

destinations make it harder for students and especially for the under- and unemployed to attend. We are quite sympathetic with this position, but note that always meeting in the US imposes similar problems (given global economies probably even more severe) for many of our members and potential members located outside of the US. And of course US members in the northeast can probably get to Montréal more reasonably than to California; those in Florida could probably travel more reasonably to the Caribbean than to the west coast; those in the southwest to Mexico, the northwest to British Columbia, and so on. Every location is more convenient for some than for others.



Statue of Victoria at Occupy Montréal, November 2011. Photo courtesy F Gleach

Another difficulty is the overall high cost of the AAA, regardless of where it's held. This year this was dramatically highlighted by the Canadian organization Anthropologists for Justice and Peace/Anthropologues pour la justice et la paix, which organized "The Accessible Anthropological Assembly: An Alternative for Montréal 2011" noting "a context of commodification of knowledge and of increasingly exclusive access to knowledge" (<http://anthrojustpeace.blogspot.com/2011/11/tne.html>) and referencing the expense of both the meeting and the venue. This was held in the afternoon of "student Saturday," and people were invited to briefly present on themes relevant to those issues. Remember that this was also at a time when the Occupy Wall Street movement was being evicted and attacked at various locations, and that the Occupy Montréal camp was set up in Victoria Park, just

a block from the convention center.

Over the years there have always been ways that students and others have evaded paying registration and membership fees—another way of recognizing the high costs for some of our constituencies. As long-term members, going back to our graduate school years, we remember packing into hotel rooms and carpooling, but we also recognize as long-term members that there are legitimate, constantly rising costs to both sustaining the organization and running the annual meetings which can only fairly be covered if shared among us all as much as possible. AAA leaders are largely aware of these issues, and they are of great concern. Might new technologies help to democratize things? Other possible solutions? There are AAA committees that would love to hear suggestions.

I did have today one of the most exciting and stimulating experiences in my years of AAA activity: I spent a couple of hours in the undergraduate student poster session, a collection of over 40 presentations by our young colleagues from across the US and Canada with an amazing breadth of interesting projects. We hope to co-sponsor this event next year, and more than ever urge people to produce and to attend and interact with poster presentations.

Writing on the last night of the conference, mentally and physically exhausted and considerably lighter in the wallet, these are some of the experiences I'll carry home. Next year, San Francisco, and we will continue struggling with the problems to try and make such experiences possible for others.

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Society for Medical Anthropology

KATHLEEN RAGSDALE, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Engaged Critical Medical Anthropology: Five Steps for Influencing Conversations on "Illegal" Im/migration and Health

By Sarah S Willen (U Connecticut), Jessica Mulligan (Providence C) and Heide Castañeda (U South Florida)

Of the estimated 214 million people who have migrated from poorer to wealthier countries in search of a better life, 20–30 million have migrated on an unauthorized or "illegal" basis. All have health needs, or will in the future, yet most are denied health care available to citizens and authorized residents. To many in receiving countries, the exclusion of unauthorized im/migrants intuitively "makes sense." As scholars of health, social justice and human rights, however, we find this logic deeply flawed and are committed to advancing a constructive program of engaged critique. In our view, medical anthropologists can, and should, claim an active role in reframing scholarly and public debates about this pressing global health issue.

This objective guides the work of the "Take a Stand Initiative on Unauthorized Im/migration and Health," initiated in 2008 under the auspices of the SMA's

Critical Anthropology of Global Health (CAGH) special interest group. To date, the collaborative activities of the initiative include a commentary in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* (Take a Stand Commentary: How Can Medical Anthropologists Contribute to Contemporary Conversations on "Illegal" Im/migration and Health? *MAQ* 25[3]: 331–56), excerpted below, as well as a new multidisciplinary blog, "AccessDenied: A Conversation on Unauthorized Im/migration and Health" (<http://accessdeniedblog.wordpress.com>). "AccessDenied" features analytic essays, news round-ups, a dynamic working bibliography, and suggested action steps. New contributors are particularly welcome.

A growing body of medical anthropological scholarship attends to the negative health implications of migrant "illegality." We celebrate this important new work, but also contend that two issues urgently need to be added to this emerging research agenda. First, we need a clear, robust theoretical framework for research on "illegality" and health in our own field—a challenge we take up in our *MAQ* commentary. Second, we need to put medical anthropology more actively in dialogue both with partner disciplines that are now consolidating their own research agendas, and with wider public discourses. We propose five ways medical anthropologists can take more active roles in shaping scholarly discourse and influencing public and policy debate:

- We can listen differently;
- We can teach differently;
- We can democratize knowledge production;
- We can translate ourselves for colleagues in other disciplines; and
- We can write differently to communicate more effectively with the broader public.

Below, we elaborate briefly on practical ways to achieve these goals. We can listen differently by engaging a wider range of informants than usual; by avoiding the assumption that we already understand actors' motivations or political investments; and by conceptualizing our work as engaged listening, rather than giving voice. We can teach differently by, for instance, approaching advocacy as a form of teaching to a broader-than-usual audience. Strategies that work in the classroom—including clear examples that call attention to power, cultural context, and historical depth—can translate well into non-academic settings. We can democratize knowledge production by allowing collaboration to more thoroughly inform all phases of the research process. We also need to translate ourselves for colleagues in related fields such as public health, clinical medicine, nursing, sociology, political science, and bioethics and show them what our field can offer. And since issues of im/migration, otherness, deservingness and human rights are both urgent and contentious in our home and research communities, we need better ways of communicating with the world outside of the academy. One particularly valuable strategy is to write differently through more traditional channels such as policy papers, newspaper op-eds, and organizational newsletters, as well as through channels that utilize new media outlets, including blogs like AccessDenied.

The health-related challenges associated with unauthorized im/migration are growing in scope and magnitude. At the same time, public discussions about unauthorized im/migration are becoming increasingly

polarized and contentious. We need a reinvigorated critical medical anthropology that is ready to intervene in the public debates through which exclusionary health policies come to be accepted as common sense. The time is ripe to sharpen our research agenda and expand our roles in public and policy conversations about unauthorized im/migration and health.

To submit a contribution, contact SMA Contributing Editor Kathleen Ragsdale (kathleen.ragsdale@ssrc.mssstate.edu).

Society for Psychological Anthropology

JACK R FRIEDMAN, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Report from the 2011 SPA Biennial Meeting

Every so often one is presented with an historical reading of the state of the discipline that seems to capture the *Zeitgeist*. I think that, given the frequency with which it is referenced as a relatively unproblematic overview of several decades of anthropological theory, Sherry Ortner's "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties" (1984) is one of those touchstones. At the 2011 Biennial Meeting of the SPA in Santa Monica, Joel Robbins (UC San Diego) gave a keynote address entitled "Beyond the Suffering Slot: Toward an

Anthropology of the Good" that, in my opinion, has the potential to shape our understanding of one of the central themes that has preoccupied anthropological thought since, at very least, the late-1990s. Unlike Ortner's review, though, Robbins did not argue that particular, well-defined, new theories have gone into ascendance over this period; rather, he argued that a new object of analysis—the suffering subject—has emerged, functioning to address so much of the anxiety and uncertainty that was created by the crises of the 1980s–90s. In essence, by emphasizing the suffering subject he suggests that anthropologists have been able to sidestep the problems of "exoticizing," "othering," the "impossibility of representation," and other pitfalls exposed during the 1980s–90s by seeking the universal and shared suffering in the people who we study.

The audience to which this paper was delivered—psychological anthropologists—was an interesting one because, in many ways, psychological anthropology has always had to walk the line between the universal and particular, between culture and individual, between psychology and idiosyncrasy. It is interesting, then, that Robbins would emphasize a conceptual shift toward "suffering"—an object of study that benefits greatly from the tools afforded by psychological anthropology—as the strategic move that provided anthropologists a way of shifting their focus away from the profoundly "burdened" and "unreflective" anthropology that came before the crises. One of the

questions that this begs, then, is: Does psychological anthropology suffer the same fate or focus on the same suffering as other anthropologists? I feel like this is a question that might be important for psychological anthropologists to think about in the coming years.

Predictably, audience response to such a bold, grand historical narrative was mixed as some argued that Robbins' periodizations were incorrect ("there have always been people doing ____") and that his claims were too broad to cover all of the particular research agendas that have defined anthropology since the 1980s–90s. My own sense was that a very significant research agenda in anthropology—that which has focused on new social movements—was excluded or was periodized incorrectly. However, these objections are not surprising when one is trying to address an entire 20-or-so year span in a discipline as diverse as anthropology in a 45-minute talk. At the same time, few respondents actually addressed the more fundamental—and, in my eyes, strongest—argument that Robbins made: that the emphasis on an anthropology of suffering, on the dissection of suffering in all its forms, the near-Talmudic reading of every behavior tinged with sorrow, every complaint, every moment of melancholy in the field, helped anthropologists to move beyond the feeling that one had neglected the real, experiential world of our subjects. Othering is replaced by narratives of pain and suffering meant to reveal that the anthropologist recognizes the universality and shared nature of

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