

ESC Rights

continued from page 33

of civil rights and economic justice. For advocacy in the US, the critical connections to be drawn are those between the country's racial, economic and social inequities.

One example of this work is the Ford-funded Center for Economic and Social Rights. Founded in 1993, the center is often described as an "anti-poverty group." It is also an original member of the USHRN. One of the center's goals is to promote the "development of a human rights culture" by getting governments and practitioners to think of economic inequality in terms of the progressive realization of rights rather than as a developmental aspiration. Their methods include quantitative measures such as budget analysis—typically not part of the research toolkit of human rights organizations—to "disaggregate" groups in terms of race, ethnicity or gender and to identify possible structural inequities. As such, the center's attention is on clean water, primary health care, basic education, housing, food, working conditions, fair wages and standards of living.

The National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, founded in 2004, is one new coordinating effort focused on ESC rights in the US. It emphasizes neglect of the uniquely US legacy in this arena, of which President Roosevelt's 1944 proposed Second Bill of Rights is one inspirational expression. Because, as the initiative puts it, "the face of poverty in America is not White," it directs attention to the predicaments of Black, Latino, immigrant and indigenous communities as "the poorest of the poor." Both organizations are concerned with the legislative erosion and increasing privatization of social safety net protections in the US. Therefore, they connect the absence of economic rights with the presence of structural racism. This is undeniably important.

The CERD Campaign

The USHRN actively pursues a human rights agenda as integral to a broader social justice

effort in this country. This includes the network's campaign on behalf of US adherence to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), one of the few international treaties ratified by the US in 1994. This effort goes to the heart of domestic challenges to human rights, since government resistance to the application of human rights at home—especially during the Cold War—largely derived from its sensitivity to accusations of racism from abroad. The NAACP's

pursuit of economic rights for racial minorities in the US downplays the cultural implications of race. The domestic human rights movement is pressing the case for ESC rights, but without the "C." *The Banyan Tree Paradox*, a 2006 primer for human rights advocates produced by the International Human Rights Internship Program, encourages not the pursuit of cultural rights, but rather awareness of the "cultural elements implicit in economic and social rights more generally."

HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

efforts to reach out to the international human rights community in the early days of the Civil Rights era, for example, were met at home by charges of subversion and treason.

New developments, however, have created some new momentum. On the one hand are evident signs of structural racism visible in the identity of the victims of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. On the other are new inroads, such as the citation of CERD in the 2003 majority decision of the US Supreme Court to uphold the University of Michigan Law School's affirmative action measures.

The USHRN's goal is to use treaty reporting to help "change the debate on rights and race at home." This involves moving US courts beyond just recognizing deliberate acts of racism to appreciating how discrimination is also expressed through the unequal implementation of laws and policies and unequal distribution of resources. In practice, this has meant that the USHRN focuses its attention on the Katrina disaster, law enforcement and prisons. These are taken up in terms of the human rights to shelter, health, education and protection from domestic violence where the question of race is a problem of redistributive justice.

The Culture of Rights

Entering into force in 1969, during the US Civil Rights struggle, CERD often refers to "racial or ethnic groups." CERD also asserts the "right to equal participation in cultural activities" in its Article 5. However, human rights advocates'

It is not uncommon for activists to invoke human rights as a set of "principled ideas." This, too, encourages starting with first principles. Paraphrasing what I have heard many times in human rights forums, "Everything starts with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." This conviction is part of the slippery slope argument made by activists anxious to protect the fragile international progress of human rights law by continuing to more firmly entrench the "culture of human rights" in national and international affairs.

But this view is at odds with the pragmatics of how human rights norms find their way onto the landscape of a particular national legal setting, if and when they do. I won't rehearse here the many issues raised about the conceptual difficulties posed by cultural rights, but I will stress that conceiving human rights as an expanding "culture of rights" informed by a collection of "first principles" is misleading. It misrepresents how human rights work is accomplished. For the US, human rights are a significantly local matter, determined from the inside out and the bottom up. Given that anthropology tells the story that "race is about culture," we would do well to consider why human rights advocacy tells a very different story.

Robert Albro teaches in American University's School of International Service, is a past chair of the AAA's Committee for Human Rights and researches questions relating to the work of global cultural policy. □

Climate Change and Human Rights

2007 AAA Public Policy Forum

SUSAN A CRATE
GEORGE MASON U

Overview

In this public policy forum we explored what anthropologists are doing and can do in response to global climate change (GCC) in contexts ranging from field sites to public and private sectors, to the anthropological community. We began with presentations by several practitioners currently engaged in some level of GCC intervention. These presenters described the climate change and human rights concerns of the Inuit

Circumpolar Council, international technical assistance to NGOs whose target communities are increasingly confronting climate change effects, and advocacy for socially responsible GCC policy as climate change affects human health. We then opened the discussion to the audience and all panel members (including three practitioners and academic anthropologists involved in climate change work) to explore how anthropologists can act as translators, advocates, educators and mediators in dealing with climate change issues, as well as which theoretical frames inform our queries and how to design effective research approaches.

Highlights

Our first speaker was Donald Goldberg, director of the Climate Law and Policy Initiative, Washington DC, and representative for the Inuit Circumpolar Council's (ICC) global climate change-based human rights lawsuit against the US. Although Donald could not attend due to a last minute emergency, we presented the brochure materials he forwarded, "Global Warming and Human Rights: A Short Primer," produced by with the ICC, Earthjustice and the Center for International Environmental Law for the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the

Framework Convention and the third meeting of the Kyoto Protocol in Bali in early December. These materials grounded us in what human rights are, how climate change presents abuses of those human rights, how affected communities are asserting their human rights and the importance of setting levels of action in Bali that preserve human rights.

Tim Frankenberger, president of Technical Assistance to NGOs (Tango International), next spoke about how GCC is affecting his organization's work in 40 developing countries due to unprecedented environmental change and a resulting increase in disasters and violent conflict. He emphasized that because there is less and less opportunity (donor monies) for development projects and more and more for disaster relief, we need to train our students in disaster assistance. He similarly stressed the need for anthropologists to work with communities to strengthen their adaptive capacity and resilience so they can respond to climate change's uncertain local effects as needed instead of continuing to wait for relief from outside. His other points included the need to (1) enhance household and community asset bases, particularly human and social capital; (2) increase measures that improve external services; (3) establish insurance and safety nets; and (4) develop proper mitigation strategies (eg, carbon trading and taxes).

Our final practitioner was Mike McCally, executive director of Physicians for Social Responsibility,

an advocacy organization representing doctors and medical professionals that has made global climate change the center of its human health rights campaign. Mike spoke about his organization's campaign to fight GCC through promoting increased energy security—improving energy efficiency and developing clean renewable energy sources for a healthier, more secure future. He

(George Mason U). Discussion included further points on the importance of tapping into anthropologists' knowledge of the cultural implications of global climate change, especially to the extent that many anthropologists work on local levels and are interpreters of culture, attuned to local conditions, customs and constraints. We also explored



VIEWS ON POLICY

emphasized that we have the technology and know-how to make these changes but we lack the political pieces, thereby highlighting the urgent need to focus on policy to realize this campaign. He offered the example of an effective letter-writing campaign (to Congressional representatives) in which a large group of well-known medical experts urged action on global climate change because of human health concerns.

Following the three formal presentations, the audience and panel members asked questions and made comments in what turned out to be a lively and effective forum. The six anthropologists on the panel included Shirley Fiske, consultant and adjunct professor (U Maryland) and former legislative assistant for energy and environment in the US Senate; Timothy Finan, professor and director of the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology; Gregory Button (U Tennessee); Lenora Bohren (Colorado State U); David Natcher (U Saskatchewan) and Susan Crate

how anthropologists can mediate and advocate for communities. We concluded that there are many opportunities for anthropologists to be involved in GCC policy, from ground-level research that facilitates adaptive capacity and knowledge sharing, to advocacy with NGOs, to connecting ground level research and carbon markets. The forum was followed the next morning by two back-to-back sessions on anthropologists' experience with GCC on the ground-level, spanning the globe from the Arctic to the Pacific Islands to Sub-Saharan Africa. As the organizer of both the forum and sessions, I can say that the interest in and breadth of work going on assures me that anthropologists can play an important role in addressing global climate change. Let us continue the dialog!

Susan A Crate is an assistant professor of environmental policy and social sciences at George Mason University. She is the author of Cows, Kin and Globalization: The Ethnography of Sustainability (2006). ☐

Tips from the AAA Press Office Writing an Op-Ed

JENNIFER STEFFENSEN
MEDIA RELATIONS ASSISTANT

As scholars and practitioners with invaluable knowledge about diverse peoples, anthropologists have a unique opportunity to reshape public dialogues, challenge misconceptions and add complexity to a wide range of contemporary issues. One of the most effective ways to share your knowledge with the public—and let your opinions be heard—is to write an op-ed. Even if persuasive writing is part of your professional toolkit, writing a successful op-ed requires knowledge not often taught in academia or professional circles. To help you get started, here are a few tips.

Know Your News

Successful op-eds must meet some basic criteria: They must be timely and controversial, or add a new insight to a current topic relevant to a publication's readers. To do this, track editorials and letters to the editor in local and national newspapers. Listen to talk radio and tune into blog conversations. These sources can help you generate ideas for addressing popular issues and help you develop awareness for potential markets for your piece.

Make Your Point—Fast

Op-Eds are shot-gun essays. You have 750 words or less to make a single, strong point and defend it. Unlike longer academic essays, there is no space for adding detailed descriptions, complex explanations or rebuttals. Less is more. Stay with one side of the argument and defend your message with a few key points.

Plan it Out

There's no single way to structure an op-ed, but the classic model follows journalism's inverted pyramid. Your lead paragraph should draw the reader in and clearly state your main argument. In subsequent paragraphs, you should provide the

evidence to prove your viewpoint. Evidence can include facts and statistics, or your personal research and professional experiences. Near the end, bring the discussion full circle and offer a policy recommendation or a call for action to your readers.

Engage Your Audience

Op-eds and academic articles have different audiences. Craft your language so that it is enjoyable to read and accessible to the public. You might try to illustrate your argument with a personal narrative or colorful anecdote. Share your knowledge responsibly, but write with simple sentences and a conversational tone. Above all, avoid jargon and clichés.

Timing Is Essential

If you know an anniversary is approaching, a report will be released or a key event will be held, prepare your op-ed to tie-in with this news. In general, try to submit an op-ed three days to two weeks before you'd like it to be published. If there's breaking news on the issue you'd like to weigh in on, drop everything and write that op-ed.

Start Local

Want to publish your op-ed in *The New York Times*? If you have a strong record of op-ed placement in national news publications or can quickly write an outstanding piece on breaking news, you might have a small chance. However, second-tier national publications, regional and local media outlets are a much safer bet. For local publications, find a local angle to a national issue.

How to Submit

When you send your op-ed, include a cover letter with contact information and a short bio (1-2 sentences) explaining why you're an "expert" on this issue. Most publications accept op-eds by email. Also, be sure to check the publication's submission guidelines. Most have rules against multiple submissions, especially to competing markets.

The AAA Press Office is a resource for members. For additional assistance, please contact Jennifer Steffensen (jsteffensen@aaanet.org). ☐