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Collaborative Ethics: Development and Implementation

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Texas

continued from page 23

that human rights abuses in Texas are no less obvious or endemic, only the public focus is missing. For example, the human rights of immigrant workers are violated when the construction industry in which they are employed does not provide safe and healthy working conditions, fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value, or they are prohibited from joining trade unions and other organizations or associations. The human rights of prisoners are violated when they are not given fair trials and when they are subjected to treatment that is degrading or lacking in respect for their basic human dignity. The fundamental right to life is violated by state-sponsored execution

HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

with alarming frequency. The human rights of indigenous people are violated when the state refuses to recognize their right to self-determination, and when state-sponsored projects (such as the construction of a wall on the US-Mexico border) impede their cultural practices and disrupt their access to traditional burial grounds and worship sites. The right of all people "to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being... including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services..." is violated when thousands live outside under bridges and tens of thousands have no access to health care. Black and brown people, when they suffer police profiling, are suffering a human rights violation in the form of racial discrimination.

In Central Texas, as in the rest of the US, human rights are violated every day. Yet, ideological blinders firmly in place, we often don't recognize them as such. Perhaps more importantly, even when we do identify them, we fail to challenge the government on them, thinking strategically that it will be more effective to approach the problem in a different way. This is in part because the US has not ratified many of these international agreements on human rights, and therefore is not legally bound by them. However, human rights by definition derive from "the inherent human dignity of all people" and it is important to state that these rights exist, regardless of ratification, and that the US government has a moral obligation to respect them. By failing to do so, we let the US off the hook for its abuses, and in turn contribute to the prevailing logic that human rights violations don't happen at home.

Shannon Speed is an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests include human and indigenous rights, gender, and activist research. She recently published Rights in Rebellion: Human Rights and Indigenous Struggle in Chiapas (Stanford U Press 2007).

Collaborative Ethics

Development and Implementation

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As part of our recent graduate class in anthropological ethics and professionalism, we were privileged to hear Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban present a lecture on "Anthropology and Ethics in America's Declining Imperial Age." Fluehr-Lobban's visit to our campus highlighted the challenges anthropology faces as western imperialism declines, given both anthropology's embeddedness in historically hegemonic institutions and our frequent interest in studying such institutions. Our subsequent discussions led us to wonder what contributions anthropologists can make in illuminating new patterns of imperialism in a context where nations, NGOs, corporations and communities all influence each other. As anthropologists, we work in the middle of and negotiate among these groups' often competing interests, which means that we must develop new avenues for ethics education and collaboration.

Since its 1998 revision, the AAA Code of Ethics has encouraged the inclusion of ethics education in anthropologists' professional training. The current commission charged with reviewing the code has highlighted the challenge of setting standards for ethical conduct that would apply in working with and for a range of stakeholders. Ethics education, as in our experience, can illuminate the interrelation-

in both data collection and data interpretation. Through collaboration, archaeologists can work with local groups to help prevent looting and subsistence digging, and, when appropriate, help advocate for sustainable cultural heritage tourism. In this capacity, anthropologists can assist local scholars and communities in applying for international grants or special status from institutions such as the EU or UNESCO.

Because of the wide-ranging nature of collaboration, we recommend that the revised Code of Ethics consider how anthropologists can be socially responsible scholars and scientists in a range of collaborative situations. As cultural heritage becomes more politically and economically visible and important in a given situation, people who are not scholars, informants or descendants become more invested in the preservation of culture. Collaboration, then, becomes more than just hiring members of descendant communities or coauthoring a paper with a local scholar; it becomes living out our recognition that anthropology is truly the result of reciprocity between anthropologists and the people with whom we work in order to accomplish a multitude of goals.

Over time, we realized the value of our class was not just in our course readings but also in our collective attempts to explore collaborative methodologies through discussion. Representing three subfields in anthropology (archaeology, cultural anthropology and biological anthropology), our class reaped the benefits of open discussions on ethics in the context of our rapidly changing world. We believe a

ETHICAL CURRENTS

ship among imperialistic powers, anthropology and communities at all scales. For this reason we propose that AAA develop an ethics caucus as part of the association's annual meeting.

This caucus might replicate the methodology of a Model United Nations conference through a formal moderated process in which groups and individuals representing all factions would enter into a dynamic and diplomatic debate on an ethical dilemma in anthropology. As with the commission's report, the goals of an ethics caucus would be to raise ethical issues and develop consensus statements regarding ethical anthropological practice, to be circulated through AAA. Anthropologists with different perspectives could benefit from sharing and discussing the rationales behind ethical decisions they have faced.

We also feel that collaboration is critical for the future of anthropology. In our class we discussed collaborative archaeology and the ways in which archaeologists can engage with descendant communities and local scholars

collaboration-related update to the code of ethics and AAA ethics caucus are important steps in addressing the ethics of working with multiple stakeholders to respond to the challenges faced by anthropologists and host communities alike.

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