



National Association for the Practice of Anthropology

e-Newsletter | February / March 2010

Welcome to NAPA e-News

Living in Hong Kong for the year has been both challenging and exciting. As many of you know, nothing truly prepares you for fieldwork and I must admit that I feel quite taken with the ups and downs, the joys and distress of my experience. But 2010 is The Year of the Tiger! All of the festivities have given me renewed energy and so many opportunities to learn about some similarities and differences between the ways we celebrate the New Year in Detroit's "Mexicantown" and the ways Mainland and Hong Kong Chinese celebrate the Lunar New Year. We all love any excuse to light off fireworks, spend time with family, and indulge in great food. Yet in Hong Kong, the formal celebrations last longer and I don't know anyone who is spending time in front of the television watching football. Shops have been closed down and outdoor markets have opened to sell beautiful flowers and miniature orange trees. I am so pleased that I brought home-grown Detroit-dollars to give away.



"Detroit Cheers" photo courtesy of Model D Media:
www.modeldmedia.com

According to tradition, the powerful grace and brave-independent spirit of the Tiger protects the household from fire, thieves, and ghosts. At the same time, the Tiger often finds trouble in its tendency to take risks and live dangerously. The brave courage of the Tiger is bolstered by the perpetual search for excitement. The Tiger protects and charms, leads and performs, rebels and stands for justice. Contemplating the meaning of the Tiger has me thinking about our own traditions in the United States generally, and Detroit's Mexicantown specifically. What is the meaning of our celebration? How do totemic identifications shape New Year rituals and traditions? How do we negotiate the work and labor in the context of celebration? What do our symbols, rituals, and practices communicate to us and to others?

I hope you'll let me know if you have any thoughts or observations about celebratory rituals in the United States or elsewhere. I am particularly interested in the ways that celebration informs or adds-value to the practice of applied anthropology.

In the meantime, I hope you will enjoy this edition of NAPA's e-News. We have several great volunteer opportunities for you so please contact us. This edition features a great article about fieldwork at General Motors by Emily Altimore as well as information on AnthroNews CFPs and the Fall 2009 & Spring 2010 NAPA Bulletins.

Gong Xi Fa Cai! Kung Hei Fat Choy!
May you make lots of money! Happy New Year!

Elizabeth Nanas @
enanas@wayne.edu

In This Issue

- 1 Welcome
Elizabeth Nanas
- 2 On Mary's Mind
Mary Odell Butler
- 3-4 Bankruptcy, Restructuring, and Change
Emily Altimore
- 4 NAPA Bulletin:
Fall 2009 and Spring 2010
- 5 Anthropology News CFPs

On Mary's Mind

Well, it's wintertime everywhere. I'm not sure what your problems may be, but here in the mid-Atlantic it has been the snowiest winter in memory. At the high point I had 40 inches of snow in my yard. The pond was frozen, the geese abandoned me, it was a depressing gray and white world. In the midst of it all, there was an insane robin who was in complete denial of the whole thing. Not a bad idea actually.

We all had a wonderful time at the AAA meeting in Philadelphia in December. There were many NAPA events, including the Annual Business Meeting and the regular meeting of the NAPA Governing Council. Especially productive was the "Stay Connected" Special Event in which many of us came together to talk about what you need from your organization and what we can do for you. Events like this help the NAPA leadership to understand where we are reaching our constituency and where we might look for new ways to help. I met many of you at this event and I kept a list of all who expressed an interest in becoming involved in NAPA's work. Stay tuned.

We have numerous volunteer opportunities in NAPA right now. NAPA has committees for Communications (the Website among other things), Ethics, Local Practitioner Organizations, Membership, Mentoring, Organizational Relations (the Employer Expo), Program, Publications and Workshops. **We especially need people to work on the Communications Committee and on Organizational Relations.** However, all committees are eager for new people. The names of committee chairs and the charters describing what their committees do will soon be up on the website. For more information now, you may email me, maryobutler@verizon.net, and I will put you in touch with the chairperson of the committee you are interested in.

NAPA Special Interest Groups (SIGs) try to build community among practicing anthropologists working in specific employment sectors. There are currently three SIGs: the Design Anthropology Interest Group, the Evaluation Anthropology Interest Group, and the Occupational Therapy Interest Group. The Design Anthropology Interest group is gearing up for new activities under the leadership of Chris Miller. The Evaluation Anthropology Interest Group, led by Eve Pinsker, will be working on developing sessions in Evaluation Anthropology at the 2010 American Evaluation Association Meeting San Antonio, Texas as well as the AAA meetings in New Orleans. The Occupational Therapy Interest Group ran a highly successful field school for anthropology and Occupational Therapy in Antigua Guatemala during summer 2009 and will do so again in summer 2010. Gelya Frank is the head of the OT SIG. I urge you to **take advantage of these interest groups** if they are in areas of interest to you.

NAPA is working hard to improve and deepen the content of the website. I have appointed a Task Force led by Ken Anderson to review the website and make recommendations for improvements. NAPA has hired Mike Scroggins to help the Communications Committee develop content—news and job announcements—for the webpage. I know that there have been some glitches in the startup of the new website. I thank you all for your comments and your patience. We are working on it.

Finally, as much as we would all like to go to the tropics right now, **we have cancelled the NAPA Spring Governing Council meeting** that was to be held in conjunction with the SfAA meeting in Merida, Mexico. We are **replacing this meeting with quarterly conference calls** to discuss NAPA business with elected members of the GC, with program chairs, and with anyone else who is interested. **These calls—like all NAPA meetings—are open to all of**

you. I will post announcements of them on the web page. If you would like to call in, email me and I will send you dial in information. The next GC meeting is as yet unscheduled but will be held in May.

NAPA's e-Newsletter is edited by Elizabeth Nanas. Ideas & submissions may be addressed to her at:
E-Mail: enanas@wayne.edu
Skype Phone: 313-915-4933
Skype Chat: enanas72

Sincerely,
Mary Odell Butler, NAPA President
maryobutler@verizon.net

Bankruptcy, Restructuring, and Change: Ethnographic Fieldwork in GM's Lansing Delta Township Assembly Plant

Emily Altmare
Michigan State University

In the winter of 2009 the future of General Motors (GM) looked bleak. Having worked as an intern at GM's Research and Development Center in Warren, MI for three consecutive summers under the mentorship of Elizabeth Briody I was both personally and professionally interested in what GM's potential bankruptcy would mean. After obtaining my master's degree in Applied Anthropology from Northern Arizona University I decided to pursue my Ph.D. at Michigan State University (MSU). MSU appealed to me for two main reasons. First, it offered me the privilege to work with Marietta Baba, who focuses on organizational culture and who herself has completed research on GM. Second, if I was in Michigan, dissertation research on an element of GM seemed promising.

With insecurity about GM's future looming, Elizabeth suggested that I propose a research project to Randy Thayer—the plant manager of Lansing Delta Township (LDT) at that time. LDT is one of GM's most modern and impressive facilities, for which, great care and preparation went into the construction of the physical plant as well as the culture. I petitioned that anthropological investigation of the restructuring efforts offered an opportunity to learn directly from those most affected by the changes. Field work and the cultural analyses resulting from it are designed to describe and subsequently explain cultural phenomena as those phenomena evolve through time. Participants in the culture under study would reveal their beliefs, expectations, values, and behaviors in patterned ways; the patterns could then be examined for consistency and longevity.

In winter 2009, when my project began, LDT had weathered a number of recent challenges, including manpower replacement, work rules, team-build issues, issues with its Global Manufacturing System (GMS), a two-tier wage system, and outsourcing. LDT also experienced a strike in April 2008. In addition, LDT faced turmoil from ongoing uncertainty about GM's future as well as sweeping changes to be enacted to help keep the corporation viable (e.g., regionalization of plant management, two-tier wage systems). These and other factors created and underscored the state of flux of the plant culture.

After receiving Randy's permission to conduct my project at LDT, IRB approval, and my committee's go ahead to collect pre-dissertation data I was allowed to begin my fieldwork. Initially, one of the greatest challenges, something my methods class did not explicitly cover, was feeling comfortable in an environment that was so foreign. Despite being a brief twenty minute drive from MSU's campus, the manufacturing environment felt other worldly—I had been naïve to think I would be exempt from some of the trials of fieldwork that one would anticipate when doing work abroad. Additionally, I lacked a job on the line, and I often felt my comparative inactivity was as overt as someone doing pushups in the middle of a library.

Luckily, these types of challenges were not deal breakers. To date my fieldwork—which is still in process—has been multifaceted. I have been given the opportunity for participant observation on the plant floor of LDT. This has included time spent in the body shop, paint shop, and general assembly. I have completed and continue to conduct formal and informal interviews with both hourly and salaried individuals, and I have participated in countless activities at LDT such as new employee training. As previously predicted the plant has been in a state of flux. In particular, the last calendar year has included the following events for the corporation: loans from the United States government, corporate leadership changes, plant closures, product line changes, union concessions, bankruptcy, and finally emergence from bankruptcy. At LDT some of the major changes that have occurred in addition to the large corporate events have included: transitioning from one shift to two with plans for a third shift in March of 2010, a regionalized plant management shared between LDT and the Lansing Grand River

Plant, changes in production schedules, and tremendous changes in the workforce—in particular the transfer of nearly 500 employees from the now closed Springhill, TN, plant to LDT. In addition, there have been changes to LDT's plant management and the loss of many salaried positions. My ongoing ethnographic fieldwork aims to document, analyze, and offer insight on the impact of these changes on the plant culture, the nature of work in a modern manufacturing plant, and the experience of a previously unimaginable event, bankruptcy, on a community that in many ways has been born and raised by GM.

To discuss applied anthropology in transforming manufacturing settings, please feel welcome to contact Emily at altimare@gmail.com.
If you have a fieldwork story to tell, please contact Elizabeth Nanas at enanas@wayne.edu.

NAPA Bulletin, Volume 32; Fall 2009

The Global Food Crisis: New Insights into an Age-old Problem

David Himmelgreen, Volume Editor

Satish Kedia, General Editor

The food riots and demonstrations that occurred in more than 50 countries in 2008 signaled the oncoming global economic recession. Skyrocketing food and fuel prices spurred on violence in poorer countries where there is no social safety net and in places impacted by food insecurity and malnutrition. Today, while the prices for some food staples have retracted some, the deepening economic recession poses a threat in wealthier nations including the United States and members of the European Union. The World Food Program (WFP) has cited the increase in world food prices as the biggest challenge in its 45-year history, calling the impact a “silent tsunami” that threatens to plunge millions into hunger. In this volume, practicing and applied anthropologists examine the current global food crisis in a variety of settings including Belize, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania, and the United States. Further, they use a variety of theoretical orientations and methodological approaches to understand the chronic nature of food insecurity and the ways in which global food policies and economic restructuring have resulted in increasing food inequities across the globe. Throughout this volume, the authors make suggestions for combating the global food crisis through the application of anthropological principles and practices.

Upcoming NAPA Volume 33: Spring 2010

Intersections of Faith and Development in Local-Global Contexts

Keri Vacanti Brondo and Tara Hefferan, Volume Editors

Satish Kedia and David Himmelgreen, General Editors

Over the past three decades, neoliberal economic models have encouraged states to withdraw from the provision of social and development services. In response, non-governmental organizations have mushroomed to meet the needs and promote the interests of those living in poverty. While scholarship on NGOs has exploded in recent years, anthropological attention to organizations and initiatives grounded in and inspired by religious faith has been scant. Through a case study approach, papers in this *NAPA Bulletin* engage with a range of religious development initiatives in health and social service delivery in Latin America, Africa, and the United States. Authors consider four central questions in their work: 1) How do the actors involved in faith-based initiatives perceive these endeavors as spaces to negotiate and contest social and economic injustices?; 2) To what extent do the individuals involved in faith-based development see a linkage between the provision of social, medical, and economic support service and evangelism?; 3) How are faith-based models shaped by the specific cultural contexts in which they emerge and evolve?; and 4) What is the role of the anthropologist as practitioner within studies of faith-based development initiatives? In exploring such questions, the volume also hopes to spur additional ethnographic investigation into the complex worlds of faith-based organizations and an expanded awareness of the varied ways that anthropologists are connected with them.

Anthropology News CFPs on Anthropology Education and Disaster Relief:

Topic: Anthropology Education (September 2010)

Proposal Deadline: March 25, 2010

Many have argued that we have reached a dramatic transitional moment in education with recent shifts in the global economic climate, developments in communication technologies, and fierce debate on education policy. What do these far-reaching changes mean for the future of anthropology education as it is conveyed and experienced in the classroom? We welcome proposals for In Focus commentaries, Teaching Strategies, Field Notes articles, photo essays, news stories and interviews that examine this topic from the perspectives of teachers, advisors, educational researchers, administrators and students.

Although this series focuses on the anthropology classroom itself, authors can examine the issue on a number of scales, from reflections on personal classroom experiences to critiques of broader educational trends and their impacts. Between these two sides of the spectrum, contributors might discuss the implications of specific recent initiatives, such as the Royal Anthropological Institute's effort to promote pre-university anthropology education through a new Advanced Level General Certificate of Education, the creation of new anthropology programs (from IUPUI to the Smithsonian) emphasizing hands-on training and practice, or Michael Wesch's use of YouTube in the classroom.

For complete CFP, see: <http://aaanet.org/issues/anthronews/CFP-AnthroEducation.cfm>

Topic: Disaster Relief and Recovery (October 2010)

Proposal Deadline: March 25, 2010

On January 12, 2010, a catastrophic earthquake hit Port-au-Prince, Haiti, killing over 200,000 people and leaving an estimated 1,000,000 homeless. AAA immediately began receiving inquiries from members seeking information on the status of colleagues in Haiti and how they might contribute to recovery efforts through providing expertise or funds to organizations such as Paul Farmer's Partners in Health. This outpouring of concern and interest in providing assistance was far from unanticipated, given our members' frequent engagement with human rights, public health and social justice issues, as well as the involvement of both practicing and academic anthropologists in short- and long-term disaster relief and recover efforts throughout the world.

For the October issue of *Anthropology News*, we seek proposals for In Focus commentaries, Teaching Strategies, Field Notes articles, photo essays, news stories and interviews on the topic of post-disaster relief and recovery, in Haiti and elsewhere across the globe. Have you been involved in such an initiative through research, advocacy, service provision or program assessment? Do you see opportunities where anthropologists might contribute more or differently to relief efforts, or where contributions are problematic? What types of expertise might anthropologists provide in responding to emergency situations and helping to sustain longer-term development efforts that might mitigate the impact of future disasters or improve quality of life and infrastructure on broader levels? How can work at former disaster sites and longer-term research with previously impacted populations inform present-day situations? We welcome article proposals addressing these themes and more.

Guidelines

To participate, email a 300-word abstract and 50-100-word biosketch to *Anthropology News* editor [Dinah Winnick](#). Proposals for photo essays should also include five high resolution photographs (tiff or jpg), each with a caption and credit. Selected authors will be notified of their status in early April, and full articles —commentaries of 1000-1400 words or shorter pieces of other article types —will be due early May.

Proposal submission deadline: March 25, 2010

Early submissions are encouraged