

organized, assertive and muscular indigenous movements, making effective strides by direct participation in the political and electoral processes of the state and with a goal of more inclusive citizenship rather than as a distinct "nation within a nation." For these reasons, the Morales presidency continues to remain under an international microscope.

One of the historical precedents of the Morales presidency is the installation of a largely indigenous cabinet. Morales also moved swiftly to begin to reverse Bolivia's legacy of neoliberalism. He repealed the infamous law 21060, which dates from 1985 and ushered in the privatization of Bolivia's public sector economy. He "nationalized" the country's hydrocarbon industry, including the hemisphere's second largest natural gas reserves. He also rejected the "zero coca" policy of the US-dictated War on Drugs, instead promoting the expansion of a legal market. But, most importantly, Morales and his MAS party have worked toward a full-blown constitutional referendum—perhaps the most repeated and important demand of the country's indigenous and social movements throughout the at times violent clashes of the last six years. Morales's legacy is largely tied to the success of this referendum.

If, however, Morales has successfully ridden a wave of popular enthusiasm throughout 2006, nine months into his administration difficult waters are on the horizon. The US has continued to view Morales as part of a leftist cabal led by Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, and has not embraced his administration. Morales's government has yet to figure out how to diffuse continued tensions in Bolivia's coca-growing regions without suffering a loss of legitimacy. Embarrassingly, five months after soldiers were sent to occupy Bolivia's gas fields and the new gas plan was put into place, the government has yet to bring on board transnational partners like Brazil's Petrobras, and had to put its plans on hold because of lack of funds. Ambitious agrarian reform measures, too, remain in limbo.

Even more importantly, despite the MAS having won an impressive 55% majority in the July 2 vote for delegates to the constitutional assembly, and since its formal inauguration on August 6, the referendum process has sputtered, frustrated by frequent procedural debates and hold-ups. An opposition to the Morales government has begun to take shape in the contest over the referendum process, led by four departments—Santa Cruz, Tarija, Pando and Beni—interested in limiting the extent of constitutional change. Called the Media Luna, these departments are pursuing greater regional autonomy and successfully engineered a day-long strike on September 8. This "pro-autonomy" effort—expressing Bolivia's long-standing social divides and proving capable of altering the course of constitutional reform—is Morales's greatest challenge.

Please send any comments, suggestions, ideas, including photos for future columns to Hortensia Caballero-Arias at [hcaballe@ivic.vc](mailto:hcaballe@ivic.vc) or at Centro de Antropología, IVIC, Carretera Panamericana Km 11, Caracas 1020-A, Apartado Postal 21827, Venezuela.

## Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists

DAVID L R HOUSTON, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

### Covering and the Tragedy of the Uncommon

This is, indirectly, a book review of sorts. Indirect because I am not going to break it all down and give a chapter by chapter accounting for it all, ending with a flourish of "wow." Easier to say simply "read this." But I digress, and it's only word 68.

One side of American political power seems to have slipped badly. As this column heads to press, the Foley scandal still consumes column-inches. Whither Republicans, many wonder. Buried in this melee are the accounts of the well-hidden operatives: the gay Republican staffers and assistants, those regular folks that quaff beers at the end of a long day, get into their beamers and head home to overpriced Georgetown apartments, just like everyone else. We barely knew they were there, might never have known save for scandal—a truly sorry way to become visible. Well-disguised, probably well-protected, these folks tend their identities through various means, not the least of which is through minimal intrusiveness.

Kenji Yoshino has produced a rather engaging auto-ethnography in his book *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*. Japanese born, he traces his own emergence as a gay lawyer in America through stories of parents, friends, lovers and teachers, each with a poignancy that speaks not just to the power of suppression, but also the yearning to break free. His theoretical approach draws on Erving Goffman's work, *Stigma*, and Yoshino deftly navigates the realms of identity-production in a society ill-equipped



Kenji Yoshino, author of *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*

to deal with difference. Passing, he suggests, has been a mainstay of survival for many, but is only one part, perhaps a small part, of the larger challenge for anyone stepping past the margins of "normal." Yoshino fully develops Goffman's concept of covering, which pertains to the intrusiveness and not simply the visibility of a particular trait. Lost in the Foley case is the admixture resulting from a peculiarly enforced covering. Staff members plying their political trades doubtless have reconciled their particular identities with the ocean of ethics in which they work. It is not a matter of demanding allegiance to a particular identity. Chastisement breeds a different sort of war.

To be gay, lesbian, bisexual or anything else that steps past heteronormativity and function in a

work environment as harsh as political Washington DC presents a particular kind of challenge. The maintenance of self needs more than affiliation at the end of the workday. Without debating numbers, it is safe to suggest that the alteric toiling in Foggy Bottom comprise a minority and that those embedded in the workings of the current party in power comprise still fewer. They are, shall we say, uncommon. In such an environment, outness may be, more often than not, a state of mind and not a quality that falls neatly along any of Yoshino's four axes: appearance, affiliation, activism or association. Here, assimilation takes on an almost fictional quality: it is "borg-like." Herein lies the tragedy. Assimilation borne of ideological affiliation, regardless of how one might feel about the given ideology, coerces Yoshino's covering to an extreme: to survive while being known, even out, here demands total absence of *any* intrusiveness. The results speak for themselves. Why do they do it? This may remain an unanswered question, but I would suggest it reaches much farther and much deeper than Rep Foley's office. Whatever the draw, too many, far too many, I would argue, are maneuvered, manipulated and even forced into covering for their real selves. To be rare, uncommon and forced into this state is a tragedy.

Unwinding such convoluted selves is something we as anthropologists can do quite nicely. Yoshino's approach centers in law, yet as I read this book, it is striking at how neatly the theoretical structures mesh with anthropological canon. At the same time, it is disheartening, even disquieting, to realize how little progress our discipline has made in shedding more light in this little corner. If covering is, as Yoshino suggests, a demand for non-intrusiveness, how might we approach the revelation of "hidden but intrusive"? Oxymoronic ethnographically, such deep revelations as we might offer do more than expose. It is possible they will heal. We should do as well.

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## Society for Linguistic Anthropology

JAMES STANLAW AND MARK PETERSON,  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

### Don't Think of an Elephant ... or a Donkey!

By James Stanlaw

As this issue of AN goes to press, the 2006 election is still light-years away as politicians measure time. A lot can happen in a month, with new scandals arising or old ones being forgotten. The Iraq War and various crises abroad are also unpredictable variables. But regardless of

what the price of gas will be at the beginning of November, there is no doubt from either the liberals or the conservatives that language will play a major role—perhaps the pivotal role—in the election’s outcome. That is, at least according to two polar opposite pundant-consultant-advisor-gurus, Frank Luntz and George Lakoff.

Frank Luntz is a pollster and self-proclaimed “communications professional” who heads a number of research firms that have been enthusiastically utilized by the current Republican administration. The Amazon blurb from his new book due out in January—*Words That Work: It’s Not What You Say, It’s What People Hear* claims that “the tactical use of words and phrases affects what we buy, who we vote for, and even what we believe in.” In a series of memos and position papers he has adroitly guided government officials (and even their spouses) to never talk about “estate taxes” (rather than “death taxes”) or the “privatization” of social security (which are really just “personal accounts”). Unabashedly, in April, 2005, Luntz even went on *The Daily Show* to demonstrate how it’s done: “drilling for oil” is “responsible exploration for energy,” “logging” promotes “healthy forests” and “manipulation” is “explanation and education.”

But what has most irked liberals is not just the clever and repeated use of euphemisms and Orwellian speech. What is more insidious is the so-called “Luntz GOP Playbook,” a 100-plus page Republican message-handbook which outlines their linguistic strategy for winning in 2006 ([www.politicalstrategy.org/archives/001185.php](http://www.politicalstrategy.org/archives/001185.php)). There, Republicans are shown how to spin issues in subtle ways to influence and affect American peoples’ perceptions. For example, because these days actually “job insecurity is warranted” (section 3, p 1) the war on terror must always be inextricably verbally linked to discourse about the economy.

George Lakoff, professor of linguistics and cognitive science at Berkeley, has recently written several similar guides as well: *Don’t Think of an Elephant!* (2004), *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision: A Progressive’s Handbook* (2006), and most recently, *Whose Freedom?: The Battle Over America’s Most Important Idea* (2006). In each of these books he argues that conservatives have, over the course of several decades, artfully defined virtually every issue in the public arena. In short, they have co-opted language for their own purposes. Language, Lakoff argues, is always framed in a particular conceptual and metaphorical context. For example, if you have something called a “revolt,” that implies several things: a population that is oppressed, a group of people trying to overthrow this oppression, and the moral high ground that naturally goes along with a group yearning for justice. So if you call winning an election not just a victory but a “voter revolt,” this demonizes the other person, who is no longer just an opponent but a tyrant. Likewise, “tax relief” implies that taxation is an affliction or problem, rather than a means to provide things like social services for the common good.

Lakoff claims that in America liberals and conservatives subscribe to two differing competing frames of the nation, both based on metaphors of the family. Conservatives act as “strict fathers” who feel they need to be strong to protect the family from the many dangers and evils in the world. A protector has to have a clear and unwavering moral vision and know right from wrong. Children are born undisciplined, and tough love is often needed to provide guidance. Liberals are “nurturant parents” who emphasize empathy for others. Lakoff believes almost all political discourse comes down to one of these metaphors. Ultimately, Lakoff believes, we can use this to explain why certain sets of beliefs cluster together, like conservatives, for example, often believing in a strong defense, the death penalty, laissez-faire economics, gun ownership and traditional family values.

However, in a recent review of Lakoff’s new book in the *New Republic* (October 9, 2006), the popular cognitive scientist Steven Pinker questions both the notion of metaphorical conceptual frames and the political conclusions that might be drawn from them. Pinker claims that thinking cannot be done directly in metaphors; the abstract concepts underlying the metaphors must be present first. Also, most metaphors are not really so metaphorical at all. Very few people, Pinker argues, actually envision anything processual when something is “coming to a head.” And in any case, there is no evidence from linguistics or sociological surveys that indicates that the exemplar father figure in the American mind is anything but indulgent and caring. Thus, Pinker suggests that perhaps all this fury over political rhetoric is just that: rhetoric ... regardless whether the election was spun or framed.

*Please send your comments, contributions, news and announcements to SLA contributing editors Jim Stanlaw ([stanlaw@ilstu.edu](mailto:stanlaw@ilstu.edu)) or Mark Peterson ([petersm2@muohio.edu](mailto:petersm2@muohio.edu)).*

## Society for Medical Anthropology

JANELLE S TAYLOR, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

### Your Newly Elected SMA Executive Board Members



Kitty K Corbett

Kitty K Corbett (PhD, University of California Berkeley and San Francisco, 1986; MPH, University of California Berkeley 1980) writes: “I’m pleased to serve as SMA treasurer. My career focus emphasizes bringing anthropology into public and population health endeavors. My projects target

health communication, participatory community based programs, tobacco, HIV/STD and antibiotic use. After California and Colorado, I am now professor in health sciences at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. I’ve worked internationally in Peru, Moscow, Taiwan, Mongolia and Mexico. I support SMA’s outreach to anthropologists plus others who are diverse in their backgrounds and interests but have overlapping goals.”

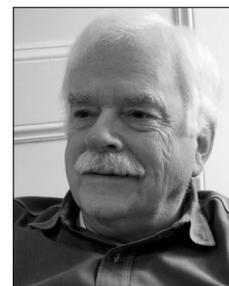
Ellen Gruenbaum is professor at California State University, Fresno, and does research on health issues of Muslim women in Sudan, especially female genital cutting.



Ellen Gruenbaum

In 2004 she was visiting professor at Ahfad University for Women in Omdurman, Sudan, and she studied the Sudanese feminist movement and the process of abandonment of FGC in rural communities. She also served as a research consultant to both UNICEF and CARE on female genital cutting abandonment projects in Sudan. She authored *The Female Circumcision Controversy* (2001) and a recent article on sexuality issues in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* (March 2006). She looks forward to compiling a historical perspective on the SMA and helping to shape its future.

Alan Harwood writes: “After completing my doctorate, I wanted to know if anything I’d learned in 25 years of formal education had any use in the



Alan Harwood

world. I therefore joined the research team of a primary health care program. This launched me as a ‘medical anthropologist,’ though I often resist that designation, considering myself a social anthropologist who has worked on health-related topics. In retirement I’ve been investigating the social history of the development of anthropology as an academic discipline in Britain. This quest has often led me away from the intellectual luminaries we read as students to minor figures who were politically important in this development.”

Lenore Manderson is professor at Monash University and holds an inaugural Australia Research Council Federation Fellowship, under which she is conducting research on chronic illness, disability, social relationships and well-being in Australia and Southeast Asia. The Federation Fellowship program comprises a series of related and complementary projects. It aims to contribute substantially to understanding how, in different cultural, social and economic settings and under different, more im-