

# FIELDWORK UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

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# REGIME CHANGE AT PRACTICING ANTHROPOLOGY

By Ron Loewe  
and Jayne Howell

For obvious reasons, I did not want our first issue of *Practicing Anthropology* to go to press on the Ides of March, but the people who set production schedules are, undoubtedly, less superstitious than cultural anthropologists, at least this one. Anyway, it is with a sense of optimism and a touch of trepidation that Jayne Howell and I release our first issue of *Practicing Anthropology*. We hope it is considered a good one, but please let us know what you think by writing to our new address at anth-pa@csulb.edu.

As our first order of business, we would like to thank the previous editors of *Practicing Anthropology*, Jeanne Simonelli and Bill Roberts for their stewardship of the journal, for giving us a quick tutorial in editing, and for lending Kristen Gentke from Wake Forest University to us for the time being. Jeanne and Bill, in our estimation, produced many interesting issues of PA, and we hope we can adequately fill their shoes. In any event, it seems as though editors are generally appreciated about as much as IRS agents or bill collectors, so we need to stick together.

As our second order of business, we would like to provide brief introductions, so our readers know who we are. Jayne Howell joined the faculty at California State University (Long Beach) in 1994. She is currently on sabbatical in Oaxaca, Mexico, completing her book *Rural Girls, Urban Women* on urban migration, schooling, and employment in this south-eastern state. In addition to her research on education, she has written about indigenous identity, US migration, domestic service and prostitution in Oaxaca, and domestic violence in the United States.

Ron Loewe joined the CSULB faculty in 2006. He has published a number of articles in small, effete journals like

the *Journal of American Folklore*, the *American Anthropologist*, and *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*. His mother, recently deceased, says all the articles are really good, but that he should learn the difference between a colon and a semi-colon. Hopefully, now that he is an editor, he will. He is completing a book on nationalism and identity in Yucatan entitled *Making Mayas into Mestizos: Nationalism, Modernity and its Discontents*.

We should also mention that Krystal Kittle, a graduate student of ours who is studying aging in the gay community will be working with us. Krystal is a talented artist and musician as well as a good anthropologist, and will help us copyedit the journal.

## Plans for Practicing Anthropology

Some things about *Practicing Anthropology* will stay the same for the foreseeable future. *Practicing Anthropology* will remain an editor-reviewed, as opposed to a peer-reviewed, journal and will continue to publish relatively short articles (3,500 words) on topics of general concern to anthropologists inside and outside the academy. We are interested in receiving case studies in medical anthropology, education, international development, tourism, business, etc., which address important substantive, ethical or policy concerns in the practice of anthropology. We also invite submissions relating to anthropologically-oriented program evaluation, social impact assessment, and cultural resource management as well as innovations in the teaching of anthropology. While articles do not require extensive citations, manuscripts should discuss the methodology or methodologies employed and should be well-grounded. We will continue the practice of publishing issues focusing on a particular theme (when we receive good proposals), but, as is the case with other journals, each article will

be evaluated individually. Finally, we strongly encourage submissions from practicing anthropologists as well as professors and students.

We are also contemplating some changes, but don't look for these in the first issue. One of the things we are considering is introducing a broader variety of submission categories: brief comments on articles that were published in earlier issues; book, museum exhibit and film reviews; anthropological humor, editorials/op-eds, or possibly a forum in which contemporary issues can be debated. These, hopefully, will stimulate an ongoing dialogue between readers of *Practicing Anthropology*.

In any case, we do not plan to shy away from controversy. In light of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Human Terrain System, there is a renewed interest in ethics in anthropology. As we begin our turn as editors, Terry Turner, professor emeritus at the University of Chicago, has proposed reinstating the language in the 1971 AAA statement of ethics that prohibited anthropologists from engaging in covert research or withholding research findings from the population from they were obtained. The Network of Concerned Anthropologists (NCA) supports the resolution. Most members of the National Association of Practicing Anthropologists (NAPA) oppose it. Wouldn't this be an interesting issue to debate in the pages of *Practicing Anthropology*?

## Fieldwork in Difficult Settings

While fieldwork has been fraught with difficulty since the beginning of modern anthropology, the present issue highlights new difficulties which have emerged in the wake of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Patriot Act and the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudice in the United States. In the first article, for example, Patricia Omidian, a medical anthropologist who has

lived and worked in Afghanistan for seven years, discusses the need as well as the difficulty of maintaining a clear boundary between her work and that of the military. Omidian's article also reminds us of the old adage that "truth is the first casualty of war," especially when the truth about negative maternal health outcomes implicates the U.S. military. Anyone who has followed the debate within anthropology about the Human Terrain System (e.g., the use of anthropologists in military brigades) or the emerging discussion of the Minerva Research Initiative, a DOD grant program to promote social science research in strategic hotspots like the Mideast, will find this paper of interest.

The paper by Tony Gaskew, a criminologist working in a Muslim community in south Florida, shows that you do not have to leave the U.S. to run into some of the same problems: suspicion, mistrust and expulsion. However, as Gaskew's piece demonstrates, even difficult obstacles to field research are

not insurmountable if one is open and honest about his background.

The article by Patricia Delaney, a former Peace Corp worker who developed health education programs in East Timor, provides another example of the personal side of fieldwork during a time of war. While most Americans are familiar with the atrocities carried out by Pol Pot in Cambodia, few Americans are aware of the violence and famine that claimed the lives of an estimated 200,000 East Timorese, nor the role of Indonesia and its US ally in this matter. Delaney's poignant recollection of the fear she felt for her former co-workers and fictive kin after she returned to the US, serves as a reminder that our ethical ties to the people we work with do not end once we leave the field.

Bruno Anili's study of the peaceful coexistence between Italian hosts and Kurdish migrants who settled in the coastal community of Baldolato demonstrates that immigration can sometimes have very positive outcomes for both

hosts and newcomers. In this case, Kurdish immigrants not only found an economic niche in a community where native Italians were leaving in large numbers, but are seen as an important social asset that can help the local community maintain its vigor and evolve.

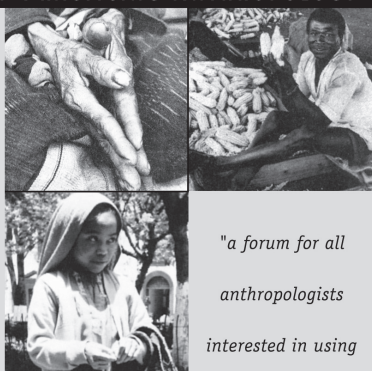
In a discussion of ethnic tension closer to home, Indira Rampersad discusses continuity and change in the attitudes of Cuban-Americans toward the U.S. embargo as well as the Island nation itself. Through an analysis of interviews with Cubans living in the United States and Cuba, she notes the emotional toll that travel restrictions have had on many families as well as the growing political diversity within the Cuban-American community.

Finally, we close this issue on a happier note by including Orit Tamir's paper of the Navajo-Hopi land dispute, a dispute which finally appears to have run its course after more than one hundred years.

*Ron Loewe and Jayne Howell* ■

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# LIVING AND WORKING IN A WAR ZONE: AN APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGIST IN AFGHANISTAN

*By Patricia A. Omidian*

United States military initiated a program to hire social scientists, and particularly anthropologists, for their wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This paper is a discussion of action anthropology as it has unfolded for me in Afghanistan from 1998 to 2008 and highlights examples from the field between December 2001 and December 2008. Through examples of my work as an applied anthropologist in Afghanistan I will show how the role of the anthropologist must be kept separate from any armed actors in the field in order to maintain ethical integrity, standards for proper research and the safety of those who are studied and of those who carry out the studies.

## Introduction

This paper is a discussion of action anthropology as it has unfolded for me in a region of the world that went from obscurity to the center of the world's attention in 2001 when the World Trade Towers were destroyed in the United States. By that time I was firmly entrenched in Peshawar, Pakistan, where I worked with both Afghans<sup>1</sup> and Pakistanis and lived with an Afghan refugee family. When I started working in the region in 1997 the US was not at war and Peshawar was a great place to practice anthropology because of issues around war, refugees and the dominant culture of the tribal Pakhtuns. I traveled and conducted research in Afghanistan from 1998 to 2001, before moving to Kabul, where I was based until January 2007. The data and experiences for this paper focus on the years (2001-2006) when I lived and worked in Afghanistan and include insights I have gained on return trips (2007-2008). I will examine how the ethical guidelines to which we in

anthropology hold ourselves give us access to and credibility in local communities through specific examples from my work there, as a way to address the problems of militarized anthropology.

Action anthropology, as delineated by Tax (1964) was an important contribution to the development of anthropology as a discipline. He advocated an approach that combined theory with practice—that one's work should be practical as it advances theory and that it helps solve local problems (Hill 2000). Public anthropology holds a similar perspective of doing anthropology for the public good, and not just for the sake of an academic career (Purcell 2000). These approaches highlight the need for applied anthropologists to work collaboratively with local populations to help them solve problems they identify as important. The Afghans with whom I worked identified "responses to violence" as one of the critical problems they wanted changed.

As an anthropologist it was important for me to stay neutral in order to work; therefore, I never carried a weapon, nor did I allow my staff or surveyors to be armed. When working in areas of high conflict, having weapons or armed guards can increase the level of risk to myself and those with whom I work. It sets up a power imbalance in the wrong direction when doing fieldwork. In Afghanistan where tribal and or extended family relationships matter, using a weapon to protect oneself can lead to a situation of subsequent retaliation. The only person a gun protects in this kind of situation is the person with the most guns or the person who can garner the greater support from others. It also creates a question among the beneficiaries of trust.

Applied anthropologists struggle to stay safe, build culturally appropriate programs and to speak for those who are without power or resources. The anthropologist, like the development



*Patricia A. Omidian*

or emergency aid worker, unlike the soldier or other military personnel, must depend on the largess and the protection of the local community. Militarized anthropology subverts our work and puts us on an ethical slippery slope. It also increases the danger to us as the local people with whom we work find it difficult to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, the soldiers and the civilian aid workers—jeopardizing personal safety and development work, while increasing the likelihood of future violence.

## Without Guns: Living and Working In a War-Zone (2001-2006)

After working with refugees in the United States for 12 years, in 1997 I traveled to Peshawar, Pakistan on a Fulbright Award. After completion of my Fulbright I remained in the region, sharing home and hearth with an Afghan refugee family. During this period I was employed through various consulting projects for international non-governmental organizations

(INGOs) and UN agencies, conducting research and designing culturally appropriate programs in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. I also traveled in Afghanistan under the Taliban, conducting participatory trainings and research in a number of areas, mostly in the rural central highlands. Working in Afghanistan under the Taliban had many challenges though safety was not one of them. For the most part, it did not feel like war because people seemed too frightened or disheartened to fight.

In 2001, I was working for an Afghan NGO that had development projects inside Afghanistan but was based in Peshawar when the World Trade Towers were blown up on September 11. Within days I was evacuated and sent back to the US to wait. I was in touch with my colleagues in Peshawar as they waited for the US to begin bombing. At that time most Afghans wanted the US and coalition forces to come to Afghanistan and force the Taliban out of their country.

By Christmas, I had returned to the Peshawar and flew almost immediately to Kabul to join my colleagues there. I lived between Kabul and Peshawar for the next 4 months, until I moved out of Pakistan and based myself in Kabul in March 2002. I continued to live with the Afghan family from Peshawar when they returned to their home near the airport in Kabul that summer. Over the course of the next two years I had the opportunity to conduct health and livelihood surveys, as well as trainings in survey methods and gender awareness in many areas of the country.

That first winter in Kabul was unforgettable as a time of great excitement, hope and the sharing of bittersweet memories. I shared my colleagues' pain and joy of returning to Kabul after their years of exile: joy at returning and the pain of seeing the nearly complete destruction of most of city: miles of bombed out buildings with whole neighborhoods destroyed. One of my colleagues cried as he pointed at a ruined three-story structure:

There! See what is left of my high school. When I was a student,

it was known as the best school in the whole city. Now there is no glass left in the windows and children can fall through the holes in the walls of the third floor.

We worked hard each day and spent each evening traveling around the city viewing what was left of their collective memories. The city of Kabul still had a ghostly feeling about it that first winter. There were few cars and almost no electricity. Yet, it was no longer the silent city it had been under the oppressive Taliban.

The painful memories were contrasted with the sheer energy and excitement of post-Taliban life. For example, as we traveled to a Kabul market for curtain fabric for our office, we were met by many women covered head to foot in the blue *chadari* (burqa) that became the center of world attention under Taliban. As I walked through the narrow alleyways of the fabric market, women would come to me, pull the cloth of the *chadari* back over their heads so that I could see their wonderfully smiling faces. Everyone shook my hand and asked me to come home with them for tea. This was a middle class area and the mood of the place was celebratory. Taliban had just left Kabul and Karzai arrived in their place. Hope was high and everyone was ready for change. In these areas the *chadari* was gradually abandoned, to become a symbol of class and village connections.

In December 2001 women, Afghan and foreign, traveled throughout the city without a headscarf, but by the spring 2002 it was clear that Kabul had become a very conservative and nervous city. By the summer even the most determined women in my office asked me to wear a headscarf when I was in public. Women's head covering became a topic of conversation at many expatriate gatherings. As the war increased in the south between the Americans and opposition groups, there were enough anti-government actions in Kabul to keep people from relaxing. A bomb that exploded in a nearby market injured one of our office guards. Yet, we all felt like we were contributing to a process

that was important, the rebuilding of a nation.

The biggest problem faced by the residents of Kabul was where to house all the returning Afghans. International aid workers can make do as I did, but local residents needed permanent housing. Kabul was destroyed, with many areas flattened by the internecine conflict that followed the departure of the Russians in 1989 and the collapse of the Najib government in 1992. The houses that remained were old, drafty and incredibly expensive—at over US \$10,000 a month in an exclusive area of Kabul called Wazir Akbar Khan, where INGOs traditionally had their offices. I lived in the NGO office where I worked; my bed was a cotton mat that would be stored during the day and brought out at night and placed by my desk. Middle class people struggled for places to live but returnees and the poor had no options. Housing was scarce; winter bitterly cold, summers hot and dusty.

Before my Afghan "family" could return to their home in Kabul they had to move the family that was there out and repair the place. This took most of spring. I continued to live in my office until summer, when they arrived from Peshawar—the whole family, parents and six children. I felt like I had a home again. Their home was near the airport in an apartment complex that survived the war. We lived another two years together before I moved into my own apartment. Adjustment was hard for all of us in the early days. The children struggled with a school system that was barely functioning, overcrowded and corrupt. Electricity in Kabul came regularly from March to July and then would fade to a 2-4 hour period every third day in winter. Heating was a problem in winter and I think I never warmed up between November and March. We did not have adequate heating for the first two years. I wore several layers of clothing and a winter coat indoors, adding gloves and boots when I went outside. Stories of people freezing were constant reminders of how difficult life was for the poor who lived without proper housing. Security

problems, curfews and robberies also impacted everyone's lives.

During this period I conducted a large survey for UN and the CDCs (Omidian 2002). In this survey I was mandated to do a qualitative study of maternal mortality issues in five districts where verbal autopsies were carried out by the quantitative team (cf. Bartlett et al 2005). The areas of study included remote villages with subsistence agriculture (Badakhshan), rural with access to urban markets or semi-rural areas (Kandahar and Laghman) and urban groups (Kabul). I did this survey as a project within the Afghan NGO where I was employed. With the help of the staff, we hired four surveyors, two sister/brother teams (Fatima and Nasir Khan, Rana and Kabir<sup>2</sup>). Fatima and Rana had survey experience. Nasir Khan and Kabir were to act as escorts for their sisters and to conduct surveys with the men in the villages we would visit. I trained the team in survey techniques, including participatory methods like resource mapping and time lines, semi-structured interviewing and observation. We also spent a great deal of time working on methods for recording the information. Because the areas we would be visiting were remote, we had to get the information the first time. We found that it worked best for them to work as teams, with one team member acting as interviewer and other as scribe/observer. For example Fatima, elder to Rana, was an excellent interviewer and Rana was quick with note taking and observations. We conducted the interviews in the morning and spent the entire afternoon each day writing up notes, discussing what was seen and done that day. The men would interview village men and conduct a mapping exercise in each village. I assigned Nasir Khan to head the survey team, giving him responsibility for logistics and our safety. I put more trust in his local knowledge than in UN security reports. As members of the NGO world, we would be traveling without guards or weapons; our protection depended on local knowledge and sometimes luck.

For four weeks the five of us traveled to remote areas of Afghanistan by car

with a driver from the NGO, seeing some places that are no longer accessible because of the escalation of the war. Our first trip was to a remote area of Badakhshan in the north. The area was breathtakingly remote and gave one the impression of being on the roof of the world. It was August yet each morning there was ice on the stream near where we stayed. We had so much fun that we believed the whole survey would be as easy. We were told there were security problems but we did not feel it. Our only problem was finding enough food to eat in the local village.

Our next stop was in the eastern province of Laghman, close to Pakistan. In the evening of our first night there, as we settled into a routine, the men went out to get water for cooking and washing. Fatima, Rana and I were sitting talking when we heard shouts and fighting beyond the wall of the compound where we stayed. I could not understand the dialect but it was clearly trouble. Fatima was close to panic as they listened to the voices. The noise increased then stopped. So did our hearts. Within minutes the men of our group returned, but things had clearly gone from bad to worse as our luck ran out. Nasir Khan had been stabbed. Fortunately, he blocked the knife with his arm or it would have been a stomach wound. He and the others had inadvertently stumbled across a robbery in progress—by men dressed as police. The driver and Kabir rushed Nasir Khan to the local hospital where his wound was bandaged. Because of the tribal issues in this war torn area, and because we were strangers, we did not want to take the chance of further violence, but we had to wait till morning before we could travel. After a sleepless night, we left for Kabul as soon as we heard the morning *azaan* (call to prayer). I cancelled the survey for this province. Nasir Khan healed quickly and was ready to travel again after a short rest.

The third province on our program was Kandahar, where we were to travel to Maiwand district with a UN staff person, a Japanese woman, to conduct more surveys. UN logistics for Kandahar chose the villages for us to visit.

Maiwand was dangerous even in 2002 and my NGO did not want us there, but we were assured that the US forces were in control. The first village we entered turned out to be about 5 kilometers from an Al Qaida training camp. Most of the village was empty, as families had relocated to other areas to avoid the fighting. Women who remained in the village took Fatima and Rana to a nearby hill and pointed out a place where a nomad camp had been bombed by US fighter jets, killing most of the men, women and children in camp. We could not verify the story but it sent chills through all of us in spite of the lovely fall weather. We conducted the interviews and mapping exercises and left for the long drive back to Kandahar.

The next day we visited another village, not far from a dried riverbed and across from vineyards that had died because of the very severe drought. Upon arrival we started to interview a group of women in a home when the Nasir Khan called us out of the house and told us to quickly get into the cars. We had to leave immediately. Once in the cars and on our way, he angrily told us that UN logistics had selected a village that was pro-Taliban and pro-Al Qaida. He overheard some of the village talking about kidnapping the UN woman who was traveling with us. Being Japanese, she looked like a Hazara woman, an ethnic group despised by the Taliban.

Our third day was no better for surveying. We were again told the village to visit and headed off on the long bumpy drive over dirt roads and riverbeds. When we arrived the place was deserted. The night before US troops had come to the village and arrested every male over 15, leaving only one old man and the pre-adolescent boys to guard all the women and children. The women wanted to talk to us so we conducted our interviews with them but left as soon as we could. There was the possibility of angry people attacking us out of frustration. This was truly and active war zone and we were intruders. I was feeling that each day's trip in this area was getting us into more dangerous predicaments. In spite of all the hazards, we had good data from Kandahar and

returned to Kabul. Security conditions in the south were already deteriorating by the fall of 2002 and, by 2005, only those traveling in armed caravans felt safe. In 2008, those would be targeted, as well. Each year Afghanistan moved toward more chaos, with fewer areas where roads were safe. I returned again to Laghman in 2003 to complete a different survey, yet, shortly after my visit the office where I stayed was bombed. By 2004, Laghman was far too dangerous and many NGO offices in that province were forced to close. Nationally, security continued to deteriorate, so that by 2006 Ghazni, a short drive from Kabul, proved too dangerous for AFSC staff to visit. In 2008, no road out of Kabul was safe. War and chaos had engulfed most of rural Afghanistan.

As areas became more dangerous for the delivery of reconstruction and humanitarian aid, because of the war, the US government and NATO increased their use of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), military groups that tried to engage in reconstruction activities, including the building of schools, clinics or water systems. Most NGOs (both local and international) worked hard to distance themselves from military actors, including the PRTs. It was standard procedure for NGOs to have signs on their offices and cars prohibiting weapons. There was an active campaign by the NGO community to try to discourage NATO from expanding the system, but it failed. It was important to signal a clear separation between military work (and even USAID) and civilian/non-governmental work. Although the idea of using the military to provide aid sounds like a good idea, it is removing the symbolic boundary that aid workers (and anthropologists) need to stay safe and which allows us to be seen by local communities as neutral. That boundary no longer exists in Afghanistan. The military bid for Afghan "hearts and minds" means that there is no longer a distinction between armed and non-armed actors. Afghanistan has since become one of the most dangerous countries for aid workers.

In 2004 I became the Country Representative for the American Friends

Service Committee (AFSC) in Afghanistan, a position I held until leaving the country in 2007. During that time I conducted numerous surveys and consultancies for other agencies, but AFSC's work focused on building schools in remote areas of the central highlands and in the mountainous northern province of Faryab. At this time the psychosocial wellness program that was developed (c.f. Omidian and Papadopoulos 2002; Omidian and Miller 2005; Omidian and Lawrence 2007, 2008) for refugees in Peshawar was expanded and tested in schools, rural communities and with interns from Kabul University. My greatest joy came when I would leave Kabul and travel to remote areas of the country, staying in villages and working with the people. We worked in areas where there were no PRTs actively working.

Shortly after starting work with AFSC, I moved into my own flat in an area of the city where no other expats (international workers) lived. My language ability and understanding of the culture, thanks to the seven years with my Afghan family, allowed me to pass as an Afghan who had returned from the west. This was important, not to confuse locals, but to allow me the security of anonymity in a city that was always insecure. Those who knew me, including all my neighbors in my apartment block, knew I was not Afghan. This period had its dangers and the international community was constantly bombarded with warnings of threats. My neighbors protected me numerous times by telling people who searched for "foreigners" that none lived in our area. I was again dependent on the local community for my safety.

As head of the AFSC office in Afghanistan, we followed the same rules as most aid agencies and did not allow guns on the premises. This occasionally led to problems, for example, once a consultant from the US, funded by US State Department, wanted to visit our office. I was looking forward to seeing her but the regulations for her safety as a US contractor demanded that she be in sight of her armed guards when traveling anywhere outside of her office

compound (which was actually on one of the US military bases in Kabul). Unfortunately we were at an impasse. No guns or soldiers were allowed in our compound and she was not allowed to enter if her guards did not come with her. We held the meeting elsewhere.

In another incident, thieves climbed the wall and entered our office compound in the night. Our unarmed guards were alerted and because of the noise they made, the robbers climbed back over the wall without taking anything. No one was hurt on this occasion. Our guards then asked if we would supply them with or allow them to carry weapons. As a Quaker organization, the answer was no. But we also breathed a sigh of relief that our guards were not armed when we later learned the robbers were part of the local police. They thought our compound was empty after dark and had planned to make a few dollars quickly. Had our guards been armed someone might have been shot or killed, which would have left our agency in trouble with the local government for wounding or killing police. Our office rule was that if armed thieves came into the compound to rob the place, our guards (local men with large families to support who make a low but steady wage) were instructed to not resist. We would joke and say that if armed robbers enter the compound, the only thing the guards would do is offer them tea, something Afghans do for any guest.

In the three years as the country representative for AFSC (2004-2007), I was able to travel throughout Afghanistan, conducting surveys on health, education and mental health. But the greatest joy was in working in remote provinces, trying to promote education and some form of change, as identified by local communities. This work was not without struggle. Yet, had we been armed, the trust we developed with local communities would have been altered. Most of these areas are governed by warlords with militias or traditional tribal leaders who have an armed following. Many NGOs in Afghanistan had stickers on their cars showing that there were no weapons in the vehicle. It was,

and is, important to distance oneself and one's agency from armed actors in any conflict zone. A few NGO workers with guns would not alter the situation in a positive way.

In the summer of 2006, I realized that I was burning out from the stress of security issues, a hard existence that included summer dust storms and freezing winters, limited electricity and water. At a deeper level it was the sense from all my Afghan friends of loss of hope in the future of Afghanistan that made

when I stopped jumping at the sound of a car backfiring, or at firecrackers, Pakistan, the place I ran to for security and safely, came close to being torn apart by the same forces that are destroying Afghanistan.

### Afghanistan 2007-2008

Something about Afghanistan and the resiliency of the Afghan people makes for an unbreakable cord, pulling me back again and again. The country-

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“Where some countries have cans and bottles littering their hillsides, Afghanistan has burned out and rusted tanks flanking roads, sitting under bridges and scattered like autumn leaves over a landscape that is barren and starkly beautiful, silent reminders of 30 years of armed conflict.”

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leaving easier. At the same time, I could no longer judge safety for myself or my office colleagues and friends, who were willing to put their lives on the line for me. There were several incidents where my local friends hid me, such as when Kabul erupted in violent riots that targeted INGOs. My staying could add to their risk. It was time to leave. Since moving out of Kabul in February 2007, I visited Kabul many times in 2007 and 2008. I now live in Karachi Pakistan, a place that feels modern and filled with liveliness. I took a faculty position at the Aga Khan University (AKU). Yet, while I was visiting Afghanistan for AKU at the end of 2007 Benazir Bhutto was killed and I had to extend my stay in there until the violence in Pakistan calmed down. My Pakistani friends told me to stay in Kabul until they let me know it was safe enough to return, about a week later. Life had felt normal in Karachi and just

side is devastated by the joint terrors of war and drought. Where some countries have cans and bottles littering their hillsides, Afghanistan has burned out and rusted tanks flanking roads, sitting under bridges and scattered like autumn leaves over a landscape that is barren and starkly beautiful, silent reminders of 30 years of armed conflict. The country is mountainous, arid and remote, and the people have been at constant war—wars that are local, national and regional, often at the same time. Afghanistan sits at the crossroads of trade and threat; currently India and Pakistan fight their battles there and Iran uses it to overstretch the US military by supporting the enemies of their enemy. The situation has become steadily worse, yet, I find I return to visit friends and former colleagues, trying to come in time to share in the Muslim holidays or Persian New Year.

The economy of Afghanistan also suffers from war, and is based on drug trafficking in opium and heroin. Corruption finds itself all the way to the highest levels of the government. In spite of the efforts of a few well-meaning nations, the country has almost no accountability or rule of law and remains in the control of warlords. There is an absence of justice or safety. In September 2008, I spent 5 days in Kabul and stayed with 3 families whom I have known for many years and talked to a number of others. At that time security was uppermost on their minds. Each family had a family member (uncle, cousin or son) or knew someone who had been kidnapped for ransom. Some were released, others killed. The kidnappings were primarily for ransom, and if money was paid, the victim was released to their family unharmed. These cases tended to be men in their later years who had wealth or attracted attention because of political status. One family was asked to pay three million US dollars, another US\$40,000. In a country where the average salary is less than \$50 a month, these kidnappings demonstrate a new kind of economic activity.

Even more frightening for families of the middle class were the kidnapping and murder of young men between the ages of 15 and 30. The boy or man would be taken while on his way to school, work or shopping for the family. Most were killed with the excuse that they said or did something against another ethnic or political (read ethnic) group. These occurred frequently enough that all families felt at risk. When one man (a distant relative of a family I stayed with) was kidnapped, his kidnappers told the story that he was arguing with someone and made a rude remark about Ahmad Shah Masoud—a war hero from the north. He was killed and yet his family did not find the truth until well after his body was buried. When the family went to the police to file on the case, they were told that their son was one of 171 missing youth in that area of Kabul city. These cases were the most worrisome because there was a feeling in Kabul that ethnic divisions

motivated many of the issues around security. Many felt that ethnicity was being used to divide various groups in Afghanistan and that the divisions were being supported by popular media and US/Karzai policy. People were afraid and openly talked about their fears.

Afghans, generally, were tired of the war and have been for decades, but there was a major shift since 2006 toward American policy in Afghanistan. Before this, people would complain but would add that the US needed to stay because the Karzai government would not be able to cope with all the problems. In 2008, they told me that the US was making the same mistakes that the Russians made years before. As I talked to people I found no distinction being made between ISAF forces, NATO and the US military. All were seen as making things worse not better, though people were afraid that if any of these groups pulled out of Afghanistan the results would be catastrophic. They expressed anger at the way the US continually failed to respect Afghan culture. The killing of civilians was unforgivable and played into the hands of anti-government groups (AOG). On this trip it was unclear which of the various groups people feared most: the Taliban, Al Qaida, drug lords, warlords, mafia groups or other powerful criminals.

Ethnic divisions became more pronounced and were used as an excuse to kill. Many people told me horror stories of the Kandahar/Kabul road, now too dangerous for anyone but the poorest of people to travel. There were frequent roadblocks and check posts with Taliban (sometimes Taliban dressed as police) where everyone was checked. They looked for signs that the person works for the government or an NGO. One method was to take the numbers from the person's cell phone to find where he works. When they found numbers of foreigners on the phone the owner of the phone could be beaten or killed. Also, members of certain ethnic groups were also at risk, including Hazaras and Panjshiris (those from the area where Ahmad Shah Masoud lives). Issues between Pashtuns and other groups have

become especially contentious along this route. People were worried but said they could not do more than adapt to these problems and get on with their lives.

I found the country growing steadily tenser as armed actors operate from every sector. The anti-government groups are fully armed, as are the warlords, drug lords and mafia groups. The government has its army and police, and has been arming local militias to help combat anti-government groups. Guns

to recognize the horrors of unintended consequences that result from our interventions, how much more so will this critique sit on those militarized anthropologists. I actively avoided weapons and grounded my work, my safety and the safety of my staff through a connection to the people with whom I worked. Trust is hard to establish but critical to any field endeavor. As an applied anthropologist I work for the people I "study" not for those who pay my way. To do otherwise hurts more than myself,

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“The US government has introduced a system called The Human Terrain System (HTS), in which social scientists, including anthropologists, work for them in Afghanistan and Iraq. The goal is to help the military understand local communities and to reduce the number of deaths.”

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are seen by locals as having become part of the aid sector as well, with more PRTs building schools or hospitals. Into this mix of military and para-military units, weaponry, factions and violence, anthropologists (and other social scientist) have stepped in to add to the confusion. Confusing non-military activities with military actors is a dangerous slippery slope, one that anthropologists must avoid.

### Militarized Anthropologists

The US government has introduced a system called The Human Terrain System (HTS), in which social scientists, including anthropologists, work for them in Afghanistan and Iraq. The goal is to help the military understand local communities and to reduce the number of deaths. Yet, if action anthropology is fraught with problems and has been criticized for an arrogance in failing

it also damages the profession and the anthropological position to “do no harm.” Peacock et al notes:

Anthropologists' engagements with military and intelligence agencies have the potential to damage relationships of trust with the people studied as well as the reputation of the discipline (2007: 17).

Because our work is grounded in participant observation and a dependence on those we study for our survival, I find the whole notion of a militarized anthropology to be inappropriate for many reasons. Leaving aside the whole question of the reputation of anthropology as a discipline, the first point one must consider is “who is being studied and what is the purpose of the study.” Interwoven in this is the whole issue of trust.

In Afghanistan, goals and beneficiaries were always clearly stated at the onset of any project. When doing the study for the UN in 2002, as described above, I and my team were paid through the UN on a CDC initiated study of maternal mortality (Bartlett et al 2005) with myself and my team doing the qualitative portion that looked at knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) (Omidian 2002). In Kandahar we found one unexpected cause of maternal mortality that was not liked by the agency funding the study. It was that US military action was a leading contributor to the death of women of childbearing age in the areas we visited. I was asked by my contact person in the UN in Kabul to remove this information from my final report, as it would upset the US donor. I refused. Consequently my study was not circulated with the quantitative study, though European and Canadian colleagues working in the area of maternal health were given the document. They were asked not to share it with Americans. As an anthropologist I felt an obligation to be honest regarding my data and to report my findings. It was not for me to censor my work for fear of insulting the donor; rather, it was important to give voice to those whom I had met and interviewed.

The purpose of the study was to understand maternal and infant deaths in rural and urban populations of four areas of the country. The information was to be used to develop culturally appropriate and critically-needed health care that would target the populations being served. As with most research, other information comes that is not expected and may even be unwelcome. What we do with that data is important. The reason for this study was to understand how Afghan women and their families tried to prevent deaths from occurring and how they dealt with it when it did. To know that military action was negatively impacting their chances of survival was important. As the anthropologist it was my task to help give them a voice so they can be heard. The Afghan agency with whom I worked needed to know, also, that I (an American) could be trusted to write that

information into my report. In the end it was about trust and intellectual honesty. Had I been working for the US military, I would not have been able to maintain either.

The second point in this debate relates to power configurations. How does the militarized anthropologist deal with the imbalance of power? When I enter a village, it is by local transport, whatever that might be, possibly by foot, donkey, horseback, jeep, car or van. But I come with a group of Afghan aid workers, by invitation of the local community or by a representative. I am not naïve and I know that there is a clear imbalance of power in any relationship I establish but those lines of power actually work both ways. The local community may or may not protect me, while I can leave when I want. The community can also ask me to leave, refuse to speak to me or invite me to stay a while. Based on what is happening around me, I can usually respond appropriately.

The HTS of the military works by different rules. Bickford rightly calls this a “use of anthropology as a weapon in counterinsurgency operations” (2008:5). He goes on to state:

While one may inadvertently cause harm through fieldwork, the problem with militarized anthropology and the HTS is the knowing, intentional use of skills and insights for combat, to trade in hurt and injury, wounding and death, fragmentation and destruction. Keep in mind that “counterinsurgency” is combat, and definitions of a ‘counterinsurgent’ is fluid (Bickford 2008:8).

If our task understand the day-to-day lives of people and we are to “do no harm”, how does a militarized anthropology fit our definition of anthropology? To enter a community as a member of the military, a person with power and the weight of the US army behind her/him brings about a level of power that the local person cannot act against—since any reaction can get them arrested or killed. The imbalance is so great that it is easy to overlook.

As the war in Afghanistan illustrates, the ally one day may become an enemy the next; roles are constantly shifting in a very malleable social landscape where families are complex social units. In order to survive each family has members who are communists, Mujahedeen, Taliban and anything else. The enemy of today may become the hero of tomorrow. A militarized anthropologist cannot carry out participant observation or even participatory research in order to understand the more subtle aspects of these family configurations. If she/he did, the information would be questioned, as the power inherent in the relationship between the community and the researcher overrides any ability of the community to offer a differing perspective. That terrain is fraught with danger for them and does not end when the anthropologist leaves. And this is where I think the greatest problem lies for the anthropologist who works as a member of an HTS team.

## Conclusion

As we work, we have to remember that our work can be used against the people we study. That is the nature of what we do and where we do it (Sider 2009). We have to do the best we can to protect those whom we study, with whom we share lives and to whom we owe our profession. Militarized anthropology is about a gross imbalance of power, as well as the subversion of a discipline that has an ethical challenge to do no harm as we work among those who may lack power in the global setting. The American Anthropological Association clarified its stance on this (though they did not go as far as I would have liked):

Our framework for evaluating the ethics of anthropologists’ engagement with US intelligence and defense communities is grounded in four basic principles: to do no harm; to provide disclosure of one’s work and role / not to deceive; to uphold the primary responsibility to those involved in one’s research; and to maintain

transparency, making research accessible to others to enhance the quality and potential effects of it as critique (Peacock et al 2007:14).

Any work an anthropologist does can be used against the community studied by those in power. Though we cannot control how our data is used once published, we can control how we maintain loyalty to the populations who share their lives with us. In this paper I have tried to give concrete examples of action anthropological techniques and applications in an active conflict zone.

Applied anthropology is aptly suited to help address peace-building processes, program design, implementation and assessment. As anthropologists we can offer a nation coming out of war insights into ways international programs can be locally adapted. Participant observation affords us the opportunity to understand people in the way that other aid workers cannot match. The anthropologist tries to understand things from the local point of view and this is our biggest contribution. I cannot list all the times I had to let someone know that the word for a person from Afghanistan is Afghan and the money is Afghani. And that Afghans do not necessarily dislike their daughters but if you ask them in Iranian Farsi how many children they have, in Dari the same words ask how many sons. Sometimes the information is as simple as how rude it is to slam a door. But it all comes together to allow for program development that meets culturally specific criteria.

Fieldwork carries risks when it is conducted in developing countries, but when working in war zones or areas of continuing conflict, the risk is increased. There is always an imbalanced relationship, but we can overcome some of that by how we work and what we want our work to accomplish. What we as anthropologists have to offer development work in these situations is enormous. It is through the anthropological lenses of observation, comparison and cultural relativism that the applied anthropologist can bring critically needed insights to program development and

implementation. We live in a community and become part of them, building a platform of mutual trust.

In the declared "war against terror" many ethical standards (including human rights and freedom from torture) have been set aside. Militarized anthropology is just one more in the long list. This is a slippery slope that reminds me that the damage may not show right away. Yet, I have not doubt it will come back to haunt us. I was speaking at a seminar in Karachi in December 2008 when I was asked to explain why anthropologists helped the British subjugate the Sub-Continent and then worked against the Muslims. This man was referring to the way social anthropology was introduced and used in the first half of the twentieth century, but his question was fair. Just as those who were perceived to support colonialism in British India, the militarized anthropologists will be seen to act on behalf of the army they serve and not for the good of the local community they study.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The people of Afghanistan generally refer to themselves nationally as Afghans; Afghani is the name for Afghanistan's currency.

<sup>2</sup>Not their real names.

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# ARE YOU WITH THE F.B.I.?: FIELDWORK CHALLENGES IN A POST 9/11 MUSLIM-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

By *Tony Gaskew*

This article is based on my experiences as an ethnographer and criminologist conducting sixteen months of field research among a Muslim American community in central Florida studying the impact of the USA PATRIOT Act, and highlights the unique challenges and obstacles facing researchers conducting participant observations within Muslim communities in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11. Establishing and maintaining trust and credibility with research participants has always been the foundation upon which fieldwork is built. For ethnographers engaged in research within Muslim American communities today, they must overcome various hurdles, including a deep sense of mistrust, alienation, fear, and potential issues of national security.

## Background

On September 11, 2001, I was a major crimes detective working at law enforcement agency in central Florida. It began as any other normal day, that is, a normal day in a police culture. I was reading through a telephone wiretap transcript and taking some notes in preparation for a criminal complaint on a drug investigation I was conducting, when a fellow detective and co-worker entered the office and yelled, "we're under attack.... Muslims bombed the World Trade Center and the Pentagon... what are we going to do?" I immediately turned on the office television monitor and watched in amazement as the events of 9/11 unfolded before my eyes. Four airplanes had been hijacked, two crashing into the World Trade Center, one into the Pentagon, and a fourth had crashed into a field in rural Southern Pennsylvania, just a couple hours away from the University of Pittsburgh campus where I work today as a professor of criminal justice.

It is very difficult for me to describe my emotions as a law enforcement officer witnessing the World Trade Center collapse to the ground like a deck of cards. In my eighteen-year law enforcement career I had never experienced a more helpless feeling in my gut, and I've witnessed my share of indiscriminate and shameless acts of violence in my life. Within minutes, my emotions ran between a cloudy fear and a deep uncontrollable anger. Were we going to be attacked again? Who was responsible and more importantly, what could I do to help? I said to myself, "Is this really happening?"

Over the next several weeks, various media pundits' began offering their opinions on the religion of Islam, presenting religion as "the primary motivator for the 9/11 attacks." As well, my fellow police officers did not have a single positive thing to say about Islam. Every law enforcement agent I knew, regardless of race, gender, or ethnicity, shared my feelings of anger and fear towards Islam. An FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force was formed and we began to encourage citizens to report any "suspicious activity." Hundreds of tips were called into our community hotline describing anyone who remotely shared Middle-Eastern physical characteristics as being "suspicious." Many of these "suspects" were in fact innocent career-oriented professionals: engineers, doctors, and professors, whose only crime was to have a Middle-Eastern physical appearance and name. I thought to myself, "Things might be getting a little out of control. Are we really going to waste our resources surveilling anyone who looks Muslim? Are we (police) doing more harm than good in our counterterrorism mindset?"

As was true of many of my law enforcement co-workers, what I knew of Islam was primarily from word-of-mouth, counter terrorism training, and the media. None of these are unbiased or credible sources of information on



*Tony Gaskew*

Islam. I had never gone to a library and conducted research on Islam, read the *Qur'an*, or even visited a mosque, yet I was making opinions based on my fear and anger. This lack of knowledge and understanding towards Islam ate away at me, creating more of an impact than I ever could have imagined. To fill this intellectual void, on January 2002 I enrolled at Nova Southeastern University to complete my doctoral studies, with the goal of focusing my research agenda on understanding Islam and the events of September 11, 2001. I felt compelled to examine the complexities of Islam from my own perspective as a law enforcement agent.

## Introduction

According to the Council on American-Islamic Relations 2007, an estimated 6-7 million Muslims reside in the United States. However, conducting research within Muslim American communities

can pose unique challenges for ethnographers. Historically, cultural immersion has provided ethnographers with the ability to engage in participant observation and develop what is called an "emic perspective," or the ability to see the world through the eyes of the group being studied. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Muslim communities in America, faced with varying degrees of public and governmental scrutiny, have all but closed the doors for researchers regarding true cultural immersion with the community. For criminologists like myself who have practical experience in the profession of criminal justice, using ethnographic methods exposes me to unique risks that include legal, emotional, and ethical dilemmas.

I discuss here my experiences as a criminologist and former law enforcement agent conducting ethnographic research among a Muslim community in Florida in the aftermath of 9/11. Establishing and maintaining trust, respect, and credibility with research participants has always been the foundation upon which fieldwork is built. Ethnographers engaged in research with Muslims living in the United States, may find this a daunting task. Today, researchers must overcome various challenges, including a deep sense of mistrust, fear, and potential issues of national security.

### The Setting

From August 2005 through January 2006, I conducted fieldwork in two separate Muslim communities within central Florida, through participant observation and interviews with both indigenous and immigrant Muslim American community members. My field research took place in various social settings throughout the community, such as mosques, community centers, homes, places of business, picnics, restaurants, and shopping centers. The focus of my study was to examine the social conflicts facing Muslim Americans in the aftermath of 9/11, and to provide insight on how the USA PATRIOT Act impacted the relationship between law enforcement agencies

and Muslim American communities. Although statistically speaking, the majority of Muslims in the United States are indigenous African-American, my research participants were predominately immigrants of South Asian and Arab descent (Table 1). Although my participant observation included countless interactions between men and women, only a handful of my interviews were conducted with women; difficulties of interviewing women were largely due to the customs and cultural nuances of the population, which prohibited me from engaging in one-on-one contact with female participants unless a male escort was present.

### Confronting My Own Role as a Researcher

Prior to accepting a faculty position at the University of Pittsburgh, I spent the majority of my professional career as a law enforcement agent in Florida. My assignment to the Organized Crime Task Force in central Florida during September 2001 involved managing "covert" criminal investigations, which included the use of electronic surveillance (wiretaps). Although my previous

career had no direct correlation to my current research agenda, it did trigger a series of questions I was forced to confront during my study. As a researcher, I often wear three distinct hats: as a criminologist, as a social scientist, and as an ethnographer (though not always in that order). Each has its own unique role in my research agenda. I firmly believe that in order to understand the hidden nuances of group behavior and social relationships, one must use experiential immersion to examine the subjects being studied: a sort of criminological *verstehen*. For criminologists however, the use of ethnographic methods of inquiry can be both exhilarating and frightening. Unlike traditional researchers, criminologists with practical experience in the field of criminal justice often face ethical conflicts arising from their loyalties to their professional duties and their responsibility to protect the rights of research participants.

One of the first issues I faced in my study was the concept of open and honest disclosure. What if the research participants were curious about my background and began to inquire about my life before entering academics? Should I tell them the truth and possibly

Table 1. Participant Demographics

| Variable           | Number (n)  | Mean (%) |
|--------------------|-------------|----------|
| Participants       | 443 (total) |          |
| Immigrant          | 381         | 86.1%    |
| Indigenous         | 62          | 13.9%    |
| Gender             |             |          |
| Male               | 434         | 97.6%    |
| Female             | 9           | 2.4%     |
| Ethnicity          |             |          |
| Caucasian-American | 6           | 1.4%     |
| African-American   | 39          | 8.8%     |
| Hispanic-American  | 23          | 5.2%     |
| South Asian        | 207         | 46.7%    |
| Arab               | 155         | 34.9%    |
| Guyanese           | 6           | 1.4%     |
| Iranian            | 4           | .9%      |
| Sudanese           | 2           | .5%      |
| Bosnian            | 1           | .2%      |

ruin my chances of finishing a very promising research project, or rather brush off such inquiries with a nod and a smile? More importantly, do I have an ethical obligation as a researcher to fully disclose my previous career if I'm aware it could impact the voluntary nature of participation in the study? In this post-9/11 climate where the lives of Muslims in the United States have come under such intense law enforcement scrutiny, surely some of my participants would choose not to involve themselves in this research once they were made aware of my former law enforcement career. I found myself in a unique situation as a criminologist, an ethnographer, and a former law enforcement agent, with little or no guidance from previous research conducted under similar conditions. In the end, I decided to be truthful about my law enforcement career if asked, even if it resulted in the project's demise. From my perspective, effective long-term fieldwork that examines the lives of "vulnerable populations" must be based on trust, respect, and credibility, all of which would have been jeopardized had I decided to be less than truthful. Although I lost a few participants as a result of my decision, I reaffirmed the confidence of my "gatekeepers" who were ultimately responsible for my successful immersion into the community.

### Gaining Entrance into the Community

One of the first things I discovered conducting field research in a Muslim community in the United States is the importance of having steadfast gatekeepers. In contrast to ethnographers who conduct research abroad, the difficulties face when trying to gain entrance into US subcultures is less frequently discussed in monographs. However, since the attacks of 9/11 and the increased law enforcement directed toward Muslim Americans, I have realized that Muslim communities have become extremely weary of "unfamiliar faces" that suddenly appear at the mosque for daily prayers. Establishing and maintaining a continuous series of "gatekeepers" become a requirement

when conducting fieldwork within Muslim American communities today. In fact, as I reflect on my 16-month journey, my relationship with my many gatekeepers later formed into friendships, which extended far beyond what my fieldnotes could ever reflect.

My initial contact with the community was made through a scheduled visit at a mosque in central Florida. After with the *imam* (spiritual/community leader) and explained the basis of my research, he referred me to a Muslim American community leader who was a professor at a local university. Several days later, I met with the professor for several hours, and the meeting actually turned out to be an in-depth examination of my background. This meeting was the first of an on-going series of tests regarding my honesty and desire to build and maintain a sense of trust with the Muslim community, which I faced throughout the duration of this research project. Without being prompted, I explained in great depth about my past as a former law enforcement agent. Although at times this became somewhat uncomfortable given the current social climate and my aggressive ethnographic research agenda, it was also refreshingly honest and required a unique sense of personal vulnerability as a researcher. I was well aware that my former law enforcement career could negatively impact any chance of completing this project, because I could easily be perceived as a "government spy" trying to gather intelligence within the community. After a series of questions about my ethnicity (because the professor initially thought I might have been Egyptian), the professor laughed and commented, "You can't make-up this kind of stuff...a former cop wants to experience first-hand how it's like to be a Muslim after 9/11...yes...I will introduce you into the community." Within the following weeks, he personally introduced me to several well-established Muslim Americans who resided in the area, who in turn introduced me to other Muslims throughout central Florida resulting in a "snowball" effect for producing new gatekeepers. These contacts enabled me to establish

fieldwork location sites throughout central Florida. I also contacted the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a nationally recognized Muslim civil rights organization. After first establishing telephone contact, I personally met with representatives of CAIR, and after presenting my research agenda, they assisted me with making several contacts within central Florida, specifically an established Islamic community center. Islamic centers in America have become an extension of mosques, providing a community center setting, sponsoring various religious, social, and educational venues. Activities such as weddings, lunches and dinners, mentoring and sports activities for children, and parenting and marriage counseling classes are held at Islamic centers. Upon a gatekeeper's referral, I visited an Islamic center in Orlando, Florida and began to establish relationships throughout the community. These gatekeepers provided me with ready-made credibility, and it would have been impossible to conduct this research without their direct and continuous intervention.

Prior to entering my first fieldwork setting, dozens of telephone calls were made by my gatekeepers to local Muslim community leaders requesting their "support" for my research project. As one of my gatekeepers explained to me, "you have a choice...you can either conduct your research by showing up unannounced and having the entire community treat you as an outcast, or you can humbly request the blessing of a few key people and be granted access to the community." After a couple of weeks in what seemed like a contract negotiation, I was informed they would allow me to conduct fieldwork at the local mosque and other settings in the community, providing I did not use any video or audio equipment to record any conversations. Since the IRB at my university prohibited the use of any electronic recording devices during my study anyhow based on the rationale that that Muslim Americans in the aftermath of 9/11 were a "vulnerable population" by IRB standards, this request posed no foreseeable problems. Although the use of fieldnotes as my

only data collection instrument was a tedious and time consuming process, I was left with few options. Several of the community members also required verifiable proof that I was a researcher and doctoral candidate, and requested a copy of my university transcripts and research proposal outlining the purpose and methodology of my study. I was told several of the Muslim community leaders wanted to ensure my project had no hidden agenda or that it would not be used to spread misinformation regarding the practices of Islam. Since part of my IRB mandate required that I provide business cards containing my contact information and the contact information of my university IRB to all potential research participants, I strongly encouraged everyone involved in the study to verify my status as a doctoral candidate and to closely examine the research project agenda.

### Problems Obtaining Informed Consent

During the onset of my fieldwork, I discovered the majority of my research participants, based primarily on the credibility of my gatekeepers, were somewhat comfortable with my presence and were initially cooperative in allowing me to conduct field observations and brief interviews at the mosque and Islamic Center. However, as I began to immerse myself into the community and attempted to conduct more structured and in-depth follow-up interviews that required participants to sign an informed consent form (an IRB mandate from my university), I received a

completely different reaction. I learned the participants associated signing the informed consent with the interview process conducted by government officials under the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS), or what is commonly referred to as "Special Registration." Under NSEERS, all foreign nationals from countries whom the State Department and the INS determined to be an "elevated national security risk" were required to undergo mandatory fingerprinting, photographing and interviews. As such, "Special Registration" ultimately led to the questioning and deportation of several immigrant Muslims who resided in the area, creating a climate of fear and mistrust between law enforcement agencies and the local Muslim American community.

Within a matter of hours after attempting to secure a signed informed consent form from a research participant, I was contacted by a Muslim community leader and informed that I was no longer welcome at the mosque or any other community sponsored activity, and that they were formally withdrawing their support and participation from the study. I was immediately informed by one of my gatekeepers that several members of the community suspected that I was never a researcher, but in fact an F.B.I. Special Agent attempting to cultivate "police informants" within the Muslim community and conduct surveillance on the mosque. Although I was very empathetic at first, given the Islamophobic environment many Muslim Americans are forced to deal with after 9/11, however, I quickly became somewhat angry because of the

underlying message of this accusation. I asked myself "What's the big deal... if they're not doing anything illegal, what's there to be worried about?" Who cares if the F.B.I. or any other law enforcement agency is conducting surveillance on the members of the community?" By then, I had provided copies of my research proposal, college transcripts, the personal contact information of everyone involved in the study, and subjected myself to what seemed like a background investigation. I had answered every question posed to me, and agreed to every stipulation required by community leaders; however, I could not overcome this sense of fear and mistrust projected toward "outsiders." At this point, there was very little I could do to convince them of my official status as a researcher and I was prepared to abandon the project. One of my gatekeepers insisted that I not give up, and explained to me the refusal to sign the informed consent was a reflection of their deep sense of fear and lack of trust in people since the events of 9/11 and added, "by requiring their signatures, you implied that either you did not trust them, or they should not trust you." It was at that moment I finally realized the how politically charged the climate had become for Muslims in America. As my research findings suggested, one of the primary social conflicts Muslim Americans face today is to overcome an environment of discrimination, alienation, fear of law enforcement, and a loss of respect, honor, and dignity as a result of the USA PATRIOT Act (Table 2).

The events of September 11, 2001 created a social climate for many of my

*Table 2. Social Conflicts Facing Muslim Americans in the Aftermath of 9/11*

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| To confront and take a self-critical and introspective look at traditions and systems of belief in relation to extremism and violence within the practice of Islam. | To resolve long standing ethnocentric attitudes and practices between immigrant and indigenous communities. | To overcome an environment of discrimination, alienation, fear of law enforcement, and a loss of respect, honor, and dignity as a result of the USA PATRIOT Act. |
|---|---|--|

research participants where their definition of "trust" was being transformed both internally and externally, which was reflected in their transient identities as Muslim Americans. The wounds of 9/11 run deep for Muslims in the United States, as they have been forced to examine their own Islamic practices and historic sense of *ummah* (Muslim community) in the backdrop of a less than forgiving world. It is important for researchers to understand during periods of crises, Muslim Americans have begun to "close ranks" in order to regain their sense of trust and security. Although my participants were gracious hosts and provided me sensitive perspectives on their unique worldviews, "outsiders" would always be perceived as "outsiders," and I was an "outsider." Fortunately, my gatekeepers were unwavering in their friendship and their commitment for the successful completion of this project. My initial gatekeeper, the university professor, contacted several of the key Muslim community members and personally vouched for me jeopardizing his credibility and reputation in the community. He emphasized the benefits to the community of not only completing this type of research endeavor, which brings to the forefront the concerns and voices of Muslim Americans regarding the impact of the USA PATRIOT Act, but the hypocritical tone it would set to pick and choose who would be allowed to examine the nuances of Islam and the lives of Muslim Americans. After a few days of meetings between key community members, I was once again allowed to continue with my field work and began to immerse myself into the community.

### The Liberty City Seven

During the course of the study, a small group of Muslims law enforcement authorities labeled as "The Liberty City Seven," was arrested in South Florida, and accused of plotting to destroy the Sears Tower in Chicago and other landmarks in the United States. During the next several months, additional arrests of Muslims were made in California and New York for alleged terrorist plots. The days immediately following the arrests in

Florida were very tense in my fieldwork setting, as word spread throughout the community that a "Muslim informant" had led to the investigation and subsequent arrests of fellow Muslims. Based on my fieldwork experience, nothing can be more devastating to the "*assabiya*" (social cohesiveness of the community) than to discover "one of their own" is a party to acts of tribal betrayal, regardless of the circumstances. Many participants silently shared their disgust with me regarding the actions of this "police informant" insisting that as a Muslim, he should have been more pious and committed to dialogue, persuading his "brothers" from committing acts of violence against the United States instead of assisting the police. As one participant explained, "the most pious thing would have been to understand why these brothers felt violence was their only option...not to just stop this single act...but to prevent this mindset from spreading into multiple acts of violence." Other participants felt these high profile arrests were simply a "hoax" invented by the U.S. government to belittle Muslims.

These incidents triggered another set of issues regarding national security that highlighted the complexities of ethnographic fieldwork among Muslim Americans. I began to ask myself, "What if during my fieldwork I observe or overhear what I believe to be "suspicious or unusual behavior?" Although ethnographers have been successfully navigating through "shark infested" fieldwork settings in the United States saturated with drug trafficking and violent crime for many years (Anderson 2000; Bourgois 2002) issues of national security are creating new concerns.

During my fieldwork, members of the Muslim community often described the United States government and President George W. Bush in aggressive and very unfavorable terms, and openly described their anger, bitterness, and frustration with American foreign and domestic policy towards Muslims. I should clarify that both indigenous and immigrant Muslim participants shared a belief in a government inspired "siege" on Islam. That is, African-American and Hispanic-American participants

were just as vocal in their passionate criticisms of the U.S. government as were immigrant participants. In fact, I heard a similar type of frustration and anger directed towards the U.S. government during a Fulbright-Hays research project I participated in over the summer in Egypt. I spent the majority of my fieldwork in Cairo, Luxor, and Alexandria conversing with members of the Muslim Brotherhood (an organization outlawed in Egypt) who did not bite their tongues when describing their bitter contempt for the U.S. government. However, in this case, these Muslims who shared their angry perceptions of the U.S. government were Egyptian citizens on Egyptian soil. The question becomes, how much anger can Muslim Americans direct towards the government of the United States or the president of the United States before it crosses the line into matters of national security? What about crimes uncovered during fieldwork settings such as immigration violations? What is my legal obligation to report these situations? In this politically charged environment does one's loyalty lie with the protection and well being of research participants or with the safety and security of the United States? I lived with this quagmire throughout a year and a half of very intense fieldwork, and was prepared to make some difficult choices if confronted with this ethical dilemma. However, I learned you can have the best of both worlds. As my brothers who are currently police officers in Chicago have always reminded me, "once a cop, always a cop." Thus legally, my loyalty lies with the national security of my country. If I were to have overheard a terrorist plot (which I did not) my loyalties would have fallen on the protection and safekeeping of the greater community and innocent American lives. I would have terminated the study, regardless of the findings or the amount of time invested. As a criminologist, social scientist, and ethnographer, my loyalty must lie with the protection and wellbeing of my research participants. Even at the risk of being stigmatized as a "traitor" by some of my law enforcement colleagues, I

must provide a safe and secure platform for my participants to share their most intimate perceptions of Muslim life. As citizens of the United States, regardless of their place of birth, Muslim Americans have the legal right and freedom to harshly criticize the government and all of its elected political figures, including the president of the United States. As criminologists involved in ethnographic research, we must recognize our own roles in this process, and find a happy medium between our legal, emotional, and ethical loyalties. I understand that in a post-9/11 world, the lines between national security and research ethics might become cloudy and tough on the spot choices will have to be made. If ever these two worlds collided and one is forced to make a decision, I would hope a researcher would choose to abandon the project. No study, regardless of the possible outcomes, is worth crossing the line into matters of national security or betraying the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants.

### Conclusion: Finding the Right Balance

On January 21, 2009, Barack Obama was sworn-in as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America. During his inaugural address President Obama stated,

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals....we are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and nonbelievers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth....to the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.

My conversations with Muslim American friends, fellow colleagues, and students at the University of Pittsburgh echoed a consistent sentiment of praise and the admiration for President Obama's speech, seeing it as a "new chapter" in how Muslims will be perceived not only in the United States but globally. I can only wonder how many "closed doors" President Obama

had opened in just a matter of seconds for future researchers seeking to examine a plethora of uncharted topics within Muslim communities across the United States.

As noted throughout this article, the aftermath of 9/11 can pose unique challenges for ethnographers. This essay provided a number of insights into the dynamics of fieldwork in post-9/11 Muslim communities. For criminologists, finding the right balance between professional and academic loyalties is essential. This in-

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“As criminologists involved in ethnographic research, we must recognize our own roles in this process, and find a happy medium between our legal, emotional, and ethical loyalties.”

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volves knowing your role in the research process, and understanding just how far you're willing to go in order to successfully complete the project and protect the study participants. I decided that in order to be an effective ethnographer, I would have to confront my own legal, emotional, and ethical fears. At the same, I understood my limitations, and was prepared to end the project rather than to jeopardize the safety and security of my country or my research participants. My goal is to continue to examine the post-9/11 social complexities facing Muslim Americans, and to encourage other criminologists to embrace the unique challenges of using ethnographic fieldwork during their research journeys.

### Acknowledgements

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# WHO BURNED DOWN OUR HOUSE THIS TIME?: ETHNOGRAPHY & CONFLICT IN TIMOR LESTE

By Patricia L. Delaney

## Introduction

The Timorese Ministry of Labor estimated that over 175,000 people (out of a total population of roughly 1 million) resided in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in May 2007. These camps, which sprung up in the immediate aftermath of political violence in May of 2006, provide shelter, food, and security to children, women, and men in every district of this small country. Hundreds of Timorese, and a handful of foreigners, have been killed. Thousands of homes have been burned to the ground. Victims of rocks, Molotov cocktails, spears, and traditional poisoned arrows appear regularly in the National Hospital in the capital city, Dili. Families, friends, and neighbors have been torn apart in a cycle of violence, house burning, score settling, and revenge. Whole sections of the country, as well as specific neighborhoods in Dili, are "no-go zones" for people from specific regions.

Even before the current crisis, life in East Timor was difficult. According to the UN Development Program (UNDP), the country has the lowest human-development in all of Asia. Even compared to developing countries such as Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar, Timor is disadvantaged. It is by far the poorest country in the region, with a per capita income of just \$370 per year. The average Timorese person can expect to live only to the age of 55.5 years. Over 50% of the population lacks access to clean drinking water. Fully one-third of women between the ages of 15-49 are malnourished. 64% of people experience food insecurity in an average year. Over 50% of both men and women over aged 15 are illiterate. The cumulative result of these numbing statistics is a situation in which as UNDP put it:

"although politically the country is free, its people remain chained by poverty." Similar sentiments were expressed by a rural village chief in 2003 who told me, "*Labele han demokrasia.*" (You can't eat democracy.)

Security is maintained by a small force of Australian "peacekeepers" and a slightly larger contingent of UN police officers. The level of violence fluctuates but most foreigners have been warned to "defer non-essential travel to East Timor" (which is just government speak for "don't go unless you have to.") The Timorese themselves, of course, continue to suffer tremendously from forced and self-selected displacement, the daily terror of gang violence, and persistent fear that they will never be able to create a secure environment in which economic and political development can happen. Needless to say, it is difficult to do ethnographic fieldwork in these conditions, and things are infinitely worse for the Timorese people themselves.

## Methodology and Reflection: The Anthropologist's Lived Experience with Conflict and Displacement

This discussion stems from a variety of both "academic" and "applied" research experiences in Timor Leste, starting during the period immediately after Timorese independence in 2002.<sup>1</sup> Prior to independence, Timor Leste had been colonized by the Portuguese (from 1515 to 1974); occupied by Japan during World War II; and then brutally occupied by Indonesia (1975-1999). The Japanese occupation of East Timor, from January 1942 to August 1945 was relatively brief in duration but particularly brutal in execution. The Japanese killed over 60,000 Timorese civilians, or almost 13% of the total population, as punishment for their collaboration with Australian commandos during



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World War II. Some elites, including Portuguese, *mestiços* (people of mixed Portuguese and indigenous Timorese ancestry), and members of the Chinese-Timorese minority, escaped to Portugal or Australia just before the Japanese took over in Timor.

After World War II ended, Timor returned to Portuguese control, and became independent in November 1975. Just one month later, the Indonesian army invaded East Timor, killing thousands and sparking a cultural and political movement which came to be known as the resistance. The invasion took place at the height of the Cold War and the Indonesians used the rationale of "stopping the spread of communism" in their backyard. It now appears clear that the United States, which had provided Indonesia with most of its weapons, provided at least tacit approval for the invasion. Many US, Australian, and Timorese scholars describe the Indonesian period as "attempted genocide." (Jardine: 2002)

In April 1976, the United Nations urged Indonesia to withdraw and declared its intention to continue to consider East Timor as part of Portugal. The massive resistance movement grew

and guerilla troops successfully fought off more than 40,000 Indonesian troops. Within Timor, the resistance movement continued unabated for the duration of the Indonesian occupation. Although the Indonesian government claimed that only a small minority of Timorese people supported the resistance, the later referendum showed just the opposite to be true.

After decades of struggle, the Timorese finally had an opportunity to express their own opinion about the future of their country. On August 30, 1999, the UN held a popular consultation about future of East Timor. Despite fear of repression, reprisals, and violence from the menacing presence of the anti-independence militias, the Timorese turned out in overwhelming numbers to vote for independence. After the vote, the Indonesian-backed militias engaged in a campaign of terror. Hundreds were killed and over 250,000 Timorese were forced across the border into West Timor. Approximately 50% of the infrastructure in the country, including electrical wires, telephone services, bridges, and schools are destroyed in the militia violence.

After the triumphant return of resistance leaders, and with International Peacekeepers guaranteeing that Indonesian rule would not return, the successive UN administrations sought to help the Timorese begin to create a new nation. The political elites, many of whom had been in exile abroad, came back to Timor and assumed important positions in both the government and the UN administration.

Despite the fact that they joined together to fight the Indonesian occupation, the many indigenous groups in Timor have maintained their autonomy and independence.<sup>2</sup> Connections to one's ethnic/linguistic group, clan, and lineage remain important even today in Timor Leste. Although some inter-marriage has happened, especially in Dili, most people maintain a strong ethnic/cultural identity based on their region of origin.

Average Timorese, former resistance fighters, and those who remained in Timor during the occupation (instead of going into exile), did not benefit as

much from the immediate post-referendum period. Most were unemployed and many felt left out of the economic and political development of the country. The decision to utilize Portuguese as a national language, which fewer than 10% of the population speaks, particularly rankled. The combined legacy of so many decades of violence, repression, and resistance and the post-independence challenges combined to set the stage for the current violence.

### First Fieldwork in Timor Leste: Applied Anthropology from 2002-2004

I first went to East Timor in late 2002 as the Associate Peace Corps Director. My job was to develop health education projects in rural areas. My husband served as a UN Volunteer in the Ministry of Environment. We lived and worked in the country for eighteen months. It was an exciting time, full of the promise of a newly independent country that had long suffered at the hands of occupying powers. Like many other expatriates in the country at the time, we felt privileged to be participating in the birth of a new nation and we quickly developed a real affinity for the people and cultures of Timor Leste.

At the same time, it was often challenging both for us and for our Timorese colleagues. The Indonesian militias had destroyed most of the country's infrastructure when they departed in a rampage in 1999. The new nation lacked roads, bridges, telephone wires, irrigation systems, schools, and even electrical lines in many places. Jobs were scarce and many people suffered from tropical diseases. The Timorese were excited about the idea of being independent, but had little experience with actually governing. The UN assistance mission, which was supposed to help the Timorese transition to independence, was a bureaucratic behemoth, full of people from dozens of different countries with at least as many ideas about how to set up government structures. The end result was often confusing, sometimes frustrating, and never boring! In a one-month period,

three different transportation advisors recommended three totally different traffic patterns for the capital, Dili. One day the street in front of our office was a typical two-way affair. The next week it was one-way going one direction. A few weeks later, it was one-way going the other direction! Almost everything was like that.

The security situation in the country was precarious. Foreign peacekeepers, UN Police Officers, and a variety of other military officials patrolled regularly. Many of our Timorese colleagues still seemed shell-shocked. The trauma was recent; one Timorese friend vividly described the psychological damage as "scabs, not scars." Everyone had horrific stories of displacement, gang rape, torture, and other atrocities at the hands of the *bapa* (Indonesians) but most didn't talk about it openly. It was only after you got to know someone that you learned things like how many times their house had been burned down.

And yet, most *malaes* (foreigners) felt safe. We snorkeled and ate at Thai restaurants (although we did avoid the "unexploded ordinance beach"). I walked to work or sometimes took a local taxi. We saw evidence of past destruction everywhere, but like most other *malaes* (and many Timorese elites), we got caught up in the optimism, hope, and excitement of independent Timor. We presumed that all of the violence was in the past, attributed virtually all of the blame to the Indonesian militias who ransacked the country in 1999, and saw the Timorese people as passive victims who needed our help to rebuild the country.

I was working as an applied anthropologist and I found that ethnographic methods were a great help in my work in the "*forro*" (the hinterland). I spent much of my time in the countryside interviewing traditional leaders, and trying to identify communities that would be ready to work with future Peace Corps Volunteers on public health projects.

Back in Dili, my husband and I moved from our first expatriate house to one that was more integrated into an actual Timorese neighborhood. We

increasingly spent our free time not with *malaes* but with our Timorese neighbors. We became especially close to our landlords and eventually developed what anthropologists refer to as a “fictive kin relationship” with them. After the death of one child and the birth of another, we were asked to become godparents to their youngest son. We maintain a close friendship with his family and have a deep sense of responsibility for his welfare.

### Post-Independence Euphoria

Although we work with Peace Corps took us away from Timor in early 2004, my husband and I continued following the country’s progress and spent much of the next year trying to figure out a way to get back. Just a little less than a year before the most recent crisis, an article in the New York Times Tourism section quoted an aid worker saying: “I feel like it is becoming safe here and tourism is about to take off in the next 10 years. We can say we were here at the beginning” (New York Times June 5, 2005). The very fact that the country was featured as a tourist destination confirmed what most foreigners thought: the United Nations “experiment” in East Timor was seen as a success. In virtually everything written from 2001 to 2006, East Timor was cited as “the model UN success story.” Dozens of papers, books, policy

summits, and internal UN documents heralded the huge investment of the international community and declared that the Transitional UN administration and the subsequent “capacity-building” with the Timorese civil service had succeeded in preparing the Timorese people to manage their own government, civil society, and economy.

### Return to East Timor: Preparations for Return and Expectations of Normalcy

In early 2006, I was awarded a Fulbright grant to teach at the National University and conduct ethnographic fieldwork. The country had continued to develop. The international peacekeepers had mostly departed and the security situation had remained calm. The Peace Corps and other development agencies were expanding their presence. Our friends sounded optimistic, hopeful, and less stressed than they had been between 2002 and 2004. I was thrilled to be returning and anxious to examine the positive changes happening in the country. I e-mailed Timorese colleagues at the Peace Corps asking for shopping lists. The young women in the office asked for lotion from Victoria’s Secret! It was a great example of the globalizing power of the Internet. It also seemed to be an encouraging sign about the beginning of normalcy in Timor. The fact that these women, all of whom had been

displaced during the Indonesian occupation, could not only use the Internet, but could also focus on lotion, seemed like a huge accomplishment.

After the grueling trip from the East Coast of the US, I finally arrived in Dili. Ms. Kristy Sword Gusmao, the Australian-born First Lady of Timor Leste was on the small plane with me. She saw me tear up as we landed, and when I turned to her and said “welcome home,” she quickly replied “you too.” It did feel like I was coming home!

I went to live with “our” Timorese family. This time, instead of living in the big rental house, I moved into a room in the grandmother’s house. The symbolic move from *malaes* (foreigner) to honorary *oan* (child) was satisfying and important. The fact that my husband had not accompanied me was beneficial to my research. I was quickly drawn into daily life, meals, and household work. I participated as an honorary family member in ceremonies, memorial services, and the funeral of the family patriarch. And, as it turns out, I ended up having a front-row seat at the beginning of the most recent political crisis in Timor Leste.

In the first few weeks, I was largely optimistic about the progress in the country. My key informants, both in the family and in the *forro* largely concurred. Table 1 reflects these thoughts as I summarized them in my April 19<sup>th</sup> fieldnotes.

Table 1. Perspectives on Change

| Pros (in 2006)  | Cons (in 2006)  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Better Communication Systems</li> <li>▪ Better Electricity</li> <li>▪ Some new bridges, road repair</li> <li>▪ People don’t seem afraid anymore (not that previous high level of anxiety), although still easily spooked</li> <li>▪ Less uncertainty about everything (roads, phones, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Fewer <i>malaes</i> advisors; more empowered Timorese</li> <li>▪ Oil Money</li> <li>▪ No UN police/people still feel secure/less talk about security</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Corruption (Prime Minister’s nephew)</li> <li>▪ Roads in Dili (Prime Minister’s nephew had contract to repair)</li> <li>▪ No jobs, no economy to speak of</li> <li>▪ Military unrest (among Timorese military force)</li> <li>▪ Fear of refugees returning from West Timor/people have not forgotten</li> <li>▪ One party state</li> <li>▪ Confusion <i>nafatin</i> (continues) about local government roles and responsibilities</li> </ul> |

The Timorese seemed lighter, less burdened. There was a nascent middle class. In contrast to earlier days, restaurant patrons included Timorese too. People were hopeful and the country seemed to have turned a corner. And then, almost literally overnight, a political, military, and security crisis erupted and shattered the hopes and dreams of the Timorese people (and the international community who supported them) once again.

### Ethnography in the Midst of Conflict (April 2006- July 2006)

Although I had not intended to do ethnographic research during an armed conflict, I found myself nervously watching national television with “my” family as the head of the army, the prime minister, and, eventually, the president all tried to calm peoples’ fears in the lead-up to the crisis. I checked in several times each day, and made sure we had stockpiles of food and water on hand. Eventually, I stopped going out at night and started interviewing everyone I knew (both Timorese and *malaes*) about the crazy rumors that were circulating.

At one point, I helped some members of the family evacuate preemptively to a relative’s home in the hills above Dili. Most of the older people stayed behind. They said they wouldn’t leave their house *again*. They had done it too many times. Over the weekend, virtually every Timorese person I talked to expressed abject fear. Most seemed terrified in ways that seemed completely out of proportion to what I perceived to be the threat level. Rumors circulated wildly about the government, the military, smuggled arms, and infiltrators from Indonesia. The *malaes* community seemed to scratch its collective head. The English word I heard over and over again that weekend was “over-reaction.” More than one thoughtful political analyst wondered aloud if the Timorese “know something that we don’t” or if they were just “*tauk tein*” (easily frightened).

The conflict simmered for quite a long time before it erupted into the

chaos of IDP camps, marauding gangs, and the renewed presence of international peacekeepers on the ground. On Sunday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006, on what turned out to be the night before the flashpoint event, I explained the situation in the following way on my web blog:

**The Troubles:** Those of you that have been following BBC will know that there have been a few tense days in Dili. Approximately 1/3 of the Timorese defense force was dismissed over one month ago. They were protesting what they called discrimination. The government called them insubordinate. They’ve been staging (mostly) peaceful protests ever since. This week was different. They marched on government house for four days in a row. On the fifth day, something seems to have snapped.

Everything is calm now and foreigners were never targeted...but rocks were thrown at government buildings; a few government cars were burned; and some thieves took advantage of the chaos to rob and steal. More importantly, the Timorese were also traumatized (again) and many ran away to the hills, to the U.S. Embassy, and to the various church compounds. The television news tonight (Sunday, April 30<sup>th</sup>) broadcast a message of calm from the Prime Minister and then showed a very depressing montage of images of fleeing people, burning markets, and police officers crying in frustration. All the while, John Lennon’s ‘Imagine’ was playing in the background. (Delaney blog: April 30, 2006)

Just two days later, I was forced to evacuate the country. Of course, as it turns out, the Timorese were right and the *malaes* were the only ones caught completely unawares by the rapid disintegration into violence and chaos. I spent much of the North American



*Need Caption Here*

summer hoping to return and continuing my work via email and telephone. My “fieldnotes” (written from my house in the US) demonstrate the incredibly high level of the anxiety, uncertainty and fear among the Timorese (and the anthropologist).

**5/25/06:** Lucia sounds happy, relieved—almost excited. Australian troops have landed and everything will be fine. Kids are fine. Ivete is fine—even joked that she was worried about me coming! They saw the planes and the flood-lights...gave them confidence that everything would be ok.

**5/26/06:** Spoke with Lucia: She’s scared and was crying. They are at the convent and are saying that people are at the gate, threatening to come in if they don’t give up 1 individual...Asked me to call Ramos-Horta and ask for help (and I am sitting here eating an English muffin!).<sup>3</sup> Foreign soldiers have arrived...but fighting continues...*malaes* go right, shooters go left.

**5/30/06:** Lucia and kids still at Tia Madre’s (convent)...sleeping on the veranda; kids are sick; down to \$30 because she bought shoes for First Communion....cried and laughed and told me about rumors—*ema Lospalos*

(people from Lospalos) saying that they will attack if Alkitiri (Prime Minister) is fired; Peace-keeping Forces not doing much; don't know where people are.... nobody is working and stores are all closed....returned to house for the first time today....doesn't see a solution or a way out. I cried and talked about options for sending money and for possible escape to Indonesia (cheaper than Australia)....said people are still getting across the border with money... less talk of violence or threats to the compound.

I was alternately heartbroken, horrified, and incredibly frustrated by what felt like impotence. I wanted to do something. Because I was so far away, I focused almost exclusively on the impact that these events were having on 'our' family...and I worked to help them psychologically, physically, and monetarily.

### Participant Observation During a Lull in the Conflict: Impacts and the Discourse of Blame (July 2006)

I was able to go back briefly in July, for a heart-wrenching 3-day visit. Because the U.S. Embassy had evacuated all Americans back in March, they only permitted me to come in for a short "trip." Unlike my flight in March, this one was not full of optimism, hope, and words of encouragement from carefree political leaders. Instead, the flight was full of *malaes* colleagues doing the same thing that I was by taking advantage of the lull in the crisis to return to collect belongings, wrap up our affairs, and say our goodbyes. After the tears of reunion at the airport, we drove by one of the largest IDP camps right next to the airport. I was shocked by the hundreds of white tents and seemingly endless array of burned out houses along the road. Needless to say, the anxiety that I felt was minor as compared to the suffering of the Timorese people.

I learned that all of my former colleagues from the Peace Corps had been

displaced from their homes. Two of the three women who just last year were casually asking for lotion from the United States are now all unemployed and living in regionally segregated IDP camps. The third woman is in exile in Australia with her three young children. Another colleague, the main driver for the Peace Corps, was living in the office because his house had been burned to the ground. His wife and several children had escaped to their native village in the East, but he stayed because of his sense of duty to the Peace Corps Volunteers. His eldest daughter, who had been living with him in Dili, moved to the IDP camp near the airport because they wanted her to finish the school year.

Lucia and her children finally moved back to their looted (but un-burned) house in early August. Her mother, the matriarch of the clan, defiantly remained in her home throughout the chaos. They all seem tired, depressed, and anxious. Rumors abounded and most folks seemed to be strategizing about ways to leave the country. Just as in past crises, the middle class and elites are thinking about exile in Portugal, Australia, or even Indonesia.

The evidence of physical violence, looting, and burned out houses was everywhere. Everyone I met (whether friend, colleague, or just acquaintance) wanted to tell their personal horror story. A casual acquaintance, a young man who worked as a waiter at a restaurant often frequented by *malaes* and elites, pulled me aside at breakfast and asked, "*Mana* (Older Sister) Patricia, Why did they burn down my house?"

While most *malaes* talked incessantly about how 'surprised' they were and how "caught unawares" they had been, the dominant discourse among the Timorese was one of frustration and despair. Time and again I heard that this was "worse than 1999 because we did it." People critiqued and analyzed and discussed. Fingers were pointed at the one-party political system, the elected leaders, the international community, the youth gangs, "bad people", and a

variety of others. Mostly, though, people seemed shocked to realize that they had nobody to blame but the people of Timor Leste.

Everyone expressed horror and amazement at the net effect of the conflict: an ethnic division that had never been significant before.<sup>4</sup> For the first time, people were being killed, maimed, and terrorized simply because of their region of origin. A *malaes* colleague (one who had lived in the country for almost 5 years) confided that he was not sure that the Timorese would ever be able to forgive each other for what had happened in a three-month period during 2006.

After the immediate physical violence subsided, and the family seemed secure, my panic turned to depression. It wasn't just the harsh reality of life in IDP camps and the lack of security.... but the collapse of international support for Timor. As a Timorese colleague in the Peace Corps said when I saw him in August of 2006, "Everything we worked for during four years was gone in one day." He was describing the profound disintegration of sympathy, patience, and understanding of the international community. Literally in a matter of days, Timor went from being "model UN success story" to just a run-of-the-mill basket case in the Global South.

It is hard to imagine that the country will ever have the goodwill and support that it enjoyed during the UN transitional period again. The Timorese, a long-suffering people, have morphed from 'hapless victims' to 'perpetrators of violence.' Although the current crisis can be explained, in part, by the mistakes and failures of the UN, it has been labeled a 'home-grown crisis.' Unlike the previous waves of occupation from the Indonesians, Portuguese, and even the Japanese, it seems that the Timorese have nobody to blame but themselves this time around.

### Conclusions

The current situation in Timor seems dire. But given the violent history of occupation, resistance, and terror to

which the people have been subjected since the earliest days of colonialism, it is perhaps surprising that the country has only experienced the relatively low-level of post-independence conflict that we have seen to date. One might honestly expect the country to be much more dysfunctional.

The title of this article asks: Who burned down the house this time? This time around, the answer is clearly the Timorese....but it is hard not to see the hands of the Indonesians, Portuguese and even Japanese at work. As Timor moves forward to address this tremendous social challenge, the international community should continue to assist in the process of healing the nation by providing assistance with mediation, economic development, and by encouraging the national government to make effective use of the many talents of non-Portuguese speakers and non-elites among Timorese society.

### Postscript

The crisis in Timor continued for the remainder of 2006 and through the whole of 2007. While violence levels ebbed and flowed, most Timorese and *malaes* lived in fear of further unrest. Curfews were enforced by an international military stabilization force and most UN agencies kept only "essential personnel" in the country. Because of continuing insecurity, Peace Corps opted not to return to Timor Leste. National elections in May of 2007 brought some new hope, but also new tensions and waves of aggression. I maintained contact with the family, friends, and colleagues throughout this period, although I was prohibited from traveling there by the U.S. Embassy.

In May of 2008, I was finally able to return to Timor Leste once again. Ostensibly, I went back to do some applied research work on a USAID<sup>5</sup>-funded project. Mostly, I used the project as an excuse to go back and check on our friends, "family," and colleagues. My husband joined me for a short vacation after my applied research was finished. It was an exhausting and emotional

journey for both of us. I returned again for two weeks in January of 2009, and I am very happy to say that the political and security situation has improved substantially.

Life is starting to look like what I described in my fieldnotes back in 2006. Unemployment is decreasing, foreign assistance is back on track, and most (but not all) of the IDPs have been successfully returned to their communities of origin. The international community (and especially the UN) now seems to realize that they pulled out precipitously in 2005. They are now committed to maintaining a long-term presence in the country.

On a more personal note, I was able to complete some additional fieldwork and, most importantly, I attended our godson's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday party while I was there! I plan to continue my long-term research and personal relationships in Timor Leste. My husband and I remain in touch with family and friends there. We hope to return together in May of 2009 and I am already working on ways to get back there for a more extended time, perhaps over an upcoming sabbatical year.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The country is officially called República Democrática de Timor Leste, but is referred to as East Timor the English-language version. The two terms will be used interchangeably in this paper.

<sup>2</sup>The indigenous peoples of East Timor are culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse. They trace their origins to Melanesian, Austronesian, Papuan and Asian ethnic groups. More than a dozen language groups, including Mumbai, Tetun Terik, Tokodedi, and Makasai exist throughout the mountainous half island that is modern Timor Leste. Dozens of groups are represented and each group exhibits its own culturally, linguistically, and socially specific characteristics. Despite the cultural heterogeneity, it is possible to generalize to some extent and describe some of the common cultural

patterns found among most indigenous groups in Timor.

<sup>3</sup>Dr. Jose Ramos-Horta was then Foreign Minister of the country. Because of my former status as a quasi-diplomat with Peace Corps, I am on a first name basis with him.

<sup>4</sup>It remains an open question whether the events of 2006-2008 tapped into long smoldering ethnic tensions between indigenous groups in eastern (*lorosae*) and western (*loromono*) East Timor, or whether political leaders manipulated their followers by whipping up previously non-existent ethnic hatred.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Agency for International Development (the major development assistance arm of the US government).

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# UNSTABLE RELOCATIONS: MEETING THE OTHER IN KURDOLATO

By Bruno Anili

*She climbs on the bull's back,  
and ambles gently along, taking  
the girl into shallow water and  
then further out, and faster, and  
terrified now, she looks way back  
at the distant shoreline and holds  
on right to the great beast's horn  
as the wind, freshening, whips and  
tunic, which streams into pennants  
behind her.*

"The Rape of Europa," in:  
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book II

The increasing number of immigrants who reach Europe's southern shores can represent both a threat and an opportunity for contemporary Europeans. While the principle of toleration might appear both desirable and expedient for dealing with this social phenomenon, it can be an inadequate modality in encounters with "the Other." Using the experience of a group of Kurdish clandestine immigrants in Badolato, Calabria as an ethnographic example, I argue that the paradigm of hospitality articulates a vast array of possibilities for rethinking inter-ethnic relations in theoretical and political terms.

## Introduction

The eponymous myth of Europe evokes the forcible relocation of the Phoenician princess Europa, raped by Zeus under the semblance of a bull. A similar pattern of expansion, westward and north, marks the route on which clandestine immigrants embark in their journey of hope from the Global South toward Italy or Spain and from there to the affluent countries of northern Europe. European attitudes towards those unwelcome immigrants generally range from outspoken hostility (often times embellished with unhidden racist overtones) to compassionate

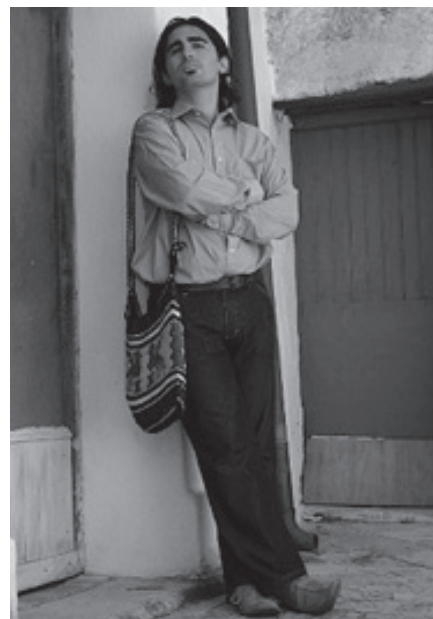
toleration (whose humane concerns often disguise the dominant desire of being left alone, not bothered by the others).

As of the end of 1997, Europeans became aware of a different possibility associated with the relocation of foreigners on their continent. The events that were to gather media attention from all corners of Europe happened in a forgotten town in southern Italy, one stricken with poverty and depopulation and unlikely to produce any major philosophical revolution in conceptualizing identity, otherness and similar abstract concepts. In the process of writing my doctoral dissertation, a project centered on a study of the ideological domination liberalism, I also became interested in the experience of the encounter between the community of Badolato and a group of Kurdish clandestine immigrants.

While the liberal principle of toleration appears increasingly inadequate as the ideological script for concrete instances of the encounter with the other, I argue that a practice of hospitality of the kind that I discovered in the course of my research in Badolato is more appealing both at the theoretical level and in its practical implications. Whereas toleration is typically defined by an attitude of mutual respect in which identity boundaries are fixed and not to be transcended, hospitality carries within itself the possibility of creatively redrawing those boundaries, incorporating a dynamic element that makes it more adaptable to change and the emergence of different situations.<sup>1</sup>

## The Kurds of Badolato

Founded in the XI century by the Normans of Robert Guiscard, Badolato is a typical village on the top of a hill that thrived for centuries and became an important fortress in the defense of the coast from the attacks of the Saracens. However, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century



Bruno Anili

Badolato was experiencing a condition of seemingly irreversible decline typical of many small villages in southern Italy and in other areas of the country. Those Badolatese who did not find work in the village or in the newly constructed Badolato Marina (a neighborhood located on the Ionian coast about six kilometers from the historic center) have emigrated elsewhere, including to the bigger cities of the region, the industrial areas of northern Italy, various destinations in northern Europe, or as a last resort to Australia and the Americas. The population declined dramatically—from 7,000 to 700 people according to some estimates—in few decades, as the emptying of the town left behind a rearguard of old folks.

However, beneath the desolating immobility that seemed to accompany Badolato to a death by outmigration, another type of change was occurring. In 1986 a provocative campaign was launched by local political and social activists under the name of "*Badolato*

*paese in vendita*" (Badolato Town For Sale). This was an effort to attract Italian and foreign tourists who would invest in the maintenance and remodeling of the houses that the emigrants had abandoned without indicating any plan to return to them. The initiative was only moderately successful, as a few foreigners, mostly from Switzerland and northern Europe, did buy houses and made Badolato their regular vacation destination. However, this was not a solution to the problems of a dying community.

At the end of the century, though, this village plagued by emigration experienced unexpected opportunities for resurgence and reinventing itself as a land of immigration. The March 22, 2000 English daily *The Guardian* recounts the dramatic events of December 1997:

It was December 27, 1997. Boats raced to the ship and ferried its human cargo to land. The Kurds were penniless and did not speak Italian, but for the villagers of Badolato, on Italy's toe, they had one priceless asset - youth.  
[...]

And then the *Ararat* arrived: a Russian-made rustbucket that had left Istanbul for Rome six days earlier. The perils and £1,500 price tag had deterred elderly Kurds from making the journey, so the new arrivals were mostly under 40. They had not planned to make a life in Calabria, one of Italy's poorest regions, but that was what they were offered (Carroll 2005).

In other words, two days after Christmas 1997, the people of Badolato received the unexpected present of 825 Kurdish asylum seekers. The Kurds received an expected warm reception from the Badolatese in return. They had reached the tip of southern Italy with no intention of relocating there, but only because it was the most convenient landing in their journey to Germany, France, Belgium, and Sweden. *The Guardian* continues: "Central and regional government gave the Kurds

food and money and promised to settle them in empty houses. Officials promised them work in new enterprises that would make the most of their skills" (Carroll 2005). In a short time, Badolato had attracted the attention of national and international media, and television crews came to report on the strange case of the village that welcomed immigration.

After a few months, the majority of the original group of 825 Kurds had left for their final destinations, primarily Germany and Switzerland. Yet, the efforts of local administrators and residents had succeeded in convincing a few of them to stay to work in construction, cleaning, and agriculture; others opened artisan laboratories, and still others a Kurdish restaurant. It bears noting that at this stage in the Kurdish experiment in Badolato, power structures all too familiar in the most inveterate practices of the immigration were being reproduced. On the economic level, the newcomers were typically (but not exclusively) employed in "works of construction and cleaning," an embryonic tertiary sector that caters to the affluent (yet sporadic) tourists from Switzerland and northern Europe. On the cultural level, the enthusiasm with which the local priest welcomed the new members of the community, as symbolized by baptisms on Easter night, cannot obscure the fact that the Kurds are predominantly of Sunni Muslim confession and, presumably, were not seeking conversion to another religion.

However, some complementary reflections may help to refine the first impressions about these patterns of seeming economic and ideological domination, by making sense of them not in the abstract, but in light of the specific local context. The productive system of Badolato, like that of most Calabrian villages, is one that does not favor the emergence of a highly differentiated and dynamic class structure. On the contrary, this subsistence economy is fundamentally based on the *rimesse* (remittances) sent back home by emigrants. In an area chronically plagued by unemployment, those who can count

on a more or less stable source of income, produced locally and independent of the *rimesse*, are, in a certain way, a privileged class. This is the case with the Kurds.

As for the religious aspect of the integration of the Kurds into the social fabric of Badolato, worries about the forcible nature of their conversion to Catholicism are not at all preposterous. However, such an interpretation of their baptisms does not take into account the peculiar character of traditional religiosity in Southern Italy's villages. While this is obviously an overwhelmingly Catholic environment, it is not one in which religion emerges as an identity marker used to differentiate among various communities (as for example it was in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the aftermath of the dissolution of Yugoslavia). Here religiosity is perceived and experienced as one element of a larger picture of "tradition," not to be theorized per se, and whose exercise is better understood as a series of ritualized habits, rather than as a coherent set of moral and canonical formulations. In this context Catholicism is not necessarily an exclusionary force, but rather peacefully coexists with a vast and dynamic substratum of alternative beliefs, ranging from a diffuse superstition, to enduring practices of magic and divination, to residual particles of pre-Christian religiosity. This context might also be hospitable to the introduction of Muslim practices.

Despite some legitimate doubts, the case of Badolato soon came to be seen as an interesting and largely successful experiment. The people of this little village had not only passively tolerated the presence of the Kurds on their territory (what in many other places would have been a remarkable achievement in and of itself), but locals had actively welcomed the guests with signs of concrete hospitality. Badolatese houses were literally opened for the Kurds, and the whole population participated in collective efforts to help the newcomers establish viable and durable premises for sound, if modest, economic subsistence. An April 2000

news report from BBC asked a very interesting question: "Could this be the answer for Italy's other dying cities?" (Gilhooly 2000). A few years later this ambitious question about the ability of generalizing from the Badolatese experience was supplemented by a more basic concern: Was that experience still in place? In order to answer such questions, I decided to do research in the field, rather than relying on news reports and other mediated sources of information.

### Doing Research in Badolato

As I was planning my research activities, I resolved to conduct open-ended interviews with a number of subjects, divided by the subsets "Badolatese" and "immigrants to Badolato." In both cases I recruited my interviewees through face-to-face interactions and "snowball" techniques. Also, studying the more recent developments of Badolato's experience, I learned that, despite the initial excitement and optimism, it had not turned out to be the squaring of the circle of the immigration and aging population problems. In fact, along with the media coverage, came the interested intervention of the national government. With bureaucratization came inefficiency and corruption, a quasi-Pavlovian sequence in the Italian context.

Additionally, complaints were raised by different corners of the European Union about Italy's lax attitudes towards the problem of clandestine immigration. As a result, Italy's adherence to the Schengen Treaty was called into question and passport checks at the Italian border were reintroduced on a temporary basis by both France and Austria.<sup>2</sup> 'Strongly encouraged' by its northern partners, Italy had to reconsider its policy of "friendly hospitality." The majority of the Kurds were placed in gated camps, under strict police surveillance. The infamous "Welcome Centers" (Centri d'Accoglienza) were created, soon to be followed by the even more infamous Centers of Temporary Permanence (Centri di Permanenza Temporanea, or CPT). The Kurds who had already settled in Badolato escaped

normalization at that time, but the perspectives for the social experiment that they represented looked now gloomier than ever.<sup>3</sup>

Toward the end of the summer of 2006 I made a trip to Badolato. On the windy road to the top of the hill I experienced alternating feelings of hope and expectations of disappointment at each curve. When I finally reached my destination I found a sleepy town, seemingly oblivious to its simple, clean streets, and of the breathtaking beauty of its scenery, between the Ionian Sea and the Calabrian mountains. In the mid-day sunshine, only a few people walked slowly in the piazza, between the town's two caf  s: if that was Badolato, I started to think, perhaps I would have been better off taking pictures that day, rather than hoping to meet people.

Luckily, I had already scheduled an appointment with Daniela Trapasso, the coordinator of the Calabrian section of CIR (Italian Council for Refugees). Created in 1990 under the patronage of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, CIR defines its basic mission as: "to defend the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers in Italy" (<http://www.cir-onlus.org/chisiamo2.htm>). The conversation that we had in the office of CIR was an extremely helpful introduction to Badolato's social reality. From the vantage point of her institutional position, but especially from the perspective of an active social worker, Daniela was careful to define the relationship between the immigrants and the local community not in abstract terms of integration, but, much more realistically, as a form of coexistence.

In particular, she pointed to the many instances in which members of one of the two communities had participated in ceremonies and religious practices of the other group. Exploring each others' traditions, Badolatese youths had crossed the fire like their Kurdish counterpart did as a ritual of initiation into adult life. Funerals had also been an occasion for encounters, and many had incorporated rituals of both the traditions. Minor altercations had involved young men of both groups, mostly in relation to women.

These disputes were of the kind that is not at all uncommon among young men, regardless of their ethnicity, and they never escalated into hostility between Kurds and Italians, and in the end strengthened community ties.

An area of special interest to me was the linguistic contamination between the two communities. While the Kurds had been learning Italian from the locals, the Badolatese had also started to use Kurdish terms in their daily parlance, greeting the elderly in the deferential manner typical of the newcomers. Misunderstandings had not been uncommon, like when a Kurdish man had asked a shopkeeper for a "gas bomb" (*bomba a gas*), rather than for a much more innocuous "gas tank" (*bombola a gas*)... Unfortunately, in the climate of excitement and optimism typical of the early days of this experience, more serious mistakes were made too. Unconditional hospitality and generosity were bestowed onto the newcomers, in ways that made it difficult to eradicate expectations that were to prove unreasonable in the long run.

I then met with a local historian and cultural animator. His perspective was also extremely helpful in delineating the social and cultural impact of relocation, both as stimulated by the "Badolato Town For Sale" initiative, and by the arrival of the Kurds. That very afternoon, as I was walking down a street, I heard a Muslim prayer coming from a window, and the British accent of a young lady coming from the next balcony. Neither would have been a likely occurrence in nearby towns; the proximity of the two added to the peculiar character of the phenomenon. When I returned to Badolato in the summer of 2007 I had brought a set of questions for open-ended interviews with me. By now I knew that on a hot, sunny day most people were likely to spend at least some time at the beach, in Badolato Marina, returning home in time for lunch. So I spent the morning re-familiarizing myself with the streets and sights of the town. I also took notice of the cars' license plates: alongside the local ones there were quite a few from central and northern Italy, as well as Swiss,

German, French, Swedish ones, some belonging to returning emigrants, some to the new house buyers.

Around 4:30 pm the roar of the first Vespas headed down to the beach announced the end of the siesta. Small clusters of middle-aged and old men started assembling, some sitting in the shade on the piazza's benches, some playing cards and sipping soda in the cafés. Old women gathered on the church's stairs, and then got inside and started praying before the mass. Tourists followed the Vespas to the beach; young immigrants, mostly males, took the benches that were left in the piazza.

It was time for me to start approaching somebody; and I did so, not without some insecurity and shyness. As I started talking to people, I noticed that some were at least as eager to talk to me as I was to listen to them. At first some people felt unprepared to answer my questions, and pointed to their educated neighbors. My reassurance that I was not looking for accurate historical information, but for their personal experiences, was able to convince most of them. Also, as I asked the questions that I had carefully phrased while planning my research, I realized that they were most useful as a starting point for free-floating conversations, rather than as a rigid grid to impose on my interviews.

I spent several days in Badolato, and met with over fifty people, of whom around thirty I identified as "Badolatese," and around twenty as "immigrants to Badolato." What I learned from these conversations is hard to summarize in a few paragraphs; and the lessons that I drew on how to conduct research is certainly another highly valuable aspect of my experience.

I met with a very loquacious priest and with an equally talkative old communist, a living testimony of the strength that the party of Antonio Gramsci once enjoyed in that district of landless laborers. From the perspectives of their different systems of beliefs, these two interviewees agreed on many points, in ways that might have sounded surprising to observers less familiar with the dominant mentality, a centuries-old

concoction of fatalism, hospitality, attachment to one's own roots. So my question: "Would you prefer to be richer elsewhere, or poorer in Badolato?" generated an overwhelming majority of answers in favor of being poorer in Badolato. The allure of material wealth was much less attractive than the appreciation of values like health, friendship, tradition and especially the feeling of "belonging" to a place and community. To this constellation of civic values, the priest also added the sense of mission that characterized his vocation as an apostle among his people.

Additionally, while a general consensus emerged on the fact that Badolato had changed dramatically in the last few decades, the exact nature of the transformation was the object of much disagreement among my interviewees. At one extreme, a strongly nostalgic mood permeated some holographic reconstructions of an idyllic past, one in which the town had been economically self-sufficient, if not affluent, and especially one in which the moral fiber and the demographic composition of the Badolatese population had been much sounder. On the other hand, some of my informants were more ready than others to recognize the amazing progress that improved communication, transportation, and education had represented for Badolato.

The main focus of my interviews was, obviously, the issue of co-existence. The Badolatese who had emigrated to escape poverty and unemployment, and who had now returned to their hometown, whether seasonally or permanently, were split on the issue of whether the arrival of the immigrants had benefited or harmed Badolato. Some tended to sympathize with the newcomers, recognizing that they performed valuable social functions, taking jobs that Italians would have refused. Others resented the fact that the immigrants now received assistance and in some cases subsidies, while their early years in Switzerland or Germany had been marked by social marginalization and inadequate economic remuneration. Almost all of my interviewees were careful to characterize

their positions as non-racist, answering in the negative the question on whether they would have preferred that more Italians (as opposed to foreigners) had relocated to Badolato. Some went so far as to say that they preferred having foreigners relocate to the village rather than Italians, as the former offer better opportunities for cultural contamination and an overall evolution of the local mentality. As for the non-racist disclaimers, in most cases they sounded genuine; others echoed the frustration at their own alienation in the big cities of the north by showing little warmth for the newcomers.

Not surprisingly, the category "immigrants to Badolato" was a much more heterogeneous one. It included both homebuyers from elsewhere in Italy and Europe, and underprivileged immigrants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Despite the obvious socioeconomic differences, these two groups shared the important experience of being a part of Badolato's community without having been born into it. In particular, most immigrants interviewed underscored the fortuitous nature of their move to Badolato. Virtually no one had chosen it deliberately, and few had even heard of it before relocating. Paradoxically, this parallels the condition of Badolato natives who had not chosen to be born in that specific community.

The attachment to Badolato might not be as strong among the immigrants as it is among the locals. Yet several people commented enthusiastically on the help that they received as they adapted to the new conditions, and showed a degree of affection towards the town. They also appreciated the lack of pressures to conform. Specifically, the immigrants enjoy being able to keep their traditions, language, food, religion. Many strongly associate this sense of liberty with life in Badolato. However, others, like one young man from Nigeria who voiced his intense frustration about the conditions and limitations of his relocation, lamented the isolation of Badolato, its small size, the lack of opportunities for both work and entertainment, and the lack of a

fast, reliable Internet connection. While he had no regrets about leaving his country, he was ready to go somewhere else. But is this really just a case of unsuccessful immigration, or is there more to this story? Aren't many young Badolatese similarly fed up with life in a small town, and itching to get out of it? All in all, this might be the ultimate, albeit ironic, proof of integration.

both the illusion of a sudden, unproblematic integration, and that of the uncompromising preservation of rigid identities are renounced. Researchers too can learn from this experience, as registering and deciphering the elusive signs around which fluid identities continuously renegotiate their boundaries can be both challenging and highly rewarding.

“Both government agencies and NGOs working with issues of relocation can learn from the experience of Kurdoloto that the peaceful coexistence among mutual “others” can be a demanding political and social project, and at the same time that it is a realistic goal, if both the illusion of a sudden, unproblematic integration, and that of the uncompromising preservation of rigid identities are renounced.”

During the course of my interviews, I learned with some disappointment that no one from the original nucleus of Kurds was left, as in the long run they had all preferred to join their relatives in Germany or Switzerland. Yet their legacy had stayed behind, both in the experience of the Italian Council for Refugees, and in the nickname of “Kurdoloto”. With all its difficulties, problems, mistakes, this unplanned experiment in encounters between immigrants and natives provides inspiration and potentially a model for the encounter with the “Other” in our contemporary societies. Both government agencies and NGOs working with issues of relocation can learn from the experience of Kurdoloto that the peaceful coexistence among mutual “others” can be a demanding political and social project, and at the same time that it is a realistic goal, if

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>J. Derrida and A. Dufourmantelle's (2000) *Of Hospitality* provides an extended discussion of hospitality as a project of ethical responsibility.

<sup>2</sup>The Schengen Agreements of 1985 and 1990, signed by a number of European countries, establish “the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders.”

<sup>3</sup>Instituted in 1998 by the Turco-Napolitano law on immigration, the CPTs are centers for the temporary detention of foreigners who have entered Italy illegally, and which for a number of reasons (including lack of documents of identification and nationality), cannot be immediately expelled from the country. The steady growth of the phenomenon of clandestine immigra-

tion, together with vast inefficiencies in the management of the existing CPTs, have rendered a number of these centers overcrowded and unsafe for the occupants. Several non-governmental organizations, including Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) and Amnesty International, have denounced the systematic violation of basic human rights in Italian CPTs. (See for instance Amnesty International's document “Italy: Lampedusa, the Island of Europe's Forgotten Promises,” available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR30/008/2005/en/dom-EUR300082005en.html>.)

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# TURBULENCE WITHIN THE CUBAN DIASPORA IN SOUTH FLORIDA

By Indira Rampersad

United States-Cuba policy has varied significantly during the five decades since the first waves of Cuban immigrants came to the United States. The disproportionate impact that the earliest immigrants had on U.S.-Cuba relations has created a deep social, political and economic schism between this group and the later waves. Though these later migrants now constitute a “moderate majority” in South Florida, they nonetheless endure a double marginalization because of their alienation at both the state and community levels. I conclude by affirming that the 2008 transfer of power from Fidel Castro to Raúl Castro, combined with a reconfiguration of the power structure in South Florida to which President Obama seems poised to pander, signal that the much anticipated radical change in U.S. Cuba policy may not be forthcoming.

This article is part of a broader research project examining U.S.-Cuba policy from 1961-2006 (Rampersad 2007). Data were collected using a mixed methods approach including content analysis of major American newspapers, archival research on official documents, books, journals, newspapers, magazines and websites and a series of unstructured and semi-structured elite interviews conducted in the U.S. between 2005 and 2006, and participant observation and interviews in Cuba and Florida during the 2008 U.S. presidential election. Interviewees include scholars, leaders of both hard-line and moderate Cuban American groups and their staff members, and members of Congress and congressional staff. The 2005 interviewees were generally contacted initially by email, sometimes followed by a phone call to arrange a face to face interview in Miami, New York and Washington D.C. The 2006 and 2008 interviews were generally conducted via the phone from the University of Florida.



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## Cuban Migration to the United States: 1959 to the Present

There are 1.3 million Cuban Americans in the United States today, with four major waves of Cuban immigration to the U.S. identified historically. The turning point in immigration to the United States came with Fidel Castro's rise to power on January 1, 1959. Two hundred thousand Cubans left for the United States between 1959-1962, settling primarily in Miami. Many of these exiles were associated with the Batista dictatorship and were upper class Cubans. Most had lost everything to the Cuban Revolution and were angry with the Castro government's policies. Others favored reform of the corrupt old regime, but felt betrayed by the communist ideologies of the revolution. They were all hostile toward Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution and these sentiments came to define the political or “exile ideology” of the Cuban community

(Zebich-Knos and Nicol 2005). This first wave of exiles began life anew in Miami, and by the end of the 1960s many had begun to prosper. Wayne Smith, visiting professor at Johns Hopkins University and former Chief of the U.S. Interest Section in Havana (1979-1982), had been closely following the Cuban migration waves to the U.S. He told me in an interview at his office at the Center for International Policy in Washington D.C. in July 2005 that because of the influence of these early, wealthy immigrants, “Cuba seems to have the same effect on American administrations as the full moon has on werewolves.”

This first wave continued until 1973. Between 1965 and 1973, the U.S. government sponsored flights from Havana to Miami called the “Freedom Flights.” An estimated 260,000 Cubans took advantage of this policy and emigrated. In the early years, these immigrants were the remnants of the social and economic elites and in later years much

of the Cuban middle class. Because of cultural and family affinities, most of these émigrés settled in Miami, though some established a Cuban community in Union City, New Jersey. Both communities were led economically and politically by the oldest post-Castro exiles—those who were most strongly opposed to the Castro regime.

This first wave was considerably different from subsequent waves, comprising numerous professionals and business people, as well as the military and administrative personnel associated with the previous Cuban regimes. It had a relatively high educational level, surpassing the median for most immigrant communities. Strongest opposition to Castro's revolution came from this group which harbored many hostile elements, including a few writers and musicians who were opposed to Castro's hardening cultural policy in the sixties. These early exiles organized under the powerful anti-Castroite, Jorge Más Canosa, who led an organization known as the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) which he founded in 1981 under the Reagan administration. The members of CANF have been the most privileged of all the generations of exiles with regard to both wealth and as beneficiaries of the U.S. government's generous assimilationist policies (Franklin 1993).

The second wave of migrants came in the Mariel boatlift of 1980 when 125,000 entered the U.S. These immigrants were poorer and darker than their predecessors. It is estimated that 40 percent or 50,000 were blacks or mulattos. Some were sent as 'undesirables' by the Cuban government and included the mentally challenged as well as some 26,000 with criminal records. The U.S. government adjusted to this change by being less welcoming to the *marielitos*. To avoid a future mass immigration of this nature, President Carter passed a Refugee Act which eliminated preferential treatment of people from communist states including Cuba, and placed a ceiling of 1000 on the number of refugees admitted from Cuba (Croucher 1997).

The third wave consisted of 33,000 *balseros* or rafters who left Cuba after

1990 due to the economic crisis Cuba has been experiencing since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The arduous conditions of the crossing resulted in 86 percent of the rafters being younger than age 40; 20 per cent of these rafters women. The first group arrived in 1991 when the U.S. Coast Guard intercepted 2,203 Cuban rafters attempting to cross the Florida straights. However, the majority, consisting of about 31,500 left in a large-scale exodus between 7th August and 14th September, 1994. Out of this came a significant policy. To prevent a situation of uncontrolled Cuban immigration, Clinton signed the U.S.-Cuban Agreement of September 1994 in which the U.S. agreed to admit 21,700 *balseros* held in Guantánamo. The significance of this is that the U.S. was unwilling to accept Cuban migrants as refugees since future rafters would be returned as illegal aliens (De Vise and de Valle 2004).

The last wave consists of legal migrants. The airlift of 1965-1973 was regularized and successful applicants were able to leave in accordance with quotas agreed to between 1981 and 1989 first by President Carter and later by President Reagan. At the height of the *balsero* crisis, Clinton agreed to admit no less than 20,000 immigrants from Cuba annually, not including the immediate relatives of U.S. citizens. In 1995, 17,937 Cuban were allowed into the U.S. and 26,466 arrived in 1996 (Wasem 2006).

### Ideological Schism Within the Cuban American Community

The early wave of predominantly white, affluent, pro-embargo, anti-Castro exiles continuously advocate a hardline policy to Cuba. This is in sharp contrast to the later waves of poorer, darker and moderate factions who advocated friendlier relations and more dialogue with Cuba. This schism has been widening because of the extremely close alliance between the small hardline community and successive American administrations which have collaborated to consistently tighten the embargo to the detriment of the larger moderate faction, most of whom have relatives in Cuba. These policies and

the antagonism of the hardline community produce a double marginalization syndrome of the generally ignored moderate faction, relentlessly struggling to repeal the embargo through warmer, friendlier relations.

The second, third and fourth waves constitute a larger, non-elite, racially mixed sector of the community which migrated mainly for economic reasons. They espouse a more centrist ideology and are more open to dialogue with Cuba. They are deeply patriotic to Cuba, and relations between members of this generation and Cubans in Cuba have been quite good, and improved in the post-Cold War era. Members of this group do not have much direct influence on official U.S. policy toward Cuba, but they have been able to foster substantial relations with Cuba at a non-state or civil society level over time through familial ties, remittances and humanitarian organizations. Many members of this group are members of moderate organizations such as the Cuban American Commission for Family Rights, the Cuban American Alliance Education Fund (CAAEF) and the Cuban Committee for Democracy. This wave of migrants also seems more inclined toward rapprochement with Cuba, and prefers a resolution to the bilateral conflict through negotiation and dialogue. Most are opposed to the embargo, and are branded "*dialogueros*" (those willing to negotiate) who are perceived as traitors to the exile community. Alfredo Durán of the Cuban Committee for Democracy commented from Miami in a phone interview in 2006 that "it is only in Miami that "*dialoguero*" is a derogatory word. Everyone else view dialogue and discourse as something positive". Cuban Americans vary in their views on Cuba itself and relations between Cuba and the exile community have been quite good. Members of the predominantly white, elite sector who migrated mainly for ideological reasons constitute the bulk of the upper crust of the contemporary Cuban American community. They have remained consistently hostile toward the Castro regime and they dream of invading the island in order to recover political power and property expropriated by the

Cuban government. Generally rightest in their political orientation, they are also economically and politically powerful. They constitute the force which backed the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. They are also well organized politically and have managed to retain a lock on U.S. policy that influences successive American administration to legislate hard-line policies against Cuba, particularly on election years.

The ideological conflict between the groups is being played out at both the national and community level in the United States leading to direct confrontation between moderate and hard-line Cuban Americans. This conflict has intensified in recent times as moderate Cuban Americans vigorously protest recent measures to tighten the embargo legislated via the 2004 and 2006 Reports of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba.

### **U.S.-Cuba Policy in the Post- Cold War Era**

In December, 2003, the first Commission for Assistance was established by the Bush administration. The Commission's first report was published in May 2004, proposing new restrictions on family, academic and cultural travel to Cuba ([www.cafc.gov](http://www.cafc.gov)). Described as "the dumbest policy in the face of the earth" (Heuvel 2004), the report met with a barrage of protests from both American and Cuban American citizens who were especially incensed with its proposals for renewed restrictions on family and academic travel and remittances. The members of the Commission included leading Cuban Americans in the Bush administration, namely, Dan Fisk, fellow staff member of former staff member, Jesse Helms, and Jose Cardenas, ex-employee of the Cuban American National Foundation. The Commission did not receive the flurry of media attention as did the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act and the 1996 Helms Burton Law. However, several newly formed and existing groups protested the measures and continue to voice their displeasure with the new measures.

The 2004 restrictions on family travel, parcel deliveries and remittances have

angered the community to the extent that even former hardliners vociferously reject them. Amongst these is Joe García, former Executive Director of the once rabidly extremist Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), which is now packaging itself as a moderate organization. During my 2006 interview with Joe García (who is still a member of CANF), he outlined the new contours of the realpolitik of Calle Ocho, traditionally the seedbed of anti-Castro activities in Miami: "We're not single-issue anymore, and we care about much more than just the embargo." He affirmed that "some Cuban Americans are stuck in Cold War politics as reflected in the Elián drama but the American public has moved past the Cold War."

The 2004 restrictions on family travel resulted in a heated confrontation between an angry, protesting Cuban American mob and Representative Lincoln Díaz-Balart at the Miami International airport on June 29<sup>th</sup>, the day before the new travel restrictions to Cuba kicked in. When the protesters spotted Díaz-Balart, they pursued him to the parking lot and spilled their venom as he stood beside his car. "You're dividing families!" one person yelled amid a frenzy of shouts and intense finger-pointing (Nielsen 2004). Joe García's actions are further evidence of a softening in attitudes within CANF toward U.S. Cuba policy and increasing antagonism toward hardliners. Using the vigilant media to full advantage on that fateful June afternoon, García blamed Díaz-Balart for giving bad counsel to President Bush on the 2004 restrictions on family travel (Nielsen 2004).

The formation of the Cuban Liberty Council, the breakaway faction of CANF, was in direct response to the actions of members like Joe García, who resigned as Executive Director of CANF and opted to campaign for the Democratic Party in the 2004 elections. The move was perceived by the *New York Times* as a signal of political diversification of Cuban Americans (Aguayo 2004). García admitted in our Miami interviews in 2005 and 2006 that CANF is not monolithic and the members have varying views on U.S. Cuba policy. He himself supports the sanctions on trade

to Cuba to pressure the Castro regime but does not advocate restrictions on family travel.

However, this "softening" of his hard-line position was counteracted by the rise of Jeb Bush as Governor of Florida in 1998. Several analysts and anti-embargo activists attribute the recent tightening of the embargo to the fact that Jeb is the brother of President George Bush and a close ally of the hardline Cuban American community. Max Castro, referring to the handful of powerful hardliners, asserted in our July 2005 interview in Miami that a "tiny dog is wagging a very big tail in Miami." The confrontation with Lincoln Díaz-Balart was only one public incident in a political drama that will climax when new generation Cuban Americans and those who migrated after 1980 come to full political maturity as they register and vote in the next decade. It seems that the cracks within the community are widening as former Republican supporters slowly turn away. In our 2006 interview, Silvia Wilhelm who founded the Cuban American Commission for Family Rights reiterated that, "it is highly likely that soon the issue of the family will supersede the issue of the embargo". Wilhelm and her organization have even launched frontal attacks on Díaz-Balart for his role in the 2004 family restrictions to Cuba (Lovato 2004). Incidentally, Díaz-Balart's father, Don Rafael, was married to Fidel Castro's sister, making the rabidly right-winged congressional brothers, Lincoln and Mario Díaz-Balart, the nephews of *el Comandante*, Fidel, himself.

In 2004, President Bush arrived at the Miami Arena to deliver a speech aimed at rallying support among older, more conservative Cuban Americans. Instead, he was greeted outside where a group of younger, highly educated twenty-, thirty- and forty-something Cuban American protesters who came to speak truths to power. Lustily waving American and Cuban flags and placards saying "Bush: Don't Divide the Cuban Family" were members of groups such as Cuban Americans for Change and the Cuban American Commission for Family Rights, which oppose the travel and

remittance restrictions with the same passionate fervor as the hardliners in their relentless quest to topple the Castro regime via the embargo. For these moderates, the family crisis has supplanted the embargo. The result is that the 46 year embargo that has been cemented by exile patriarchs and ex-CIA operatives is beginning to unglue and there are visible cracks in the icy wall which once characterized exile politics. Yet, in some cases, the ice is beginning to melt as reflected in the softening of ideological position of prominent members of CANF such as Joe García and its leader, Jorge Mas Santos.

The new restrictions have resulted in a tense relationship between Cuban American civil society and the state. Amongst those most affected are charities. The Cuba-America Jewish Mission, in Berkeley, California, can no longer send youth groups to Cuba as part of its program to strengthen ties between American and Cuban Jews. June Safran, Executive Director, is quoted as saying that young people who traveled to Cuba before the Treasury Department changed the rules in 2004 learned valuable lessons: "The children were more serious about their education and more tolerant of people because in Cuba they learned that what you owned did not indicate what your class was. Rather, your position in society was determined by what you could achieve" (Perry 2006). The most contentious issue, however, seems to be restrictions imposed on family travel remittances and parcels to Cuba which many challengers, both American and Cuban American, view as a flagrant abuse of fundamental human rights. With the new restrictions, relatives can only visit once every three years and visits are limited to immediate family – parents, children, siblings, and grandparents. Cousins, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces are excluded.

On these grounds, Human Rights Watch joined the torrent of protests and interviewed a number of Cuban Americans who expressed their outrage at the "inhumane" regulations which are entirely inadequate for people with relatives in poor health, and even worse for those with multiple family

members who are ailing. The Human Rights Watch website (<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/cuba1005/index.htm>) includes a host of poignant examples of families hurt by this policy. For example, Saray Gómez had visited her family before her father died in January 2004, but is now forbidden from visiting her mother who is also seriously ill. Several other Cuban Americans had visited Cuba earlier have to wait three years to return. In another case, Nelson Espinoza told Human Rights Watch that "I can't wait three years to see my sister, who is in a very delicate condition, because I don't know what's going to happen." Similarly, Lorena Vasquez, who visited Cuba in 2004, was very concerned about her sister who had cancer. "It's likely I won't see her again," Lorena Vasquez said. "She won't last three years."

For many moderate Cuban Americans, the issue is not so much about saying goodbye to a family member as helping him/her to live. As Human Rights Watch affirms, one of the primary objectives of these family visits is to provide ailing relatives in Cuba with money and medical supplies. The 2004 restrictions have made it increasingly difficult for Cuban Americans to send remittances and supplies through couriers. Sandra Sánchez had been sending medicine to her father, who had cancer, every month. She later realized long delays in its arrival because the number of people traveling had been reduced.

In relating the sad story of Marisela Romero and her ailing father, Human Rights Watch (2005), notes that Romero left Cuba in 1992. After both her mother and sister died in 2002, her cousin and his wife were the only remaining relatives who could take care of her ailing father. Romero hired two helpers and made frequent trips to Cuba so that she could pay them, bring money and supplies, and, perhaps provide her father with the love and care he so desperately needed. "Whenever she came he became very contented," Marisol Claraco, her nephew's wife, told Human Rights Watch. "Because even though he had Alzheimer, he knew who she was.... She would lie next to him and talk to him, and he would feel her love and get

better" <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/cuba1005/index.htm>).

Romero could no longer visit with the new restrictions. Her last trip was in May 2004, so she was not allowed to visit again until 2007. In effect, the regulations prevented her from sending money for his medical care. She could send remittances to members of her "immediate family," but the only relative in Cuba who fit that definition was her father who was too ill cash checks or sign them over to someone else. Under the 2004 regulations, her nephew did not qualify as a member of her "family." It also became much more difficult and expensive to send supplies as it became harder to find other people traveling to Cuba and willing to carry goods for her. Romero's absence was acutely felt by her nephew and his wife. "After the restrictions," the nephew told Human Rights Watch, "I was alone with the old man and my husband was in charge of going and finding what medicines he could." We were waiting for Mari to come. But she couldn't come and she couldn't send the Pampers and the medicines. So we had to endure rough times. After several months, they began to run out of diapers and basic medical supplies, such as iodine and hydrogen peroxide, which they needed to clean his bed sores" <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/cuba1005/index.htm>).

Delvis Fernández who heads the Cuban American Alliance Education Fund (CAAEEF) told me in our phone interviews in 2006 and 2008 that he actually became proactive in resisting the embargo because of the restrictions imposed on him and many of his fellow Cuban Americans in visiting Cuba. "I wanted to visit an elderly relative but the new laws prevented me from doing so" he asserted. "It is rather ironic that the embargo should be tightening in the post-Cold War era when Cuba no longer poses a security threat to the United States".

An irate Alvaro Fernández, President of the Cuban American Commission for Family Rights, told me in our interview in Miami in July 2005 that "the Bush Administration was the first in U.S. history that deemed itself fit to define what comprised a family. A Cuban family at

that. I can assure you that the measures made every Commission member's blood boil over." He was supported by Silvia Wilhelm, founder and Executive Director of the organization, who in our phone interview in December, 2006, described the measures as "anti-family, un-American and anti-Cuban."

The restrictions have released an avalanche of indignation and angry outbursts amongst the Cuban American community, incensed that the American government should decide who their immediate family is. The turbulence in South Florida concretely materialized into a storm of protests when on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2005, more than 700 Americans traveled from thirty five states to participate in what they called a "Cuba Action Day" in Washington D.C. ([www.peopleforchange.com](http://www.peopleforchange.com)). It was a day of advocacy on Capitol Hill organized to demand that Congress end the Cuba travel ban that "divides families, denies Americans their fundamental right to travel and free access to humanitarian support, harms Cubans, restricts a market important to American farmers and impedes the creation of American jobs". The participants also included over 100 Cuban Americans who are angered by restrictions on family visits. The activists were joined by several Congressmen and Senators including Senators Bacchus and Enzi and Representatives Flake and Delahunt. The Day's activities was sponsored by the Center for International Policy, the Latin American Working Group, The Washington Office on Latin America and fifteen other organizational co-sponsors ([www.peopleforchange.com](http://www.peopleforchange.com)).

But the protests seem to have fallen on deaf ears. As if to add fuel to the fire, in July 2006, the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba issued a 93-page second report which attempts to counteract perceptions that the first report was nothing but an "American occupation plan". The recommendations include a budget of \$80 million for the next two years to ensure a "transition" rather than a "succession" of Cuban leadership ([www.cafc.gov](http://www.cafc.gov)). The report has been provoking intense criticism from several Cuban American and humanitarian organizations concerned

with restrictions on academic travel and humanitarian aid such as such as the Emergency Network of Cuban American Scholars and Artists. Anti-embargo activism amongst both new and existing organizations have also increased in protest of the new restrictions.

### Post-Script: U.S.-Cuban Relations After Fidel Castro and George W. Bush

The glacial confrontation between old and newer waves of Cuban Americans continue as the administration makes way for the first African-American President of the United States, the Democrat, Barak Obama. I have been writing a regular column for the *Trinidad Sunday Guardian*, with articles that assess the potential changes in both the Cuban and U.S. administrations and the implications for U.S. Cuba policy under the new presidencies of Barak Obama and Raúl Castro, throughout the 2008 election year. Even before the 2008 election campaign, there was growing speculation that the new voice of the moderate majority, the impending demise of the older, right-winged conservative generation (including a visible softening of attitude within CANF), and the transfer of power from Fidel Castro to Raúl Castro suggested potential change. Thus, the icy walls around South Florida's ideological battles may soon crumble leaving behind the rubble of old exile politics in a new political and sociological configuration.

The 2008 election campaign brought into stark relief the reconfiguration of the power structure in South Florida. Prominent members of the of the former right-winged CANF supported the Democratic party. Indeed, Joe García, the former Executive Director of CANF, was the Democratic candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in Florida's 25th congressional district, running against incumbent hardliner, Republican Mario Díaz-Balart. An interview with Joe García in August, 2006 revealed that he was in full support of the removal of U.S. restrictions on family travel and remittances but not on

trade. Interestingly, Barack Obama presented an almost identical position on May, 2008, during the heat of his election campaign in Miami. Obama echoed García when he said that he would seek "an immediate change in policy to allow for unlimited family visitation and remittances to the island.

Yet, Obama's policy on Cuba seems ambivalent at best. Despite his overt opposition to the embargo, Obama declared that "I will maintain the embargo.... It provides us with the leverage to present the regime with a clear choice: if you take significant steps toward democracy, beginning with the freeing of all political prisoners, we will take steps to begin normalizing relations... I promise to pave "the road to freedom for all Cubans by securing justice for Cuba's political prisoners, the rights of free speech, a free press and freedom of assembly; and it must lead to elections that are free and fair" (Moynihan 2008). So this would not come without preconditions since Obama would only "accept *libertad* (freedom)" for the "captive nation" of Cuba.

On the other side of the Florida Straits, Raúl Castro announced potential changes underscoring the need to boost salaries and raise domestic food production to substitute for massive increases in the world price for basic food products Cuba imports. These changes have been very slow in coming and Cubans are not very hopeful that they will materialize even as their own demands for imported consumer goods increase. Since 2006, Acting President, Raúl Castro, had expressed hopes for normalization of relations with the United States. Toward the end of January 2009, both brothers Fidel and Raúl Castro had kind words for Obama. Fidel Castro told the Argentine President, Cristina Hernández de Kirschner, that Obama "not only had a very good background as a political leader, but also that he was a man he saw as being absolutely sincere." For Raúl Castro, Obama "seems to be a good man; I wish him luck," but added that Obama "may be raising hopes to high" (<http://www.startribune.com/nation/38155294.html>).

Barak Obama was just inaugurated as President on 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2009, and it is yet to be seen whether he will

initiate relaxation of the embargo. It is still uncertain if and how he can sway the three hardline Republican candidates, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and Mario and Lincoln Díaz-Balart, each of whom retained their congressional district in the 2008 elections. In short, the much touted changes in U.S. Cuba policy including complete removal of restrictions on family travel, remittances and trade under an Obama presidency may be longer in coming than is expected by the newer waves or moderate majority of Cuban Americans.

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# WE FIND OURSELVES IN THE MIDDLE: NAVAJO RELOCATION AND RELOCATEE-HOST CONFLICTS

By *Orit Tamir*

Only relatively recently have human migration and resettlement processes been studied in an effort to understand, in depth, the effects of resettlement on the relocatees and their hosts. This paper focuses on the relations between Navajo relocatees from the Former Joint Use Area, their initial relations with their Navajo reservation hosts, the various disputes that ensued, followed by “20 years later” comments on the long term impacts of the land dispute and the forced relocation. This paper then examines the Navajo case in the context of forced relocations cases from around the world.

## Introduction

On a cold rainy October 1987 day I was driving my Cutlass 442 toward Pinon, Arizona (the Navajo Reservation). At the Hopi Cultural Center I turned into the Oraibi road that on that particular day turned into a soup of clay-mud. Cursing in a number of languages, I asked myself, why don't they (whoever 'they' are) pave this road? What on earth am I doing here? (Field notes, October 30, 1987). This was my introduction to consequences of the Navajo-Hopi land dispute that resulted in the forced relocation of over 10,000 Navajo people. I lived in Pinon for a little over two and a half years. I never really went away. I have continued to visit the people who became my fictive kin, participate in their ceremonies, and have recently concluded a study on a four-year cycle of the Sun Dance in Pinon. My frequent visits provided me with ample opportunities to personally observe changes and visit with friends and acquaintances.

## Roots of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute

The Navajo-Hopi land dispute had led to the involuntary relocation of over

2,940 households, and of more than 10,000 Navajos. This has been the largest forced relocation of American citizens in the United States since the World War II period incarceration of over 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry—most of whom were American citizens.

Navajos and Hopis lived side by side in the Black Mesa region of northern Arizona for centuries. The 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish arrival to the Southwest, the regional slave trade, and the Navajo pastoral lifestyle compelled scores of Navajo people to move closer to Hopi villages. Land disputes between the pastoral Navajos and the dry farming Hopis flared up from time to time. Altercations over land increased in frequency after President Chester Arthur signed an Executive Order on December 16, 1882 setting aside approximately 2.5 million acres of land “for the use and occupancy of the Moqui (Hopi) and such other Indians as the Secretary of the Interior may see fit to settle thereon.” The state of affairs was exacerbated with expansions of the Navajo reservation. By 1934 the Navajo reservation completely surrounds the 1882 Executive Order Area (EOA). Navajo living on the EOA gradually outnumbered the Hopi, a factor that widened the scope of local land disputes (Tamir 1999:71).

Land disputes intensified in the 1940s as a result of an action taken by the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to the Indian Reorganization Act 4. The Secretary established 21 Grazing Districts on the two reservations (the Navajo reservation and the EOA) for livestock control and to improve range management and soil conservation. District Six, comprised of about 631,000 acres, was identified as an exclusive Hopi district located in the south-central portion of the 1882 EOA. In essence, that was the first partitioning of the EOA. All remaining districts were assigned to the Navajo Tribe. The Hopi Tribe protested the establishment of



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District Six. Due to increasing tensions between the two tribes, Congress passed the Navajo and Hopi Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 85-740) in 1950 that was intended to promote cooperation between the tribes by providing federal funding for the construction of infrastructure including roads, hospitals, radio and telephone communications. The Act also authorized funds for the development of off-reservation employment opportunities for members of both tribes and for the continuing relocation of Navajo and Hopi people to the Colorado River Indian Reservation. By 1957 hopes for cooperation and amicable resolution of land disputes between the two peoples had evaporated. The Hopi Tribe sought and got legislation from Congress, Public Law 85-547, authorizing both tribes to sue one another for title to the 1882 EOA. On August 1, 1958, the Hopi Tribe sued the Navajo Tribe under the authority of P.L. 85-547—the case is known as *Healing V. Jones*. In

1962, a U.S. District Court in Prescott, Arizona ruled that the Navajo and Hopi tribes have undivided equal rights to the surface and subsurface of the EOA with the exception of District Six (which remained exclusively Hopi). The area outside of District Six became known as the Joint Use Area (JUA).

Following the court decision a series of initiatives by the Hopi Tribe aimed at protecting the JUA's grazing resources resulted in a sequence of federal actions that had serious consequences for the

The Act ordered equal partitioning of the JUA between the Navajo and Hopi tribes and the relocation of people residing on land partitioned to the other tribe. It also established the Navajo and Hopi Relocation Commission (Commission) as the executive arm. The relocation was supposed to be completed in 1986. Instead it has been limping along for additional twenty odd years. After years of delays Senator John McCain (Arizona) introduced a bill that resulted in a 2006 amendment to the Land Settlement

households in Pinon. Eleven of these households provided home-sites to relocatee households who lost their entire customary land use area.

Pinon relocatees were relatively young; with a median age of 18.3 years, and the average education attainment of 7.7 years. Most relocatees were fluent in both English and Navajo, but older relocatees spoke only Navajo, and a number of children spoke only English. Most relocatees described themselves as 'traditional.' While at the time of the research unemployment in Pinon was higher than that of the wider Navajo reservation, the rates of employment and income among relocatees were generally higher than the norm in Pinon, a tribute to their relative employability (younger with higher education attainment) vis-à-vis the rest of the population in the community.

Some relocatees felt that their kin-hosts were reluctant to provide them with one acre home-sites due their own restricted land base. A young relocatee explained:

My aunt sort of did not want to let people move here because she had sheep and horses grazing here. We had no place to move and we had to move. Finally, she said OK and signed the papers.

Another relocatee recalled a similar experience:

The Commission just move you out (of HPL) and that's it. You have no place to go except this one acre. You know, it seems I got stuck right here in this one acre. Dela Bahe (the host) still thinks that she can run her sheep and goats and come into my house any time she wants. She acts as if this house is hers.

Traditional territorial buffers between residence groups that have been an integral part of Navajo settlement pattern, all but disappeared for relocatees who lost their entire traditional land use area. Disappearance of these buffers often resulted in host-relocatee land disputes that ranged from verbal

“Traditional territorial buffers between residence groups that have been an integral part of Navajo settlement pattern, all but disappeared for relocatees who lost their entire traditional land use area. Disappearance of these buffers often resulted in host-relocatee land disputes that ranged from verbal assaults, through vandalism, to physical violence.”

socio-economic fabric of Navajos living in the JUA. On July 1, 1966, the Bureau of Indian Affairs froze all residential, commercial, and infrastructural developments in the JUA unless the Hopi Tribe approved them. In 1972 proceedings, an Arizona District Court ordered drastic reduction of Navajo livestock and restricted construction in the JUA to developments approved by both tribes. These actions failed to resolve the land dispute. After a series of congressional hearings, the U.S. Congress passed, on December 22, 1974, Public Law 93-531—the Navajo and Hopi Indian Land Settlement Act (the Act). The Act intended to facilitate a settlement of all of the rights and interests of the Navajo and Hopi Tribes in the JUA and was subsequently amended in 1980 (P.L. 96-305), 1988 (P.L. 100-166), 1991 (P.L. 102-180) and 1995 (P.L. 104-15).

Act that calls for the completion of the relocation by September 30, 2008.

### Navajo Relocatee-Host Disputes

#### *The Relocatees*

Seventy-one Navajo households were originally slated to relocate to Pinon. At the time of my initial ethnographic fieldwork (October 1987 through December 1990) 47 relocatee households (171 individuals) had already relocated to Pinon. Twenty-seven households (57%) were relocated in five group moves (Navajo families that have relocated as a unit from Hopi Partition Land (HPL) to Navajo Partition Land (NPL) and whose replacement homes are within close proximity). I interviewed members of all relocatee households, as well as members of 293 other households—73% of the total number of

assaults, through vandalism, to physical violence. A middle age relocatee blamed the disputes on the relocation:

There are Navajos who hate us. We found ourselves in the middle, unwanted by the Hopi and by Navajo relatives of ours. We (relocatees and hosts) have the same blood, but why hate each other. It is not right. At the present time it is the same. We do not visit with relatives, the hate still continues. I hear a lot of bad words about us, but I just let it be and do not bother with it. Our hosts also complain about our livestock. They say "you relocatees already got new houses." But we cannot even herd sheep around here. Our relatives tell us not to use the land for grazing. At times we are even scared to go out to improve our living conditions, so we just stay in one place. We brought with us only a few sheep from our previous home. They want us to take our sheep somewhere else and not graze around here. Some of our relatives turned against us, no communication with them.

Another relocatee complained about vandalism that she attributed to the host family:

We do not get along very well (with the hosts) because we are having problems. They broke our window frames in the living room. The problems started when the (relocation) house was built. Before that they wanted very much that we move out here. The Commission said that when we move they (hosts) will probably get running water and electricity. But once the house was completed, the problems started.

Relocatees who did not experience disputes still felt crowded: "my neighbors are good to us, but we are too close to one another." Those who moved within their traditional land

use area retained at least some of their traditional territorial buffers and did not experience disputes with members of the host community.

#### *The Hosts*

The host families in Pinon were typically close kin of relocatees who provided home sites for them. Like other JUA residents, host families experienced the impacts of the livestock reduction, construction freeze, and other related hardships. Eleven host families provided one acre home-sites from their own cultural land use areas to each of the relocatee households. They were not compensated for the land they provided. On the contrary, some were forced to further reduce their livestock holdings to fit the new carrying capacity of their grazing land, or to otherwise accommodate relocatees' grazing needs.

Hosts were typically elderly—all but one were in their sixties or older. All host households were headed by women, authenticating both women's place in traditional Navajo social hierarchy and their customary rights to the land. A host explained:

That relocation house, the woman from that house is married into the family. That why it was decided that a house should be built there. They asked me if they could have a house built for them there and I approved. The other relocation house over there, the man is my oldest brother's grandchild, so he calls me *shinali* (paternal grandmother). He said that he wanted to move because the Hopi were forcing people out of the land over there, where he lived with his wife near her relatives. I told him too to go ahead and have a relocation house built for them over there.

Elderly Navajo hosts who lived alone expected the younger relocatees to help them in daily tasks. They also anticipated that utility services promised to relocatees would also extend to their homes. This was significant since after years of freeze on construction and

infrastructure electricity was available to only 38% of the households in Pinon and indoor plumbing was available to only 18%.

Most hosts' homes were located in the outlying areas of Pinon. The homes were small, only six had electricity, and none had running water. A host who was in her seventies lived in a tiny one room cabin about 10 miles from a paved road, had no electricity, no running water, and no form of transportation provided several home sites for a group move of relocatees. She was bitter that she herself did not qualify for relocation home:

I was told to move out of this area (HPL) long before the relocation begun, and I did. Later, my application was turned down... I moved here because my old home in the other sheep camp, over the (HPL) fence, was burned down by some drunks.

She complained that not only the relocatees do not help her with daily chores, but they asked her to pay for rides and for helping her hauling wood and coal:

They (relocatees) were crying to me saying that they are going to be taken away. They are all my youngest sister's children. So I signed (the home site lease) papers for them. They only look at me from inside their big homes all day.

In one case the hosts, an elderly woman and her daughter, insisted that they were not aware that relocatees would be sharing their customary land use area as well as occupying the one acre they had provided:

They (relocatees) never let me know that they are going to move here. Even though I am his sister it does not mean he can just go ahead and move. I live in this Hogan ((traditional Navajo octagonal one-room home) near their new house since I was twenty-one. But they (relocatees) told me 'this is mine, you stay away from here.' I

hope one day they will move away from here.

The case developed into a long and bitter dispute. The elderly host was very unhappy with the relocatees, which include the family of her married brother who moved from another community where they lived on the customary land use area of his wife's family—as customary in Navajo tradition. Since relocation, her brother separated from his wife and moved out. She recalled:

Houses built for relocatees are on one acre lots and they have no right to use other land. We have the right to use the land, our birth places are on this land.... We hear other relocatees fighting with people over land. We still fight with her (daughter-in-law). Just recently we lost our sheep herd. We found out that one of her sons took them up to the mountains. My daughter asked me to go with her to check it out because she was afraid to go alone. When the boy was away from the house we went to check where the sheep were. The next thing we know, she [daughter-in-law] was running toward us with a big rock. Before we could even move she hit the windshield of our new truck near the place where my daughter was sitting. I hope that one day they will move out to a place they will feel comfortable at and that everything will be healed.

In another incident the host's daughter was herding sheep not far away from her uncle's relocation home when suddenly shots were fired in the air—she was scared and run away. She charged that the relocatees sold their land and way of life for a new big house echoed the sentiments of some other Pinon residents who did not provide home sites for relocatees.

### Pinon Twenty-Years Later

Long term cultural, behavioral and economic consequences of forced relocation

on human populations bring to the fore a wide range of mixed results. On one hand are claims of increased multi-dimensional stress, substance abuse, and the breakup of families. On the other hand, are new employment opportunities, improved housing, improved infrastructure, and revitalization of beliefs and practices.

The single most important component determining the present status of Pinon is the fact that the chapter lies within the former JUA. Compared to other chapters on the Navajo reservation, Pinon is remote and populated by very traditional Navajos. One paved road, Navajo Route 4, connects Pinon with neighboring chapters and with the Agency Town of Chinle, Arizona. The rest of the roads are graded and un-graded dirt roads notorious for their ruts and "wash board" surface during dry months. After rain or snow these roads often become impassible due to mud or flash floods. There is visible evidence of, and lots of complaints about, drinking of alcohol and of hair spray. There is also a marked rise in substance abuse, especially methamphetamine, and problems associated with youth gangs have been spun out as well. The Sun Dance movement on the Navajo reservation, that was initially a reaction to the forced relocation from the JUA, spread to Pinon where its focus is on addressing youth related substance abuse and gang problems (Tamir 2006).

The hub of political and administrative activities is "Pinon village." Located there are the chapter house, a senior citizens' center, a post office, a gas station, a mini strip-mall (a supermarket, a Laundromat, and three other outlets), the Bureau of Indian Affairs dormitory, three missions (Catholic, Presbyterian, Mormon), Navajo Housing project, and few Navajo homes. Most of the businesses opened during the mid 1990s. Also during the 1990s Pinon's K-9 public school was expanded to include a high school, a much needed development that eased the burden of children spending hours every days en-route to and fro Chinle High School. Still, some parents prefer sending their children

to off-reservation boarding schools or move to Flagstaff or even Phoenix in order to provide their children with better education. More recently a full service Indian Health Service clinic and associated housing opened in December 2006.

According to the 2000 census, there are 1,190 people living in Pinon, 92% of the population is Native American (46.3% under the age of 18). Most of this population was born and raised in Pinon and vicinity and many households are still widely dispersed, the result of Navajo traditional land use patterns. The average household size in the community is 4.7. Most Pinon families live in small wood-frame houses and in *hogans* (traditional Navajo octagonal or round Navajo homes) which they build themselves. Many homes are overcrowded, have cement or dirt floors, and some still lack electricity or indoor plumbing. Most households use wood and coal for heating, and butane for cooking. When possible, homes are situated along the major paved and graded dirt roads, along school-bus routes, and parallel to power lines. The median income of a household is \$19,271. Of Pinon's population, 52.1% is under the poverty line. Out of the total population, 54.7% of those under the age of 18 and 100% of those 65 and older live below the poverty line. The rate of Navajos living below the poverty level is the highest in the U.S., even among American Indians.

### The Context

Major development project such as the construction of the Kariba Dam in Zambia, the Aswan Dam in Egypt, and Three Gorges Dam on China's Yangze River produce major environmental disturbances, promises of anticipated benefits, and the forced relocation of local populations—all for the "public good" (Hansen and Oliver-Smith 1982; Goldsmith and Hilyard 1986; Scudder 1973; Cernea 1999). Natural disasters such as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami that caused widespread devastation leaving an estimated 230,000 people dead and scores homeless, the 2005

Hurricane Katrina where at least 1,836 people lost their lives also forced scores of people to relocate, and the 2008 Cyclone Nargis that may result in the death of as many as 100,000 people in Myanmar (Burma) also left about 1.5 million people without provision of clean water, sanitation, and homes. Armed conflicts such as the Arab-Israeli dispute, the war in Iraq, and the Darfur conflict in western Sudan resulted in the displacement of millions of people. The forced relocation that resulted from the Navajo-Hopi land dispute is unique: it is not part of a development project, it did not result from a natural disaster, and it is not an outcome of an armed conflict. It is primarily the result of a land dispute between two tribes. The Navajo Nation was primarily interested in avoiding massive relocation of its people.

The Navajo-Hopi land dispute has played out for over more than 100 years, with multiple missed opportunities and deadlines for conflict resolution. A close look reveals that the federal government created a legal dispute when it created the EOA for the Hopi and "such other Indians," which included the Navajo inhabitants who lived in the EOA. The government compounded the land dispute by creating grazing districts that perpetuated individualism and relocation from District 6 that in turn were further enhanced by courts with the creation of the JUA. The federal government also grossly underestimated the number of Navajo and Hopi households that would be forced to relocate, and overlooked the multi-dimensional impacts of forced relocation upon them (Tamir 1999, 2000). The good news about the Navajo-Hopi land dispute is that the tribes are no longer at daggers drawn over it. Legal aspects of the land dispute have been settled, and the fewer than 100 Navajo families still living on Hopi Partition Land are either leasing the land or preparing to relocate. The bad news is that the original estimated cost of the relocation was \$40 million; the actual cost exceeded \$480 million. The cost of human suffering is incalculable.

## Conclusions

It has been 20 years since I first arrived to Pinon on that dreary and wet October day. Since then some of the relocatees and all the hosts have passed on. Children of

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“The Navajo-Hopi land dispute has played out for over more than 100 years, with multiple missed opportunities and deadlines for conflict resolution.”

relocatees are in limbo—the forced relocation of their parents left them with no cultural land use rights of their own. They are landless in a culture where “being Navajo” is directly tied to one’s cultural land use area. Some of them live in Navajo Housing Authority homes in Pinon’s version of a ‘project,’ few moved into the land using area of their spouses; and, others have left Pinon and the reservation altogether. Many in Pinon and vicinity, while pleased with having a supermarket, K-12 schools, and a clinic also blame the widespread methamphetamine and alcohol abuse, and the spread of various juvenile delinquencies in the area on the land dispute, the forced relocation experience, and on related loss of “Navajoness.”

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# EDITOR SEARCH

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, *HUMAN ORGANIZATION*

The Society for Applied Anthropology announces a search for a new Editor-in-Chief of *Human Organization*, a journal that has been recognized as a leading scientific publication in applied anthropology since its founding in 1941. It is published four times annually and is directed toward interdisciplinary as well as anthropological audiences.

The term of the current co-Editor team, David Griffith and Jeff Johnson, ends in December, 2010. The successor's term will begin on January 1, 2011. The search is being initiated now to provide for a smooth transition.

The initial term of service for the new Editor-in-Chief will be three years. The term is renewable for one additional three-year period. The Editor-in-Chief of *Human Organization* also serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Society for Applied Anthropology.

In addition to making at least a three-year commitment to the journal and to serving on the SfAA Board of Directors, candidates for the position should be able to secure release time (where possible) and other institutional support to supplement SfAA resources, constitute an Editorial Board, promote and cultivate the journal, and offer editorial expertise and direction. Additional criteria include:

1. Experience as a journal editor, associate or guest editor, and/or editorial board experience
2. A strong record of publication in applied social sciences
3. A history of involvement in applied social science research/practice

Persons interested in applying for the position should provide the Publications Committee early on with a letter of intent, which can help initiate discussion and provide potential applicants with necessary information.

The actual application should contain the following:

1. A letter of interest that indicates the candidate's experience, ideas, and vision for the journal, and any support (such as release time, space, equipment and editorial assistance) that will be available from the host institution
2. A letter of from the candidate's institution that demonstrates commitment to provide resources such as course release time, teacher/graduate assistants, computer support, office equipment, and so on
3. Additional letters of support from colleagues and professional associates
4. A copy of the candidate's vita or resume
5. A proposed budget

Additional material may be requested by the Publications Committee at a later date.

The application deadline is September 15, 2009. Applications should be sent to:

Society for Applied Anthropology, HO Editor Search, P.O. Box 2436, Oklahoma City, OK 73101-2436

Questions concerning the position can be directed to Nancy Schoenberg, Publications Committee Chair ([nesch@uky.edu](mailto:nesch@uky.edu)). We especially encourage interested individuals to contact current editors David Griffith ([GRIFFITHD@ecu.edu](mailto:GRIFFITHD@ecu.edu)) and Jeff Johnson ([JOHNSONJE@ecu.edu](mailto:JOHNSONJE@ecu.edu)).