economy with a laborist perspective. This scene is marked by the triumphant spread of global capitalism, neoliberal ideology, no ongoing state alternatives to the capitalist mode of production, widespread commodification and sell-off of formerly public resources, and the stigmatization of all welfare state amelioration of exploitation. The U. S., at the center of capitalist imperialism, still has the power to prevent anticapitalist protest or to render it relatively ineffective. The November election is meaningful in terms of the domestic economy, the tax code, the environment, the public sphere, and the war.

Key words: race, labor, war, U.S., Iraq, George W. Bush

April 24, 2004 (Atlanta). I used to begin talks of this sort, back in the late 20th century, with the Charles Dickens line from his novel of the French Revolution, Tale of Two Cities: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” But the worldwide events of the post-9/11 years have made it increasingly difficult to make arguments for the positive side of the ledger. The French Revolution this ain’t. Nevertheless, there are some small causes for optimism, and I will try to highlight them as they appear, sprinkled, across our nearly solidly gloomy landscape.

On the basis of the will of an unelected White House, the U.S. military has been in Iraq for more than a year, in Afghanistan for nearly three, the situation in each state is worsening daily, and there is no clear road out. Bush, Jr. has killed decades of Middle East peace process in shifting the U.S. stance on Jewish settlements on the West Bank, immediately after Israel assassinated a major figure in Hamas. This is the 10th anniversary of genocide in Rwanda, and we have no better international means of preventing another tragedy, like the worsening situation in Sudan. It is also the 10th anniversary of NAFTA, with its harvest of ruined agricultural markets and increased class stratification in Mexico, and a massive spike in desperate Mexicano migration to the U.S. (although this latter shift, wrenching as it is for the migrants, is in many ways a positive phenomenon for the United States).

The majority-black city in which we are meeting is long celebrated as a site of relative black/white amity -- “the city too busy to hate”-- and black middle-class success -- the site both of Booker T. Washington’s notoriously accommodationist “cast down your bucket” speech at the Cotton States Exposition of 1895, and also of W. E. B. Du Bois’ thunderingly radical opposition as professor at Atlanta University. But this chocolate city is now, post-NAFTA, part of a regional host to upwards of a half-million Latinos. Lest we forget national race realities, however, racial segregation in American public schools, once on the downturn, has been worsening since the late 1980s. The capital and muscle the federal government has not put into improving education has gone instead into incarceration -- a run-up to about 2 million people jailed in the U.S., disproportionately black and brown, most for nonviolent crimes. Amnesty International has reported that the U.S. is one of just four countries responsible for 84% of all executions worldwide. And a series of “innocence projects” have exonerated hundreds of those convicted of serious crimes, including many men on death row. A new University of Michigan study suggests that there are thousands of wrongfully convicted people in U.S. prisons (Liptak 2004). For those black Americans who manage to avoid incarceration, recent studies indicate how profoundly the job market is not a level playing
field: “The disadvantage carried by a young black man applying for a job as a dishwasher is equivalent to forcing a white man to carry an 18-month prison record on his back” (Wessel 2003). While the American labor market is extremely disadvantageous to both male and female residents of color, even white women still get it in the neck: the famous 59 cents rallying cry -- women earning 59 cents for every male dollar -- has improved since the 1970s to 79 cents, but most of the improvement from the 1990s forward is due to men’s worsening status rather than women’s higher pay.

Finally, to throw a monkey wrench in the totality and confuse the hell out of us, we also saw the popular outbreak this season of thousands of gay weddings in multiple American cities and towns, after the Massachusetts Supreme Court declared their legality. Even more surprising than the sudden conversion of not particularly progressive municipal leaders, more than the immediate efforts by gay couples nationwide to gain state sanction for their unions, was the extraordinarily positive -- dare I say it? -- magnificently sentimental coverage of the movement in national and local media. The Chicago Tribune, for example, a newspaper of notoriously conservative and racist history, began running gay wedding announcements, and featured loving profiles of white, black, Latino and mixed-race gay couples. Amidst the worsening national and international outlook, and despite the doubts that many queer theorists have over the utility of state-sanctioned gay unions at all, it was a pretty exciting time. And it was also a reflection of a significantly positive shift in American constructions of gayness, as evidenced by U.S. opinion polls (Mehren 2004).

Today I speak to you about this complex global and national situation within which we find ourselves, both as a furious, guilty, worried sick, leftist American citizen, and as an anthropologist whose purview is the culture and political economy of the U.S. with a focus on race and gender politics. I will also attempt to sketch in some thoughts on the evolving “American scene,” to use Henry James’ Gilded Age phrase -- the shifting public sphere, and our relationship to it as anthropologists as well as citizens. At the risk of boring you stiff, I will start with a little stage-setting.

The last quarter-century has witnessed the triumphant spread of global capitalism concurrent with the fall of the Soviet sphere and China’s capitalist turn. Whatever we may think of the economic problems and lack of civil liberties in the former Communist states, it is now the case that, globally, we no longer have any ongoing state alternatives to the capitalist mode of production, that non-governmental organizations’ efforts to structure amelioration of the naked operations of capital have been relatively ineffectual, and that we

---

North American Dialogue is edited by Alisse Waterston. Maria D. Vesperi is SANA Publications Chair. Ideas and submissions for NAD can be addressed to Alisse at Department of Anthropology (433T), John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 899 10th Ave., NYC 10019; 914/576-1939 or 212/237-8956 awaterston@jjay.cuny.edu.

North American Dialogue is a membership benefit of the Society for the Anthropology of North America (SANA). Desktop publishing, production and distribution by Alisse Waterston.

©2004 American Anthropological Association
face a worldwide disappearance of middle class sectors as extreme wealth and poverty increase rapidly both within and across most nation-states (World Resources Institute 1999). The explosion of prostitution, sex tourism and sex trafficking across the global South and in both the People’s Republic of China and the former Soviet sphere are clear indices of women’s overall lack of political power, their drastically lowered economic status in formerly Communist states, and the globally heightened commodification of sex. Finally, one key function of the Communist world, from the Russian Revolution forward, was to strike the fear of God into capitalist leaders: to create the need at least to appear egalitarian, anti-racist, as did the Truman White House in moving to desegregate the U.S. military, and when its State Department disseminated leaflets, two years’ prior to Brown v. Board, claiming that segregated schooling was illegal.

Neoliberal ideology, which rationalizes trade “liberalization” and thus the decline of poorer states’ abilities to plan their economies, the widespread commodification and sell-off of formerly public resources, as well as stigmatizing all welfare state amelioration of capitalist exploitation, has gained enormous purchase worldwide through both its celebration of individualized consumption and its novel joining of neoclassical economic theory with an identity politics reading of civil liberties. Thus politicians, North and South, can claim to stand for women’s, racial and religious minorities’, and even homosexuals’ rights, while blandly observing the growing immiseration which disproportionately affects most of those populations.

At the same time, the technologies of globalizing capitalism have spurred the internationalization of anticapitalist protest, of truly globalized labor, feminist, anti-racist, queer, environmental and human rights organizations. Unfortunately, as the postmodernists have never quite learned -- while power may be multi-sited, the United States is still the center of capitalist imperialism, and still has the power, if not to prevent such organizing, certainly, in conjunction with the actions of myriad capitalists, to render it relatively ineffective. The U.S. also has the power to intervene, illegally, in the governmental processes of Venezuela, El Salvador, and in the recent coup in Haiti. It also has the power to criminalize dissent, to lie to its own citizens about the threat represented by a rogue state, to lie to the international community and to flout the will of its institutional representative, the United Nations, to sacrifice American lives in the hundreds, and Iraqi lives in the tens of thousands, in a war that, one year in, looks every day more like Vietnam.

But it is not Vietnam, not really, neither at home nor abroad. It is certainly true that Iraq, like Vietnam, is an invasion based on lies, with U.S. puppets, with no local credibility, installed in the hot seats, and an occupation that in itself has achieved precisely the opposite of winning hearts and minds, managing to unite warring Sunni and Shiite Muslims against their common foe, just as the South Vietnamese increasingly favored the National Liberation Front (NLF). It is also true that this is an occupation and war, like Vietnam, in which U.S. troops have been led into perpetrating atrocities against a civilian population. But it is also the case that U.S. soldiers in Vietnam were drafted, across at least to some extent class and color lines, from a healthy economy with a low unemployment rate, whereas today’s American military volunteers are working-class youth, disproportionately of color, and now also female, responding to an economic draft and a jobless recovery. It is also the case that, while the Vietnam War was waged largely on the basis of Cold War domino theory, this war was planned, long before its inception, in a post-Soviet climate, for both New Rightist imperial geopolitical advantage, and for the super-profits to be reaped for corporate friends of the White House, from exploiting Iraqi oil reserves and from the highly advantageous no-bid government contracts for so-called “rebuilding” awarded to Halliburton, Bechtel, Raytheon, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, and others.

These corporations’ intimate involvement leads us to a key point: Iraq is also not Vietnam because this is the first heavily outsourced war of the modern era. That is, on good neoliberal principles, the U.S. military has also subcontracted much of the supply functions for its own soldiers -- a major reason why American soldiers have lacked not only proper equipment and sufficient medical help but water, toilet paper, and food during the invasion and after. Journalist Herbert Docena (2003) has documented the corporate logic in Iraq, which has prevented any infrastructure rebuilding, because to do the job logically and quickly would demand buying spare parts and technology from multinational sources, not supplying entirely new infrastructure, heavily marked up in price, from subsidiaries of Halliburton, Bechtel, et al: “The U.S. and its contractors are not even trying, for a simple reason: it’s not the point. To assume that they are striving, but are merely failing because of factors beyond their control, is to presuppose that there is an earnest effort to succeed. There isn’t. If there were, there should have been a coherent plan and process in which the welfare of the Iraqis -- and not of the corporations -- actually comes first. Instead, the Iraqis’ need for electricity comes after Bechtel’s need for billion-dollar projects. The Iraqis’ need for decent living wages becomes relevant only after Halliburton has maximized its profits.” This is truly a new and brazenly open form of corporate welfare and crony capitalism.

We learned most painfully from the atrocity of the four Americans burnt and mutilated in Falluja who, it turned out, were mercenary soldier employees of
Blackwater USA, that a significant chunk of both governmental and corporate bodyguard work in Iraq has been outsourced. More than one U.S.-employed mercenary is in Iraq for every ten U.S. soldiers. These American deaths are not counted as military casualties, allowing the Pentagon to underreport the costs of our invasion and occupation. Many of Blackwater’s mercenaries are “veterans of some of the most repressive military forces in the world, including that of the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and South Africa’s apartheid regime” (Berkowitz 2004).

This is also the first American war in which the Pentagon is using high percentages of its own reserve units instead of active-duty soldiers, another key element of outsourcing. By definition, military reserves support themselves, and do not require full salaries, housing and other maintenance from the federal government, until they are called up. When Marx and Engels coined the term “reserve army of labor,” I doubt that they could have imagined the situation in which we find ourselves, well-described by my dead father’s humorous social mobility threat to me: “Shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in three generations.”

We are now pulling police, fire and EMTs from the homefront, where they are desperately needed, and sending them abroad to fight. According to journalist Anne-Marie Cusac (2004), we are not only using reserves as frontline troops in an unprecedented way, we are bankrupting them in the process: they lose income from second jobs, they lose overtime pay, and delicate family economic and childcare arrangements are destroyed. Attorneys report a blizzard of bankruptcy filings of reservist families.

But regular enlisted troops are also underpaid and suffering economically, there is a rash of soldier suicides in Iraq, and dozens of servicewomen have been raped by their own military comrades. Barbara Ehrenreich (2004) reports that about 25,000 families of servicemen and -women are eligible for food stamps. Hardship is so widespread on military bases at home that private charities deliver free food and other goods there. Bush’s 2003 tax cut for the wealthy even failed to extend a childcare tax credit to 200,000 military personnel. And the Veteran’s Administration is an open scandal for its appalling failure to provide medical care to vets. In “his 2005 budget, Bush proposes to raise veterans’ health care costs through increased drug co-payments and a new ‘enrollment fee’, thus driving an estimated 200,000 vets out of the system and discouraging another million from enrolling” (Ehrenreich 2004). Just as Brett Williams (2004) documents new predatory lending among the American race-minority poor, so the same jackals are fastening on military families of all races thrown upon...

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Lee Baker

This past April, we joined forces with the American Ethnological Society to host our spring conference in Atlanta, Georgia. It was a resounding success thanks to the indefatigable efforts of Don Nonini, Dana-Ain Davis and Erik P. Revely. John Clarke came from England and Micaela Di Leonardo (see lead article) came from Chicago to strike the keynotes during their thought provoking and evocative addresses. Perhaps more importantly, graduate students, faculty members, and undergraduates, including a rather large contingent from Wesleyan (brought down by Gina Ulysse) participated in a very exciting and successful program. Registration was higher than expected and we actually came in well under budget when all the accounting was finished. Dana-Ain was busy with the spring conference as she organized the program for the AAA conference this coming November. We have another great program and the “invited sessions” will be exciting as they at once reflect upon the contributions of one generation while introducing the work of another group of upcoming scholars in the critical study of North America.

Our membership remains about the same, as well as our budget— in good shape. Treasurer Sarah Horton and I are closely monitoring both. We will be launching a new website; once in operation, it will be located at www.sananet.org. So stay tuned.

I am also delighted to announce that our membership elected two new people for leadership positions within our organization: Jeff Maskovsky as President-Elect and Gabriela Vargas-Cetina to serve as an at-large member of the board. Jeff has already provided years of leadership for SANA- -recently completing a three-year term on the SANA Program Committee and he was also the Conference Chair for our inaugural spring conference in Windsor, Ontario in 2002. Jeff is a model activist/scholar and will bring energy and an infectious sense of the unbounded possibilities to our organization. He is currently an assistant professor of urban studies at Queens College CUNY. Gabriela (Gaby) has played a vital role in expanding our ties with colleagues in Canada and Mexico. Gaby attended graduate school at McGill and is Professor of Anthropology and Researcher at la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. Her unique networks have already served to enrich our organization and we are glad that she is willing to help SANA better represent North America by developing these important relationships. She has also been one of the chief organizers of our upcoming conference in the Yucatán. Please join me at the SANA business during the AAA conference in room “Franciscan A” at 12:15pm on November 19, 2004 to extend a heart-felt congratulations and a hearty welcome to their new positions.

SANA President Lee D. Baker is Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Duke University. He may be reached at LDbaker@duke.edu.
hard times and afraid of discharge or denial of promotion because their “financial disorder” is a violation of the military good conduct code.

This newly, simultaneously neoliberal and American imperial war machine is directly connected to rising poverty, unemployment, and overall economic insecurity at home. Mainstream U.S. media continue to find reasons to report that the economy has recovered, finally, from its post 9/11 doldrums. But recent American consumer spending, the source of the recovery, is based on the mortgage refinancing boom fueled by extraordinarily low interest rates, now risen again, and wildly increasing consumer debt. And of course, this very process has fueled rising home values, which in turn exacerbate gentrification processes, and the expulsion of the poor and working-classes from American cities. As of mid-April, the Consumer Price Index is showing an alarming rise. Rising personal bankruptcy rates alone indicate that this process cannot go on long. Income inequality has returned to the levels of the 1920s (Krugman 2002). Unemployment, hovering around 6% nationally—5.7% in March—and in high double digits in regional, poor and of color communities, shows little sign of softening. We have lost, according to Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey (2004), 2.2 million private-sector jobs since Bush took office. To give this number proper context, note that more than 9 million jobs were created in each of Clinton’s two Presidential terms.

Lest we forget, however, that it was the Clinton Administration that presided over the rise of neoliberal governance, it is important to note that during the go-go 1990s, when the rising tides were supposedly lifting all (or most) boats, high-income households saw their incomes increase at more than twice the rate of low-income households. During Clinton’s second term, more than 60% of U.S. corporations paid no federal tax whatsoever, indexing a rising corporate culture of tax avoidance. Paul Krugman (2002) points out that over the past 30 years, the average CEO compensation, in the top 100 U.S. corporations, mushroomed from 39 times the average worker’s pay to more than a 1,000 times average worker’s pay. And Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, mandatory sentencing laws, the Defense of Marriage Act, and the draconian welfare-ending bill of 1996 are the poisoned cherry on that neoliberal Clintonian cake.

Nevertheless, the 2000 election has been and is meaningful in terms of the domestic economy, the tax code, the environment, the public sphere, and the war, as will be the election this November. The Bush White House is doing everything in its power to increase misery at the bottom end of the scale, to reward its hyper-wealthy friends at the top, and to prevent us from speaking and writing about these facts. We have plummeted from a large federal budget surplus to a heretofore unimaginable level of federal deficit. The New Right phrase “starve the beast” describes the process, now partly accomplished, of killing all social spending while rolling back all taxes on the wealthy and corporations, in order to return us to a state of pure capitalist process, and of the gated communities of the wealthy staving off the newly impoverished, polluted, criminalized, and infrastructure-less world in which the rest of us will have to live. This deliberate set of policies is threatening Social Security, has made a dog’s dinner of Medicare, and, in the form of an unfunded mandate, is destroying public education. Weakened EPA rules threaten a rollback of pollution controls institutionalized since the 1970s, threatening the environment and providing cheer and hyper-profits to the CEOs of polluting industries. And, in terms of income stratification, “American workers’ share of the increase in national income since November 2001...is the lowest on record. According to a Northeastern University study, ‘In no other recovery from a post-World War II recession did corporate profits ever account for as much as 20 percent of the growth in national income. And at no time did corporate profits ever increase by a greater amount than labor compensation.’ The gains were used ‘to boost profits, lower prices, or increase CEO compensation.’” (Herbert 2004)

In fact, not only are corporations avoiding taxes and resisting offering pay increases to ordinary workers as they hyper-reward their high management, we are witnessing an epidemic of corporate exploitation of labor not seen since the Progressive and New Deal era government reforms. Let’s just take Wal-Mart as an example, not only because it is a wildly successful, rapidly growing corporation, not only the nation’s largest private employer and now the world’s largest corporation, but because, as Jane Collins points out (2003), large retailers now wield extraordinary power over global manufacturing. The egregiousness of Wal-Mart’s violations not only of labor law, but of widespread understandings of gender and racial fairness and personhood, is such that not only has the federal government been forced more than once into action, but the New York Times, no friend of labor, has repeatedly covered the scandals. This underlines our point that it is always important to take into account the heterogeneity of class formation, as differing interests among class fractions of the bourgeoisie can and do offer openings for progressive political change.

Liza Featherstone (2002) reported in The Nation nearly two years ago on the class-action sex discrimination suit brought by female Wal-Mart employees, Dukes v. Wal-Mart, a suit that both documents widespread tolerance of sexual harassment, and an overwhelming pattern of failure to promote women workers. The National Organization of Women
has elected Wal-Mart to its corporate Hall of Shame (Feminist Majority 2003). On October 3rd of last year, Homeland Security arrested hundreds of undocumented workers at 61 Wal-Mart stores. The corporation claimed it had no knowledge of the employees’ undocumented status, that they had outsourced the hiring. In the autumn of last year, Wal-Mart in Seattle was discovered to be offering “mail order bride” Halloween costumes. In January of this year, the New York Times reported that a three-year-old internal audit determined that Wal-Mart was violating child labor and mealtime laws in 128 U.S. stores (Greenhouse 2004). A former Wal-Mart manager told the reporter, “Wal-Mart stores are so understaffed that they work minors just like they do adults...They don’t have enough workers to take care of business.” The same reporter filed a story a week later, reporting that for fifteen years, Wal-Mart has had a policy of locking graveyard shift workers inside their stores and warehouses overnight “to prevent theft.” The story broke in the news because an overnight worker in Corpus Christi, Texas, broke his ankle on the job and couldn’t get out to seek medical treatment until morning arrived. In response to attempts by the UFCW and the Teamsters to organize Wal-Mart workers, the corporation has unleashed such a fierce array of threats, Panopticon-like oversight, and widespread firings that even the pro-business Bush-era National Labor Relations Board has ruled that 40 of these union complaints are justified.

Finally, Wal-Mart is among a wide array of other corporations that have been caught instructing local managers to fudge employee time charts to avoid paying overtime or simply to pare down payroll costs. Wal-Mart executives acknowledged that one common practice, the “one-minute clock-out,” had cheated employees for years. “It involved workers who clocked out for lunch and forgot to clock back in before finishing the day. In such situations, many managers altered records to show such workers clocking out for the day one minute after their lunch breaks began -- at 12:01 p.m., for example. That way a worker’s day was often three hours and one minute, instead of seven hours” (Greenhouse 2004).

Having just finished teaching part of Capital, Volume One, I was inescapably reminded, reading about this widespread employer theft of wages, of Marx’s careful documentation, in his “Working Day” chapter, of precisely that same practice, minus computerization, among Victorian factory owners. Marx writes that “[t]hese ‘small thefts’ of capital from the workers’ meal-times and recreation times are also described by factory inspectors as ‘petty pilferings of minutes,’ ‘snatching a few minutes,’ or in the technical language of the workers, ‘nibbling and cribbling at meal-times’” (Marx 1976). Shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves.

References cited

Micaela di Leonardo is Professor of Anthropology and Performance Studies at Northwestern and author most recently of Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity (Chicago). She is currently writing The View From Cavallaro’s, an historical ethnography of gender and race politics, public culture, political economy and private life in that city. She may be reached at l-di@northwestern.edu
MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR
By Alisse Waterston

This issue of North American Dialogue (NAD) features four articles based on presentations given at SANA’s Annual Meeting held this past April, 2004 in Atlanta, Georgia. The theme of the conference, held jointly with AES (American Ethnological Society), was Containment and Transgression: Global Encounters with North America @ Twenty-first Century. In keeping with the mission of the conference, Di Leonardo’s keynote speech, as well as articles by Waterston, Dorsey and Fisher focus on “how anthropologists explore the contradictions that have emerged between dominant institutions’ use of the forces of globalization to increase the efficacy of markets, surveillance, and violence in containing everyday lives -- and the daily practices of organizations and individuals who harness these forces for transgressing boundaries, borders, and behaviors.”

Di Leonardo’s keynote followed the AES keynote address by John Clarke (Open University) who spoke on Changing Welfare, Changing States, which is also the title of his new book (subtitled New Directions in Social Policy, Sage 2004). Clarke’s interest is in how “national, international and trans-national processes intersect in the reshaping of social welfare, its social relations and its governance systems.” Clarke, a Professor of Social Policy, charmed his audience of anthropologists by saying how much he loves our field and the insights it offers for understanding the ways in which ideas about the public interest and social policy are constructed and contested.

Readers of NAD who were unable to attend the SANA conference will understand why the audience was aroused, enraged and inspired by di Leonardo’s keynote. In this issue, we lead with the first half of di Leonardo’s speech; the second half will appear in the next issue of North American Dialogue. Having just come off a week of outrageous speeches from the Republican Convention here in New York, this editor feels so fortunate to have the brilliant words from Global Inequality, War and the American Scene right in front of her, words that serve as a relief and reality check. It is also gratifying that SANA can bring di Leonardo’s message to members by way of NAD.

The article on Legislation as Strategy to Intimidate, Silence and Manipulate Consent is based on my contribution to a SANA sponsored panel titled In the Name of Security: A Roundtable on Anthropology in the G.W. Bush Era which Maria D. Vesperi (New College of Florida) and I co-organized. The group of about 20 participants shared information, ideas, strategies and personal experiences related to the new political climate within which we conduct research, teach, and participate in political activity. The enthusiastic response we received prompted us to organize a Special Event at the upcoming AAA meetings in November titled In The Name of Security: Anthropology in an Era of Surveillance.

Maria also chaired a panel on Transformation and Globalization at the spring SANA meeting. I’d like to extend a special thanks to Maria for getting two speakers on that panel to submit their research-based articles for this issue of NAD: Margaret Dorsey (U Houston-Victoria) on Globalization and Transformation at a South Texas Pachanga, and Carolyn Fisher (CUNY Graduate Center) on Fair Trade and the Idea of the Market.

SANA 2005 Spring Meeting Chair Ana Aparicio (U Mass Boston) is currently working on plans for next year’s conference to be held in Mérida, Yucatán, currently scheduled to take place May 3-8, 2005. SANA’s 2005 partners are Societe Canadienne d’Anthropologie (CASCA) and the Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas of the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (UADY). For further information about the SANA 2005 Spring Meeting, please contact Ana at ana.aparicio@umb.edu.
Legislation as Strategy to Intimidate, Silence and Manipulate Consent

By Alisse Waterston

Abstract: The Patriot Act was signed into law six weeks after 9/11, and set an ominous agenda in a political atmosphere conducive to it. Yet it is the series of new laws, new rules, new practices and the proposals for new legislation that make up a larger campaign to intimidate, silence and manipulate consent. Such strategy for political use has historical precedent, including FDR's targeting “aliens in our midst” immediately following the Pearl Harbor “crisis.” During such crises, and in the name of security, ideological engines get revved up, certain social groups are deemed dangerous and demonized, and the conditions become ripe for mob violence, the implementation of policies of exclusion and expulsion, and the chipping away of freedoms and rights. Together, legislation and ideology work to manipulate consent as citizens believe the state is benevolent, protective, and acting in their best interest.

Key words: USA Patriot Act, post 9/11, legislation, enemy aliens, ideology of difference

“Personally, I’m afraid to go to a rally against Indian Point,” said Westchester resident and activist Linda Berns, quoted in the New York Times, and she asks “Is someone going to subpoena records of who was at that rally?” Berns adds, “Local people, especially those active against the war in Iraq, are really frightened that they’re being watched and that their backgrounds are being checked into” (Whitaker 2004).

In the meantime, some 550 librarians have received requests for information about their patrons from law enforcement agencies, according to a report produced by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), and bases the statement about libraries on statistics from two surveys, one conducted in 2001 and one in late 2002 (2004:7). In a recent conference on the Patriot Act, Professor Joan W. Scott of the Institute of Advanced Study notes that “some (of these) libraries have feared to ask their university counsel for advice” when such requests from federal and state law enforcement come in (Beaky 2004:3).

Are these people just paranoid or do they - and we - have good reason to fear new watchful eyes peering at what we do, what we say, where we go, what we think? After all, our government assures us, this legislation and the policies that result are designed to protect us from the enemy alien who dare attack us. The USA Patriot Act, the centerpiece of that legislation, is for our benefit, we are told. An “educational” website produced by the U.S. Justice Department claims the DOJ “is preserving life and liberty by using the USA PATRIOT Act.” Lest you forget that idea, the site name itself will remind you. You may access the DOJ “educational” site at www.lifeandliberty.gov.

Even as the USA Patriot Act may be built upon a foundation of laws and practices established in the pre-9/11 era, it does go much further, and sets an ominous agenda in a political atmosphere conducive to it. And even as the USA Patriot Act is the centerpiece of new legislation, it is the series of new laws, new rules, new practices and the proposals for new legislation that make up the larger effort - a campaign to intimidate, silence and manipulate consent.

As we know, the Patriot Act was signed into law on October 24, 2001, just six weeks after 9/11 (it is up for renewal in 2005). David Cole, author of Enemy Aliens, explains that the bill’s “awkward title”—the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism -- was purposefully designed so that “its acronym, USA PATRIOT would send the message that to oppose it was unpatriotic” (2003:57). Cole, an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights and a professor at Georgetown University Law Center, concludes that the Patriot Act “raise(s) substantial concerns about respect for basic human rights and civil liberties.” Perhaps more importantly, Cole points out that the most alarming provisions are those that are "...characteristically... (and) principally directed at non-citizens" (2003:57).

According to Cole, The USA PATRIOT Act “makes foreign nationals deportable for wholly innocent associational activity, (it makes them) excludable for pure speech, and (it makes them) subject to incarceration on the attorney general's say-so, without a finding that they pose a danger or a flight risk. With a stroke of the pen, in other words, President Bush denied foreign nationals basic rights of political association, political speech, due process and privacy” (2003:58,64-65).

This is not the first time an American President has targeted “aliens in our midst” immediately following a crisis. Two months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, FDR signed Executive Order 9066 in February, 1942 authorizing the Secretary of War to “prescribe military areas...from which any or all persons may be excluded and subjected to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War may impose” (Norgren and Nanda 1996:75-76). The targets at that time were the Japanese. None had committed any acts of “espionage” or “sabotage.” Yet, in the name of security and by authority of Executive Order 9066, Lieutenant General J. L. De Witt implemented the internment of some 120,000 Japanese —50,000 of whom were legal residents of the U.S. and 70,000 who were U.S. citizens (ibid). Norgren and Nanda (1996:77) cite Lieutenant General De Witt explanation:

The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on U.S. soil, possessed of U.S. citizenship, have become ‘Americanized,’ the racial strains are undiluted. The very fact that no Japanese American sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken.
In a country that professes its commitment to freedom, democracy, civil rights and a welcoming to its shores of the “huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” how can all this be so blatantly stripped away with a stroke of the pen? Eric Wolf’s Envisioning Power offers a clue. He writes, “Society…grasp(s) certain events as crisis points, and ideological representations respond to these purported crises” (2001: 9). In the wake of the crisis of 9/11, as with the crisis of Pearl Harbor, the ideological engine got revved up, its focus the manufacturing of difference. In the 1940s, it was the Japanese. In the post 9/11 era, the targets are Arab and Muslim U.S. citizens and immigrants.

This is not to say that “difference” is invented at that crisis moment since difference is deeply rooted in the very foundation of this country, in the conquest of the New World. In a telling acknowledgement of that foundation, Chief Justice John Marshall writes in a Supreme Court decision on federal Indian law in 1823:

We maintain, that the principle declared in the fifteenth century as the law of Christendom, that discovery gave title to assume sovereignty over, and to govern the unconverted natives of Africa, Asia and North and South America, has been recognized as a part of the national law, for nearly four centuries, and that it is now so recognized by every Christian power…Our claim is based on the right to coerce obedience… Without its assertion and vigorous execution, this continent never could have been inhabited by our ancestors. To abandon the principle now, is to assert that they were unjust usurpers; and (therefore) we should in honesty abandon it, return to Europe, and let the subdued parts again become a wilderness and hunting ground” (Newcomb 1993: 303-304).

During the 15th century, difference was manufactured in the name of religion. By means of ideological representation, the conquerors could demonize and thereby enslave the other.

During the 20th and into the 21st centuries, difference is manufactured in the name of protection. It is important to keep in mind that suspicion and fear are always held in reserve, waiting to be mobilized against the other in a time of crisis. The Japanese did not come under suspicion suddenly and only as a result of the crisis. As Cole reminds us, “Historians tend to trace the Japanese internment to anti-Asian prejudice spurred by the influx of Asian immigrants who came to work on the railroads. In fact, the roots extend back at least to 1798, when, inspired by fears that the ‘alien’ radicalism of the French Revolution might infect the polity here, Congress enacted the infamous Alien and Sedition Acts” (2003:91).

Like the Japanese before them, today’s Arab and Muslim residents of the U.S. are easily marked as the dangerous other. Today we have another case in which (quoting Eric Wolf) the “elite. .. extrapolates from the culturally available stock of ideas and practices a body of specifically ideological conceptions, which underwrite their claims to be masters in the struggle for the promise of an enhanced life” (Wolf 2001: 9). Once again, as Edward Said has described the process, “difference becomes an ideological infection” (1995: 105).

Labib Salama owns an Egyptian cafe in Astoria, Queens. Five nights after 9/11, his restaurant was attacked. Mr. Salama tells his story to researchers Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan.

It was...three o’clock in the morning...Four guys came smashing into the coffee shop. Two white American. Two Hispanic American, around the age 20 to 25. They break a lot of things...the windows, the mirror and all the glasses. We call the police. We don’t want to make more hatred than what we already have. I tell the police not to do anything. They say if I don’t press charges, they can’t arrest them. So the police let the guys go...We start to clean up the place. There’s broken glass all over. Tables everywhere. An hour later... and I see the four guys coming again inside the door. They came back to the café! For what? I’m thinking. It’s 4 o’clock in the morning. The first thing out of their mouths, they say, “We are sorry.” They apologize! They say, “We can fix for you whatever is broke.” They help us with the cleanup... We want to know why they do this to us? They said, “You are Arab. You are speaking the same language as bin Laden. We thought he is someone who belong to you...You have to understand our feeling. We are angry for the people who die. We are afraid, are we going to be next? Are we going to lose our way of living?” (2004:323-325).

Six months later, Labib reports that since September 11, he “lost 75% of (his) customers,” and he offers three explanations for the sharp decline in business: “People are scared to be seen in an Egyptian coffee shop; so many people lost their job, they can't spend money; and some of my customers got arrested” (2004: 326).

This story does not surprise us. History teaches us that once social groups are deemed dangerous and demonized, the conditions are then ripe for individuals within that group to become targets of mob violence and for being the objects of policies of exclusion and expulsion. History also teaches us that the demonizing process is a necessary but insufficient condition for genocide, a reason some people are now drawing comparisons between the current administration and the Nazi regime under German National Socialism.

Historian Raffael Scheck explains that “the implementation of Nazi policies against the Jews... proceeded carefully and in different steps. ‘First there was ‘restriction and segregation,’ then ‘expulsion and
exclusion,’ and ultimately there was ‘extermination’ (2004). On genocide more generally, Alexander Hinton explains that annihilation occurs “often after nation-states embark upon lethal projects of social engineering intent upon eliminating certain undesirable and ‘contaminating’ elements of the population. And the ‘manufacturing of difference’ is a critical aspect of these social engineering projects” (2002: 13).

The manufacturing of difference undergirds and goes hand-in-hand with legislation that, as noted before, “is principally -- and characteristically -- directed at non-citizens” (emphasis added). Together, legislation and ideology work to manipulate consent as “citizens” come to believe that the power elite -- the state as agent of enforcement -- is benevolent, protective, and acting in the best interest of the citizenry.

It is also characteristic for the legislation to be directed at non-citizens so that the door be opened to more firmly contain and control the larger citizenry, and to begin to chip away at everyone’s freedoms and rights. David Cole warns us, “first they came for the aliens, and then they come for us.”

It is with this understanding that we must look at the series of new laws, new rules, new practices and the proposals for new legislation that make up the larger effort. The following are some of these proposals and policies:

- Patriot II: Domestic Security Enhancement Act or DSEA. “In January, 2003, the DSEA was leaked to the press before it was introduced to Congress.” Patriot II (would legislate) “that anyone who supports even the lawful activities of an organization that the executive branch deems terrorist is presumptively stripped of his or her citizenship. (It would) dramatically cross the citizen-non-citizen line (and) literally turn citizens who are associated with ‘terrorist’ groups into ‘aliens’” (Cole 2003: 69). As I understand it, Patriot II is not on the table at this time.
- The Terrorist Information and Protections System or TIPS was designed to create a pool of 11 million volunteers to “spy on their neighbors.” This proposal never got off the ground.
- The Terrorist Information Awareness Program (previously named the Total Information Awareness Program or TIA). According to the AAUP, this “project aimed to develop technology to collect and search all the computer-accessible information about individuals that currently exists in the public and private sectors, including every electronic communication” (2004: 4). This project was proposed by the Department of Defense but was closed down in 2003.
- HR 3077, the International Studies in Higher Education Act. HR 3077 would create an International Advisory Board for Title VI programs - the funding source for area-studies centers in universities. The proposed legislation would establish a curriculum advisory board. About HR 3077, The American Council on Education states, “this advisory board sets a precedent for Federal intervention in the conduct and content of higher education. With apparently unlimited authority and no checks on the exercise of that authority, the advisory board is charged with functions that could place it in conflict with the Department of Education Organization Act, which explicitly prohibits federal interference in curriculum decisions” (2003).
- OFAC’s Informational Materials Exemption. The U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control “sent out advisory letters over the past year informing publishers that (it is forbidden to edit manuscripts) from a country under a trade embargo” (including Iran, Cuba, Libya, North Korea). As editor of North American Dialogue, I received several memos in early 2004 from Susi Skomal, Publishing Director of the AAA, to alert me and other editors about the U.S. Treasury warning that “editing manuscripts…from disfavored nations…may result in) grave legal consequences…on the ground that such tinkering amounts to trading with the enemy.”

In a very real and important way, it does not matter if the proposed legislation dies before it gets to Congress or to the Senate, or if a particular rule implemented by one or another federal agency is retracted once it has been announced and circulated as policy. Each proposal and the collective of these proposed laws give the power elite more control. We are being assaulted by an agenda not of our making. The citizenry is on the defensive, forced to react to each new proposition. Most people are too distracted to respond -- they are struggling to get through the day, or simply believe the propaganda. Still, people are defending against the assault. As of September 3, 2004, for example, Alaska, Hawaii, Vermont and Maine as well as 346 cities and counties have passed resolutions against the Patriot Act (BORDC 2004). The Bush administration’s campaign to intimidate, silence and manipulate consent made considerable headway as the country reeled from the shock of 9/11 and the USA Patriot Act was swept into law. We are now in the mode of assessing the results of the Bush offensive even as we anticipate the next round of assaults.
References for Legislation as Strategy


NAD Editor Alisse Waterston is Associate Professor of Anthropology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. She may be reached at awaterston@jjay.cuny.edu

PROGRAM PREVIEW:
Upcoming SANA Panels at AAA, San Francisco

Program Chair Dana-Ain Davis (SUNY Purchase) sends word that the following SANA panels and special events will be featured at this year’s AAA meetings on November 17-21 at the San Francisco Hilton and Towers:

- **Peripherals@thecenter.com: Inuit in Urban Spaces**
  The past two decades have witnessed a dramatic upsurge in the migration of Inuit/Eskimo people to urban and regional centers in Alaska, the Lower 48 States, Canada, Greenland and Denmark. This session examines identity construction, kinship and close social association, political activism, substance abuse and the culture of poverty among other issues, demonstrating Inuit engagement with modernity and the urban environment.

- **Shaping Place: Case Studies of Anthropology and Anthropologists as Agents of Change**
  This session examines the myriad ways anthropologists and anthropologists impact academia and the wider society. Cases presented will include the various ways in which anthropologists shape places, the strategies they employ and what issues of accountability and ethics need to be addressed.

- **Making Homes, Making Change: Honoring the Contributions of Carol Stack to Anthropology**
  On the 30th anniversary of the publication of *All Our Kin*, and in the wake of her retirement, Carol Stack’s students and colleagues come together to honor her contributions to anthropology and public policy and the ways these have inspired their own work.

- **Rethinking Exploitation: Imagineering Ethnography and Marxist Praxis Today**
  These papers examine structural violence caused by hegemonic dominance of imperialist capitalism and the largely unacknowledged rebirth of fascism today. They explore the current trends towards fascism, racial and sex disparities and segregation, and responses to poverty and inequalities through ethnographic work informed by Marxist and post-Marxist insights.

- **New York City Ethnographies**
  This session focuses on ethnographic research being carried out in New York City, exploring issues such as transnational mobility, risk, security, affluence, poverty, identity, diversity and the use of public space. The panel seeks to shape an agenda for urban research, and to help establish a cohesive network of urban ethnographers.

- **Ethnicity and Rationality, A Poster Session**

- **In The Name of Security: Anthropology in an Era of Surveillance (Special Event)**
  This roundtable discussion will focus on the impact of the Patriot Act on the people with whom we conduct research and on the entire enterprise of anthropology, including data collection, teaching, and affiliation. Topics include privacy and confidentiality, grassroots organizations, intimidation, and threats to academic freedom. The discussion will highlight specific consequences and emerging issues for the critical study of North American societies, with emphasis on new directions for research.

From video documentary Urban Garden: Fighting for Life and Beauty 2004, Liudost Productions
Jay Sokolovsky, videographer

Pictured is the Westside Community Garden being watered in 2002. The garden is in the same area on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, 89th St. between Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues, depicted in the photograph on page 10.
REPORT FROM THE FIELD
GLOBALIZATION AND TRANSFORMATION
AT A SOUTH TEXAS PACHANGA

By Margaret Dorsey

Abstract: The South Texas border town of Edinburg became the site of an extravagant social event attended by national marketers and executives from Ace Hardware’s corporate offices seeking to learn more about “Hispanic” markets and transborder sales. Local marketers transformed the parking lot of Broadway Hardware, a possible Ace partner, into a pachanga spectacle — a social gathering featuring music, fajitas, and more. Pachangas are a vital intersection of the local and the global, attracting people from Texas, Northern Mexico and the Latina/o diaspora in the U.S. to become customers. With profits on their mind, the corporate team extolled the benefits of a selective, open-door immigration policy for those with money to spend.

Keywords: “Hispanic” market, U.S.-Mexico border, consumption, migration policy, globalization, pachanga, music

In this report I focus on an extravagant social event that national marketers and corporate executives attended in Edinburg, Texas, to learn about increasing brand loyalty and selling products to “Hispanics.” In this way, my research stands out from other scholarly accounts of globalization, which emphasize local people absorbing global formats (see for instance, Wilk 1995: 110). I was fortunate to meet with agents at the historical moment when they themselves were figuring out new “ethnic” and “target” marketing strategies. The data on which I base my analysis were gathered in the course of an ethnographic study conducted in several periods over four years, from 1998-2001. My main sources consist of transcriptions of tape-recorded performances, archival materials, first-hand interviews, and observations of approximately 100 live events attended during the year 2000 presidential political campaign.

Teaching Ace: The Pachanga

Four days before Super Tuesday, 2000, I arrived at Broadway Hardware in Edinburg, Texas, just a block from the courthouse and town square. Two black vans with neon pink and green radio call signs stood at the front of the parking lot with speakers facing multiple directions. Beside the trucks, young men with microphones emceed the live broadcast in Spanish. Between Norteño songs, their rapid banter invited the community to join them at the Broadway Hardware Store pachanga, a social gathering featuring music and, in this case, a raffle and fajitas. Circling the full parking lot, I caught the glorious scent of marinated beef grilling over mesquite wood. I parked and walked toward the large blue-and-white-striped tent, which was filled with wrought-iron barbeque pits. Two trailers perched outside the tent were stocked with fajitas and “Cokes.”

Anxious to get away from the heat, loud music and smoke, I went into the store to meet the South Texas general manager of Broadway Hardware and representatives from Ace Hardware’s national field office and media marketing teams. I learned that this was not just an event to generate local, regional and transborder excitement about hardware, but also a display for Ace’s corporate office, which had sent a team of planners and marketers highly interested in learning more about Hispanic marketing and transborder sales. This live-music event was the grand finale of their field trip before returning to their regional and national offices in Chicago and Atlanta to begin implementing their new marketing directive.

Roberto Pulido -- a brand-name musician and brother of an elected county judge who was also involved to the event -- sat behind a table autographing a tall stack of glossy black-and-white photographs. He conversed agreeably -- primarily in South Texas border vernacular -- with whoever stood in line as he signed. He worked casually, but his long, bright-red Broadway Hardware apron signified that this was not a regular signing ceremony.

Attendents entered and escorted him outside for the celebrity fajita cook off. His competitor was an anchor for a local television station, Channel 5. Ace and Channel 5 had affiliated for this competition, and they would donate the proceeds to the station’s philanthropy, “Wednesday’s Child,” which collected money for a local orphan. Another Channel 5 newscaster was present to document the event for the viewing public.

While the celebrities grilled meat in the South Texas heat under multimedia scrutiny, the team of Broadway/Ace managers and marketers remained in the air-conditioned building animatedly conveying their plans to reach a transnational “Hispanic” market. The market they aspired to reach included consumers from Texas, Northern Mexico, and the Latino diaspora in the U.S., all identified by language, style, age, and buying power. The South Texas general manager demonstrated sociolinguistic awareness when he explained that old-style, general, mass marketed advertising no longer works; marketers must target. He pointed out that two radio stations and a cable television station were on-site at this event; one radio station targets the northern part of the region, the other the southern.

Rather than waste precious advertising dollars on a mass campaign, he said that Broadway (like most companies today; see Turow 1997) chose to be more strategic in marketing because it provides a “higher return on [our] investment.” As he explained that Broadway aggressively seeks consumers and does not depend on the corporate office to market to Hispanic shoppers, my eyes wandered over to the clerks handing out free T-shirts emblazoned with the Broadway Hardware logo. Sounding somewhat patronizing, the manager stated, “Broadway calls employees ‘family’” in “the tradition of Mexican culture,” adding that “style is critical to coming across to the Hispanic population.” According to this manager, style influences “the way
that you want them to really shop and become a customer of yours.” Thus, “the way you say things is crucial [within the Hispanic market].” He elaborated that “[when] advertising to the senior citizens [who are] very proud to be Hispanic -- formal Spanish is very important to them. Proper. No dialect.” In contrast, “younger” residents “have a lot of dialect.”

Such statements evidence an understanding that form matters. The manager explained that Broadway marketed with events like this “to attract a unique audience.” Pointing to the presence of radio station FM 96.1, he said that while “good will doesn’t touch the heart and soul of people,” music and branding through the radio does.

**South Texas:**

**A Poetic, Political, and Economic Geography**

My narrative of a live-music event differs in scope and approach from earlier work on poetics and politics in South Texas (Limón 1989, 1994; Paredes [1958], [1978]; Peña 1985, 1999) in several important ways. Those scholars focused on the role of verbal and musical artistry in forming a vehicle for expressing resistance to Anglo domination, highlighting the integral nature of music to Mexicano social life and music’s role in the animation of ripostes to a repressive system. I agree that music continues to play an integral role in the formation of a Mexicano political subjectivity and an objectifiable Mexicano identity. However, I do not agree that the system of domination -- now or in the past -- cuts crisply along ethnic lines. Economic interests and forces must be more closely considered. This said, some important elements have changed. When those scholars first conducted their fieldwork in the region, Anglos still held most dominant political positions. In Hidalgo County today, Mexicanos hold almost all of the public political posts. The county no longer operates through a rural economy. Rather, it is the third-fastest growing region in the country (U.S. Census 2000), infused with a cosmopolitan sensibility and booming with new construction. The output of border factories (maquilas) and implementation of global agreements such as NAFTA have significantly affected the local economy, poetics, and politics. Nonetheless, these large-scale factors alone do not explain the transformation in meaning and use of the *pachanga* -- once central to local politics, the constitution of political publics, and the maintenance of political authority.

The contemporary aesthetics of political practice and their relation to a significant restructuring in the economy are not merely passive reflections of the external forces of globalization. Today’s *pachangas* are shaped by a cross-fertilization of ideas. My focus is on the innovative ways in which South Texans’ attitudes toward these performances have adapted to new forms of global public culture, and on the ways transnational marketers’ attitudes toward forms of gathering native to South Texas have shifted in relation to their own versions of a global public sphere.

*Pachangas* themselves are vital intersections of the local and the global. In my fieldwork, I not only observed South Texans rearticulating the meaning and use of this event form, but I also had access to the agents who manufacture and coordinate global campaigns and imagery. Broadway Hardware invited Ace Corporate in order to pursue a partnership campaign geared toward a Hispanic market. Broadway’s general manager told me that the Ace team “from Chicago” was highly impressed with the Rio Grande Valley and that they were leaving with “a totally different view of specialty or targeting advertising.” They seemed surprised at Broadway’s “first-class and professional marketing and advertising.” For them, this was a learning expedition, and they were eager to discuss their plans and share their new knowledge.

I spoke with the Ace representatives at a time when the company was moving away from mass marketing and focusing on developing chains of regional connection. They were interested in reaching out from the centralized headquarters in Chicago and Atlanta to specific clusters of people by region and community. This strategy allowed the corporate groups to join and thus have more buying power -- the kind of partnership they were exploring with Broadway on this trip. Ace’s marketer and officer for the Eastern United States came to the Valley for six weeks preceding the event to check into these possibilities.

Members of the corporate marketing team were excited about their discoveries on this trip. They considered a couple of newly acquired concepts to be “a real education.” Their eyes widened when they informed me that more than 900,000 people resided in two cities in the Rio Grande Valley and that more than one million lived in Monterrey, Mexico. Monterrey’s numbers really excited this crowd. More specifically, I was told that Mexican shoppers spend “here” (on the U.S. side in the Valley), buy immediately, and take their goods back. They were impressed with how “very easy it is to get across [the U.S.-Mexican border]” and how “very quick [Mexicans are] to buy.” They learned of “affluent, wealthy” Mexicanos who come across primarily to shop with their special passes, permits that allow Mexican nationals to enter the United States for a brief stay, usually three days. “This really exciting new info” branded the minds of Ace’s team. They repeatedly affirmed their shock concerning the potential the borderlands held, especially when taking into account Mexican markets. As one national marketer said, “I didn’t realize how close Mexico is,” and “so many people, so close,” drawing out her emphasis by accentuating the “o” in “so.”

The idea that the border is “easy to get across” ties into Saskia Sassen’s (2000) discussions of globalization,
particularly her understanding of a NAFTA/WTO governmental paradox, which she explains strategically in terms of competing epistemologies. The paradox is NAFTA’s transnational/denationalizing goal of opening economic borders and the U.S. government’s nationalizing policy of more rigidly controlling borders. Here we see a strategic approach to the well-known fact that borders are wide open to those with plenty of money to spend. This illustrates a way that the government’s policy is selective -- favoring “the affluent, the wealthy” for entry.

**Corporate Pachangeros: Their Strategy**

Flush with conviction in their fresh awareness of the geography, population density, and potential buying power in the borderlands, the marketers’ conversation shifted to marketing strategies. Music emerged as a key strategic device. The team seemed to understand the formal power of music to elicit participatory engagement, and they realized that it also can index social gatherings and family occasions. As we enjoyed this pachanga, the team spoke generally of music, family, and musical brand names as central to their Hispanic marketing campaign. An individual from the corporate office chimed in, “I think music is going to be a part of it, but I don’t know how.” He speculated about “Roberto’s [Pulido] tremendous power” and reputation in “all markets,” offering that they need to see if they can “partner” to “solidify.” They liked the idea of partnering with Pulido because his “very strong family values” might help them “to capture a younger audience.” This public image aligned with another comment made by an Ace corporate visitor who added that part of their shift to target marketing will include talking to neighborhoods and family. A marketer highlighted the ties between South Texas and the Chicago area: “Aurora, Illinois is 50 percent Hispanic.” And they juxtaposed the style of interaction in Hidalgo County with that of Chicago, explaining, “People here are very nice, cordial, unlike Chicago.” On that note, the team disbanded, going outside to get fajitas and observe the contest and increasingly intense media coverage.

Jennifer Schmidt, the advertising supervisor, remained behind and continued to discuss how music could help Ace’s campaign: using music in sponsorship ties the company to the community and has the potential to draw many people. Music is connected to its strategy of using the brand to reach people at the grass-roots level. It relies on using the brand as name recognition to relate the national to regional to local and neighborhood levels. Presently, according to a Gallup poll Ace commissioned, Ace is at the top in terms of “mind awareness.” Ace is ranked third in brand recognition with hardware. She highlighted the point that, even though its advertising budget of $30 million is far less than Home Depot’s $100 million, the company is able to stay in the minds of consumers. Ace plans to develop more local-level promotions, such as this live-music event, in order to sustain its momentum and build loyalty and attachment to community. It “always” works to host something “like this barbeque,” which includes a few marketing elements: glamour; charity; draw; and music as part of the background. Using radio to broadcast music and event sponsorship appear ideal for increasing local-level brand attachment.

The concept of using music appealed to Schmidt because it “transcends” difference. She found music to be a useful marketing mechanism because it stands out, crosses barriers, and connects with “a culture within cultures.” She expressed a keen concern about the many styles of Spanish spoken in the United States and explained that music is an excellent remedy. “Audiences can be from any background and enjoy the music; for example, anyone can listen to Gloria Estefan and enjoy the sound.” She advocated ‘moving away from target into transcendent marketing in which ties open into ethnic markets.’ She predicted a clear shift. This tied into language, media and the high cost of producing transnational and multi-dialectal Spanish spots. They marketed a television spot internationally, and the voiceovers quadrupled the price of production. Television is expensive and charges for such services; in contrast, radio is “always free.” Due to the cost and challenge of Spanish dialects, they find the music-marketing concept appealing. It transcends dialects, and it relates to people from all over.

We walked outside, where Broadway’s costumed mascot chatted with us. The fajita vapors enticed our noses. Television crews surrounded Pulido and the Channel 5 anchor as they flipped meat, smiled and chatted. The radio vans blared in the background. We passed through the big-top tent filled with barbeque pits specialized for South Texas, and she observed: “These guys will be successful because of the time and effort put into the event. The key is enthusiasm. What you put into it [is] not really money but putting passion into it. These people have passion for what they do.” Broadway’s marketers and staff showed their passion by piling the event with attractions -- well known local and transborder television personalities, a celebrity musician, a raffle, a competitive celebrity cook off event, a filmed entextualization, and a charity -- making it more special and thus in keeping within the genre of a showbiz extravaganza.

Corporate talk of injecting passion into marketing underscores the importance of affect in eliciting participatory engagement. Passion clearly is a key ingredient to successful marketing -- and political -- campaigns, but the desire to make money -- and influence action -- frequently fuels that passion. The team of marketers came to South Texas to learn about live-music events and ethnic marketing, and carried back to their offices in Chicago and Atlanta a host of
I was looking for the administrative offices of a Fair Trade company in a small town in Massachusetts when I stumbled upon the open doors of a large warehouse. The space was crowded with pallets of merchandise; forklifts moved back and forth across the floor. When I finally found the offices next door, I found colorful, professional-looking marketing materials hung in frames next to line graphs of annual sales showing optimistic upward trends. Business was obviously being conducted on a large scale.

In the mountainous region of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, twelve American Fair Trade volunteers in muddy hiking boots and large backpacks climbed onto a bus for the beginning leg of their trip home. Mostly white, twenty-something college students, they had just spent ten days on a “fair harvest” trip. As the guests of small-scale coffee farming families, they had helped pick and process coffee, played with the children, and learned how to make corn tortillas over a wood fire. The trip had been arranged and partially subsidized by a human rights NGO, which expected that relationships the activists formed with their hosts would inspire and inform further work on behalf of Fair Trade.

Is Fair Trade a business model or a social movement? How can contrasting scenarios of bustling business and volunteer-driven activism be reconciled? Fair Traders in the global North, like many social theorists, often draw a sharp contrast between the impersonal but rational calculation of “the market” and the warm, personal spontaneity of non-market relationships. Evoking early economic anthropology (e.g. Mauss 1967) with its descriptions of gift exchange in contrast to rational market exchange, critics view overlapping spheres as evidence of corruption or hypocrisy. More recent
theorists (e.g. Reddy 1984) have pointed out that there is plenty of “irrational” behavior within the most “rational” of market economies, and that many gifting relationships also include elements of calculation. Yet, the difficulties Fair Traders encounter in incorporating aspects of both spheres demonstrate the continued strength of this ideological dichotomy.

My research examines how Fair Traders both oppose and operate within a traditional market model. Focusing on coffee, the single most successful Fairly-Traded product, I have spent numerous participant-observation hours as a volunteer for a number of different fair-trade groups, especially United Students for Fair Trade and Global Exchange. In January 2004, I spent two weeks as a “fair harvest” volunteer in Nicaragua under the sponsorship of Global Exchange. And I have done archival research reviewing publicity materials, newsletters, catalogs and websites of a wide range of American fair trade organizations. Here I will introduce a few of the many actors in the Fair Trade movement and then focus on ambivalences common among for-profit, one hundred percent Fair Trade coffee traders. I will end by posing some questions about Fair Trade’s ultimate potential.

Most Fair Traders in the global North say the movement has two main goals. First, it attempts to secure a better deal for Southern producers by eliminating intermediaries in the commodity chain and returning a higher percentage of the retail price to producers. The Fairtrade Labeling Organization (FLO) mandates that coffee growers from Central America must receive either $1.26 per pound or five cents more than the New York market price, whichever is greater. In general, Fair Trade coffee is retailed at prices comparable to gourmet coffee. The high profit-margins of the gourmet coffee industry make this product especially amenable to market restructuring (Dickinson 2003, Roseberry 1996). The second goal is to educate consumers about the origins of commodities. Information aimed at coffee drinkers frequently includes data about where the coffee was grown and the living conditions of the farmers who grew it. Consumers are often encouraged to feel they are becoming involved in a relationship, not merely making a purchase. Of course, attempting to encourage consumers to form “relationships” with brands and products, and even with producers, is a very common strategy among conventionally market-oriented companies as well (Klein 2002; see also Dorsey, this issue). Among fair traders, the ultimate in such consumer education efforts are tours to coffee growing regions such as the fair harvest trip mentioned above, and producer tours, which most often take the form of whirl-wind, nationwide speaking engagements.

Two additional points are important. Fair Traders only deal with small family farmers organized into cooperatives to avoid supporting exploitative corporate agriculture. Also, the ideal relationship between traders and producer cooperatives is a long-term commitment. At the very minimum, traders make a contract to buy the coffee one year in advance. Most Fair Trade companies, especially those in place before Fair Trade certification, try to establish much longer-term and deeper links. Relationships between traders and grower cooperatives are sometimes talked about as apprenticeships; here the ultimate goal is for growers to be able to do their own exporting, keeping an even higher percentage of profits for themselves.

Fair Traders are not a homogenous group; they come from a number of activist traditions. United Students for Fair Trade, for instance, is part of the recent wave of movements reacting to corporate-led globalization. Well-established NGOs such as Oxfam International and Global Exchange are involved in Fair Trade activism. Social service branches of churches such as Lutheran World Relief are also involved.

Fair Trade organizations are also diversely structured. The original Fair Traders were non-profits, founded in the years after WWII to aid war victims by buying and selling refugees’ handicrafts. In this paradigm, both traders and consumers considered themselves to be providing charity. In the late 1970s European traders began to trade in coffee, and around this time, the first for-profit Fair Trade companies were founded, moving farther away from the charity paradigm. An early for-profit Fair Trader in the U.S. was Equal Exchange, whose founders felt they could pose a more effective challenge to the mainstream market model by working within the for-profit paradigm. In 1997, a unified Fair Trade certification was created in the United States and Europe. Third-party certification of producer cooperatives allows traders to establish Fair Trade relationships with much less initial investment of energy. This has made it easier for conventional coffee traders to carry Fair Trade coffee. In the last five years, large companies such as Starbucks, Procter & Gamble, and Sara Lee have started carrying small lines of Fair Trade coffee. Today, Fair Trade is being conducted by non-profits, by for-profit companies which are largely or one hundred percent committed to Fair Trade, and by for-profit corporations with relatively tiny commitments to Fair Trade.

My work focuses on the situation of for-profit, one hundred percent Fair Trade coffee companies such as Equal Exchange. The relationship of this sector of Fair Trade to the market is uneasy at best. Awareness of contradiction is revealed in the motto of Equal Exchange: “a for-profit company with a non-profit mission.” Examples of specific areas of concern include advertising, competition, and for-profit status.

From one perspective, advertising is absolutely central to the mission of Fair Trade companies. Much
Fair Trade advertising attempts to educate consumers about producers’ conditions and to humanize the producers, using pictures of families and testimonials about the good that Fair Trade has done: children can go to school, families can buy medicine, farms can be improved. However, other advertising messages are also necessary because Fair Traders continue to fight a perception that the quality of their coffee is low. In the last decade, most Fair Trade coffee companies made a strong effort to raise quality, but a better product alone has not been enough to improve sales—it has also been necessary to advertise this high quality. There is disagreement about how much advertising is appropriate, however. Fair Traders are concerned about spending too much on overhead, both in the interest of public perception and so that the maximum profit can be returned to farmers.

Also, self-promotion through advertising sometimes comes dangerously close to the troubling realm of competition. Is it appropriate for Fair Trade companies to cooperate with one another like non-profits with compatible missions, or to compete like for-profit corporations? If they should compete, on what grounds? The premise of Fair Trade, that traders and consumers are paying a fair price instead of the lowest price they can, precludes the competitive practices of offering sales. Some Fair Traders have come up with alternate strategies. For example, early this year, a Massachusetts Fair Trade roaster, Dean’s Beans, sent out an e-mail to its customers which read, in part:

[M]any companies have signed on to carry Fair Trade coffees, which guarantee the farmer a livable price. Unfortunately, many other companies are rushing to slather their “business-as-usual” behavior with claims of friendly treatment to farmers, fair pricing, charitable donations, and a host of other “tradewashing” techniques... That’s why we have committed to a new program to raise the bar on trade justice and corporate integrity in our industry..... we are...paying an additional five cents per pound “social equity premium” and one cent “cooperative development premium” per pound roasted in each quarter. These premiums mean we are paying the highest Fair Trade prices in the country...

This advertisement contains several noteworthy elements. First, the author is careful to specify that his criticism only applies to those Fair Trade companies engaging in what he calls “tradewashing.” However, his specific technique, “paying the highest Fair Trade prices in the country,” places him in competition with all other Fair Traders. Second, trying to entice buyers by paying more to producers suggests an assumption that people buy his coffee primarily out of altruism. An exploration of the various reasons consumers might buy Fair Trade is not my subject here, but I will simply pose the question: if altruism is the primary motive, why this complicated half-involvement with the market? Why couldn’t consumers simply donate their money directly? In any case, the symbolic attributes of the product are clearly more important than factors such as price and quality.

Fair trade companies often feel ambivalent about being for-profit corporations. A few have taken steps against some of the potentially damaging aspects of for-profit corporate structure. A number are cooperatively owned. At Equal Exchange, the highest-paid employees may not receive any more than three times the salaries of the lowest paid, and though the company issues shares and pays dividends to shareholders, the shares are not publicly traded to protect against hostile take-over bids by profit-driven corporations which might then dilute the mission. At least one company, Dean’s Beans in Massachusetts, undergoes third-party social audits to verify that it is continuing to fulfill its social mission.

The high valuation of “the market system” is pervasive in the United States and around the world, but challenges to its profit-driven nature are growing at the same time. These challenges are not limited to purely anti-globalization movements, but include the call for more responsible forms of globalization that take into account concerns such as the environment, health conditions, human rights, the rights of women, children, and oppressed minorities, and labor conditions. Values related to all of these concerns are threatened by the corporate-led model of globalization and the exclusive focus on profit (Bakan 2004).

In asking about the relationship of Fair Trade to market ideology, it might be too easy to dismiss the small lines of Fair Trade carried by large multinational corporations as cynical public relations gambits, and non-profit Fair Trade might be seen as operating outside of the market altogether. But does for-profit Fair Trade have the potential to be a viable synthesis of this contradiction? Can an effective challenge to the market be developed from a community which is so entwined with many of the market’s very premises? On the other hand, how could a form which does not harness the self-perpetuating and reproducing power of the for-profit corporation ever gain enough power to challenge it?

The initial question of whether Fair Trade is a social movement or an alternative business model may not be the most relevant. As I have tried to show, Fair Trade operates in a space which both opposes and operates within the ideology of the capitalist market. Rather than grappling with the conceptual contradictions, it might be most productive to see Fair Trade as a new organizational form. Fair Traders begin with the familiar capitalist market and expand it, in the process undermining some of its most basic premises.
**References for Fair Trade and the Market**


*Carolyn Fisher is a graduate student in anthropology at CUNY Graduate Center. In addition to fair trade, her research interests include the historical construction of economic, political and environmental inequalities and their impacts on human health. She can be reached at cfisher1@gc.cuny.edu.*

---

**CALL TO PARTICIPATE**

**SANA Annotated Bibliography of North America A SEARCHABLE DATABASE:**

**By Matt Thompson**

SANA hopes to increase the visibility and accessibility of the field of North American anthropology through the creation of a searchable bibliographic database. The mission of this project is to gather information on current North American research so that it can be made available online for undergraduate and graduate students, professors, researchers and activists. We envision our database as a supplement to AnthroSource by providing additional editorial content on available publications. Finally, our project will be fueled by you, gentle reader, acting in self interest by offering submissions. SANA is counting on your participation to make this a success.

We begin by calling upon SANA’s PhD. and professional membership to submit annotated entries on their own publications with the prospect that this project could raise the profile of their articles and books through users’ citations and syllabi. To SANA’s graduate membership we ask that they provide annotations on the works most important to their thesis, dissertation, or other research. The bibliography will be made available for free download on the SANA website in the form of an EndNote data file as soon as possible. A free version of EndNote is available at [www.endnote.com](http://www.endnote.com).

To submit an entry, complete the required fields in the body of an email; you do not need to use an attachment or EndNote to submit your entry. As some emails make spacing difficult, please number the fields 1-5 to help us read your entry. Submit entries as often as you like and multiple entries in a single email are welcome. Send to sanaabna@yahoo.com with ‘submission’ in the subject line. If you have any questions or would to know more about the bibliography project write sanaabna@yahoo.com for more information.
Debt for Sale: A Social History of the Credit Trap
by SANA member Brett Williams

The following description of Brett's new book was issued by its publisher, University of Pennsylvania Press:

Credit and debt appear to be natural, permanent facets of Americans' lives, but a debt-based economy and debt-financed lifestyles are actually recent inventions. In 1951 Diners Club issued a plastic card that enabled patrons to pay for their meals at select New York City restaurants at the end of each month. Soon other "charge cards" (as they were then known) offered the convenience for travelers throughout the United States to pay for hotels, food, and entertainment on credit. In the 1970s the advent of computers and the deregulation of banking created an explosion in credit card use—and consumer debt. With gigantic national banks and computer systems that allowed variable interest rates, consumer screening, mass mailings, and methods to discipline slow payers with penalties and fees, middle-class Americans experienced a sea change in their lives.

Given the enormous profits from issuing credit, banks and chain stores used aggressive marketing to reach Americans experiencing such crises as divorce or unemployment, to help them make ends meet or to persuade them that they could live beyond their means. After banks exhausted the profits from this group of people, they moved into the market for college credit cards and student loans and then into predatory lending (through check-cashing stores and pawnshops) to the poor. In 2003, Americans owed nearly $8 trillion in consumer debt, amounting to 130 percent of their average disposable income. The role of credit and debt in people's lives is one of the most important social and economic issues of our age.

Brett Williams provides a sobering and frank investigation of the credit industry and how it came to dominate the lives of most Americans by propelling the social changes that are enacted when an economy is based on debt. Williams argues that credit and debt act to obscure, reproduce, and exacerbate other inequalities. It is in the best interest of the banks, corporations, and their shareholders to keep consumer debt at high levels. By targeting low-income and young people who would not be eligible for credit in other businesses, these companies are able quickly to gain a stranglehold on the finances of millions. Throughout, Williams provides firsthand accounts of how Americans from all socioeconomic levels use credit. These vignettes complement the history and technical issues of the credit industry, including strategies people use to manage debt, how credit functions in their lives, how they understand their own indebtedness, and the sometimes tragic impact of massive debt on some people's lives.

Brett Williams is Professor of Anthropology at American University. She is the author of Upscaling Downtown: Stalled Gentrification in Washington, D.C.
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 $25. ($10. students) annual membership fee.

NAME: __________________________________________________
AFFILIATION _____________________________________________
ADDRESS: _______________________________________________
ADDRESS: _______________________________________________
EMAIL: __________________________________________________

Society for the Anthropology of North America
c/o Waterston T433
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
899 Tenth Avenue
New York, New York 10019