

that traces the encounters between practitioners, clients, and suppliers of ritual goods, I show how these two apparently opposing processes work in tandem: the prognosticated homogeneity produced by consumer capitalism, and the end of the nation brought about by globalization—both of which have turned out to be theoretical fictions when taken as isolated propositions.

That is, an a priori public recognition of *brujos* (witch-healers) as repositories of Puerto Rican wisdom (in the context of the unresolved neocolonial political status of the island) has brought them the fame and celebrity that enabled them to openly incorporate African based rituals, bureaucratic practices, interventions and transnational religious commodities. Also, the entrepreneurial aspect of this form of spirituality leads to a strategic integration of transnational deities and healing and magic rituals, while *brujos* gain an unprecedented revalorization of their expertise in the public realm in line with mainstream consumer demands and multicultural ideologies.

Critics of the culture industry and consumerism tend to suggest that commercial forces taint the authenticity of culture, and in this case they would taint the spiritual effectiveness of *brujería*. Practitioners and clients, however, do not perceive material and spiritual progress as being at odds, but rather as intimately connected. Indeed, practitioners are driven by the attainment of *bendiciones* (blessings)—defined by a form of materialized spirituality, or material success as well as spiritual power—which presume the spirituality of commodities and the materiality of spirituality. Especially in a world guided by capitalist modes of production and the sensuous insatiable consumption of life styles and self-images, *brujos* and their clients take advantage of the opportunities opened up by the ideology of multiculturalism and identity politics. They openly expand the pantheon of spirits as well as their ritual expertise, protected by the idiom of heritage—yet outside of its constraints—showing that more than endangered species they are active participants in these global forces, speaking to them in their own particularly modern yet spiritual idiom.

This ethnographic reality—which is not unique to Puerto Rico, nor exclusive in its globality to the present—points to the complex interface of various, even contradictory sets of practices (as in our example, where *brujería* is guided by discourses of consumerism and heritage), which—to complicate matters even more—operate at various individual, commercial and public circuits. The challenge for anthropologists today—to follow up on Gabriela's appeal—is to integrate previous scholarship on each of these levels of inquiry (consumerism, nationalism, heritage), moving along and in-between various global sites equipped with a particular methodology and lens for each site, and to propose new theoretical formulations that might cross over traditionally unconnected theoretical traditions.

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Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists

DAVID L R HOUSTON, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Is Anybody Out There?

As *AN* enters summer hibernation, a few issues facing the anthropology community would seem to be clearly cast in the political arena. It is fair to say that not every anthropologist works on the subject of marriage. Smaller still is the subset of those with an interest in same-sex marriage. However, this issue confronts us all: as anthropologists and, for those residents in the US, as voters and citizens. Even those who are citizens of other countries have a stake. Same-sex marriage has stirred interest and discussion worldwide. It does impact a sizable minority worldwide and it speaks to ways in which various forces act to preserve their domains. Each of us needs to be part of the conversation at some level, whether through our practice or simply as active members of a community.

The release of a position statement about same-sex marriage by the AAA is important. We as anthropologists bring a great deal to this particular debate. Whether we feel that this position statement goes far enough, is just right, or does not go nearly far enough, we can agree that the knowledge and skill of the discipline provides a vast amount of relevant knowledge and data that can enlighten and expand the dialog and vocabulary about this debate. We can—and should—attempt to put this material in front of those shaping policy. This must include the entire spectrum of participants, not just those in positions of political or religious power.

The question is: will anyone listen? Anthropology is itself often fragmented, whether by internal disagreement over method or theory, or the degree to which one researcher should or should not go in an effort to further a particular project. Journalistic responses to our dilemmas can be a mixed blessing, on one hand driving reflexive debate, and on the other demonstrating the hazard inherent in sensationalizing matters of serious concern. If attendance at the numerous "El Dorado" discussions (as one example) in past meetings is any indicator, the converted hear these internal debates. Extending the debate—and the more considered self-evaluation that stems from that debate—beyond the doors of anthropology is far more difficult. The press tends toward self-interest—selling papers—and the public responds according to what they offer. Let's face it: this same public rarely has occasion to pick up a copy of *American Anthropologist* and read about an issue anthropologists might all share an interest in. How then do we put an issue before a larger audience and present useful supporting information? In the case of same-sex marriage, how do we do this and not risk antagonizing or alienating our hoped-for audience?

Does the public know, or even care, what anthropology has to say about this subject?



A confession is perhaps in order here. One of my own "pet peeves" in the discipline has always been the seeming obfuscation wrought through cacographic bluestockingism. Such *pattes de mouche* are too frequently, in my view, mandated in much the same way as 30-hour medical residency shifts: an expected part of growth within the full-fledged discipline. But this is not a diatribe on training. Rather, it is a call to arms in hopes of getting to the field at all. Eruditeness has a place in scholarly debate. Well-chosen and well-crafted prose can, among a similarly oriented audience, refine and clarify. It is not that the "great unwashed" are entirely incapable of literate exchange. We live in an age of information overload that is nearly Donnellian in scope; drowning is not an option when what is at stake reaches into daily life.

The debate over same-sex marriage demands more than an angry exchange of views. One does not have to identify as queer, or even as ally, to feel the impact of changes to *any* constitution. Placing the center of the issue before an overloaded public requires a departure from the rhythms of academe, a willingness to eschew obfuscation for openness, clarity and a degree of simplicity in order to be heard at all, a summer project that is useful to consider.

Please send any comments, suggestions, ideas for new columns or other material to David Houston at dlrh+an@uvm.edu.

Society for Linguistic Anthropology

MARK ALLEN PETERSON AND JAMES STANLAW, CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Language of Hate

The phrase "anti-Semitism" was in the news in February and March in accounts of Mel Gibson's new movie, in descriptions of a EU report on anti-Semitism, and in a recent demand by the American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee that Merriam Webster change its definition of anti-Semitism. What immediately strikes one about these reports is the extraordinary semantic range of the term "anti-Semitism."

When first coined in the 1870s, the term *anti-Semitism* usefully captured many of the nuances of racist hatred in Europe, where the Jews lived as a religiously, ethnically and linguistically separate people, and whose difference became the basis for social and political exclusion and persecution. In modern Europe, Jews are no longer the only ethnic and linguistic Semites. Even the most virulent anti-Jewish rhetoric by those of Arab descent is claimed by its speakers not to be "anti-Semitic" on the grounds that Arabs themselves are descended from Abraham and speak a Semitic language.