

I wish to dedicate this talk to the memory of Sam Dubal. Sam was an Assistant Professor at the University of Washington's Anthropology department. I knew him from the time that he was a high school student in Lexington, Kentucky. As class valedictorian, he objected to the school's use of a Christian prayer at graduation. He was rebuked by the authorities but he continued to make good trouble as an undergraduate at Stanford. He learnt Portuguese to do an undergraduate thesis on soccer in Brazil. His formidable intellectual abilities were developed further in the course of two advanced degrees, an M.D. from Harvard and a Ph.D. in medical anthropology from Berkeley working with Nancy Scheper Hughes.

Sam worked with fighters in the Lord's Resistance Army, who first came to prominence when citizens of the Global North joined forces with the U.S. government to bring vigilante justice to the "warlord" Joseph Kony. Sam worked with former fighters in the Lord's Resistance Army, and wrote against the humanistic impulses that led ordinary people and celebrities in wealthy countries of the North, NGOs, and governments to advocate violence against the LRA in the name of humanity. He was a fierce, uncompromising, anti-colonial intellectual.

No matter how much he disagreed with you, Sam was always generous as an interlocutor and interested in understanding your view, a generosity that was underlined by his ready smile and ringing laughter. I never heard him speak ill of people. He was a large hearted human being and a spiritually developed soul. Just over a year ago, just days before his 35th birthday, he went hiking alone in Mt. Rainier National Park and merged with Mother Mountain.

To honor his memory, the Dubal family has endowed the AAA Sam Dubal Memorial Award for Anti-Colonialism and Racial Justice, which will be given every year.

Decolonizing U.S. Anthropology¹

1. Introduction

I want to begin with two important acknowledgments. First, I want to thank the Organizing Committee led by Dr. Bianca Williams for putting together an outstanding program for this conference. Truth and Responsibility has been a timely and productive theme – please give a big hand to Bianca and the committee that worked so hard with her for two consecutive years through this pandemic. Second, I want to recognize the presence in this gathering of the person who has been the bedrock of my life, an outstanding and caring teacher, a brilliant anthropologist who has joint appointments in Anthropology, Asian American Studies, Film, Television and Digital Media, and Gender Studies at UCLA, my co-author and co-researcher, Prof. Purnima Mankekar.

[Slide 3]

After Ferguson, after Standing Rock, after the Black Lives Matter protests, after the crisis of refugees at the U.S.'s southern border, there have been renewed calls for a racial reckoning in U.S. anthropology. The relation between the feelings of dissatisfaction on the domestic front run

¹ Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Jessie Stoolman for incredible research assistance, and for helping shape the arguments in this paper. In addition to the three discussants, I have also incorporated extremely useful and detailed comments from Purnima Mankekar, Valerie Lambert, and Ramona Perez.

parallel to an unease over U.S. anthropology's failure to adequately address militarism, imperialism, and predatory capitalism abroad.

[Slide 4]

These calls echo at least two other previous moments in our discipline's history: in the aftermath of the Civil Rights movements of the Sixties; and, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Reaganism aggressively employed the War on Drugs to intensify the operation of a carceral society, especially for black and brown people, and the U.S. state became an accomplice in the mass murder of indigenous people in Central America, and started imperial wars in Grenada, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, and Angola, among other places. Without asserting a false equivalence among these moments—when decolonial and postcolonial theory appeared to be making some headway—we may well ask: Why are we again at a point when a new generation of scholars is complaining about the failure of U.S. anthropology to deal with questions of race and racialization, with continuing Indigenous land dispossession and denial of Indigenous sovereignty, and with the continuing global impacts of militarism, colonialism and imperialism? How does one simultaneously decolonize U.S. anthropology with regard to domestic issues and international ones? In other words, how does one decolonize and situate U.S. scholarship in a specific history without ending up re-centering the U.S.? My attempt to understand this today is an incitement to debate rather than a resolution of thorny problems.

I want to underline that nothing that I will be saying today is new: it has all been said before by others, and probably more eloquently. I am joining an ongoing conversation, placing myself in what the Métis scholar Zoe Todd (2021) has called “rivers of thought,” and my goal is to continue to draw attention to these issues because of their importance rather than to emphasize

the novelty of my intervention. The chase for theoretical novelty does not always lead to theories that are consequential for the world.

By relating the use of decolonizing theory, largely an outgrowth of struggles within the U.S. and with diasporic populations in the U.S. to postcolonial theory and subaltern studies, which arose mostly in the colonial contexts in the Global South, I do not imply that the two projects converge, but that there is productive frisson and synergy between the two.² These lines of productive engagement are visible in the fight against various forms of colonialism: settler colonialism, enslavement and indenture, and colonization and imperialism. Paradoxically, mutual provincialization among these extremely disparate forms of domination and exploitation leads to a more powerful overall picture than does tying them to tell a singular story.³

In the next two sections, I go back to the first and second generation of U.S. anthropology to indulge in an exercise in speculative history. What would U.S. anthropology have looked like today if it had been founded and propagated in the first instance as a decolonizing project? Finally, in the last part of my talk, I turn to the implications of my argument for the everyday life of anthropology departments.⁴

² A relatively early example of such a synergy was the mutual engagement of women of color feminism and Third World feminism (Mani; Mani and Frankenberg; Visweswaran; Mankekar).

³ Each of these categories (for example, “settler colonialism” or “indenture”) are themselves internally heterogeneous and were not implemented or experienced in the same way (Liboiron 2021; Veracini 2016; Wolfe 1999).

⁴ Although I am an anthropologist of institutions, who has done fieldwork on government and corporate bureaucracies, I restrict my focus on academic training and academic institutions for

2. U.S. Anthropology and the Color Line

[Slide 5]

Of the many stories that could be told about the founding of anthropology as a discipline in the U.S., in the canonical story, Franz Boas looms large as a founding figure. There are three features about the conventional narrative about our disciplinary origins that I wish to highlight, because they have consequences for the story we tell ourselves about our discipline. First, Boas' position on races and race difference was forged in opposition to the dominant paradigms that were competing for hegemony at that time: Social Darwinism, and essentialist theories of racial difference rooted in evolutionary biology. Second, and related to his critique of social Darwinism, Boas argued against the isolation of certain material objects, ideas, and traits of a social group, forcefully advocating that any ritual, practice, or object had to be seen in the context of the culture as a whole, giving us the idea of holism and a methodology of employing the four fields to understand the whole, a legacy which gives anthropology in the U.S. a distinct profile in world anthropologies.⁵ Third, Boas' commitment to anti-racism and his critique of

two reasons: these are the places that are formative for future generations of anthropologists; and, having spent all of my working life in such institutions, I am better able to reflect on my long-term “homework” (Gusterson 2017; Visweswaran 1994).

⁵ Although many U.S. anthropologists today take holism and the four fields as self-evident, foundational, principles of the discipline, few understand that those principles emerged from a very specific context. Boas' struggles against Social Darwinism and his efforts to secure

nationalism went far beyond his immediate scholarly concerns, and was not principally motivated by his work with Native Americans. In fact, Boas' relationship to Native Americans, and the legacy of his ideas for Native Americans has been severely criticized in recent years by many Native scholars such as Audra Simpson. Some anthropologists have criticized the Boasian relation to Native Americans as participating in what Renato Rosaldo Jr. has called "imperialist nostalgia," the recuperation, documentation, and perhaps even celebration of those peoples and cultures that white settlers had destroyed or were actively destroying.

[Slide 6]

Scholarly and popular works on Boas now constitute a small cottage industry. My chief problem with this focus on Boas as a founding figure lies both in the fact that so much of it slips into hagiography and in that it shares in a problematic "Big Man" view of history. In this view, the founding of U.S. anthropology is credited to the deeds and thoughts of a single, remarkable individual. The problem is that such extraordinary figures simply did not and could not have had the singular influence with which they are credited or accused. I think it makes more sense to speak of the "founding generation," those people who were critical in the setting up of anthropology as a discipline in universities, museums, and government agencies.⁶ Not all of these people were Boas' students, and it would be a mistake to assume that even Boas' students were simply propagating his views.

institutional authority for his conception of the fledgling discipline against biological essentialism shaped the peculiar form of U.S. anthropology amongst world anthropologies.

⁶ We know from training our own graduate students that, fortunately, they don't always propagate their teachers' ideas, and that is for the good of the discipline.

Although most of what I will say later might be interpreted as critical of the founding generation of U.S. anthropology, I want to make sure that we heed Ghassan Hage's call to "respect the elders" and acknowledge the complicated and contradictory genealogies that shaped the structure of anthropology as a discipline in the United States, and appreciate the entrenched forces against which it was operating. Even today, anthropology is an outlier among the social sciences because its political project is to challenge the culturally dominant common-sense of capitalist consumerism, and that is one reason among many that it struggles for traction in the public sphere. From cultural critique to the opposition to neoliberalism, many of the positions taken for granted within the discipline find little or no resonance in the hegemonic social order in the United States.

Two features of anthropology in the interwar years, and especially in the period of the rapid expansion of anthropology programs after the Second World War, may have been responsible for the failure to develop a decolonizing project. First, for its majority white practitioners, anthropology increasingly became the study of "the other" abroad rather than "the other" within the United States. Relatedly, these studies abroad emphasized that part of the Boasian legacy which focused on cultural relativism through the technique of cultural critique—making familiar U.S. cultural practices strange. Margaret Mead, for example, made her name with a doctoral dissertation that constituted a critique of U.S. child-rearing practices. *Coming of Age in Samoa* was widely read outside academic circles, and represented the promise

of the Nacimeran project, that is, making mainstream U.S. cultural practices strange.⁷ In a nutshell, that was the problem with the Nacimeran project as a whole: the familiar that it was estranging was a white, middle-class self. This point was forcefully made by William Shedrick Willis Jr., Boas' African American student: "...disenchantment with middle-class society deepened in the twentieth century, and this disenchantment is one main reason for the popularity of field work in twentieth-century anthropology. In this way, field work is a kind of tourism..." (Willis Jr. 1972, 142). The diversity of U.S. populations was effectively erased by this project, because it assumed that what anthropology needed to do was to study other cultures to critique dominant white culture within the U.S.

[Slide 7]

I think that it may be fairly well accepted that, having proven that social Darwinism was scientifically unsupportable, the next generation of U.S. anthropologists failed to take up Du Bois' challenge and ask: *If race has no scientific basis, then why is the problem of the twentieth century the problem of the color line?* Would it be fair to say that U.S. anthropology as a discipline never centrally confronted this question? In her essay, "Interrogating Racism: Toward an Antiracist Anthropology," the late Leith Mullings, former President of the AAA, whose untimely passing represents a big loss to the field, provided a blueprint for the discipline: "Anthropologists must resist using the passive exonerative voice and name racism and the forces that reproduce it. This requires moving beyond noting that race is socially constructed to

⁷ The term "Nacimera," an inversion of "American," refers to Miner's influential satirical piece about the body rituals of Americans (1956). I am using the term here to refer broadly to the project of cultural critique and self-estrangement.

confront forthrightly the extent to which structural racism is pervasively embedded in our social system" (2015: 685).⁸⁹ I think that the historical question that needs to be asked here is: Why did mainstream U.S. anthropology fail to move from a *liberal anti-racism* to a *decolonizing project*? This is a question that has implications for the present.

[Slide 8]

It would be well to remember that Du Bois' formulation of the color line was not enclosed within a nationalist imaginary. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois says, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (Du Bois 1903: 15). In Du Bois' cosmopolitical vision, the color line operated both within and outside the U.S., through projects of colonialism, settler colonialism, and imperialism abroad, as much as through settler colonialism and enslavement at home (Brown & Itzigsohn 2020). Growing out of his own experience in the U.S., Du Bois found a way to frame a problem confronting people all over the world. For example, Du Bois took a keen interest in anti-colonial movements in the colonies, and

⁸ One year earlier, reflecting on Trayvon Martin's murder, Mullings said, "what we have not always done so well is to demonstrate that though race is socially constructed, racism is a lethal social reality, constraining the potential, if not threatening the lives, of millions of people" (Mullings 2014: 1).

⁹ A similar point had been made earlier by William Willis Jr. who, observing that many Boasians were detached from the Civil Rights Movement, pointed out that the scientific antiracism that anthropology had inherited from Boas was "not conceived primarily to defend colored peoples" (Willis Jr. 1972: 138; Sanday 1999:259).

invited people like Gandhi and Ambedkar to contribute to *The Crisis* (Lal 2021).¹⁰ In his view, decolonization demanded a perspective on various forms of colonialism that were global and interlinked.

The problem of the color line was important not just to anthropologists who worked within the territorial borders of the United States, but it faced U.S. anthropologists who worked in other parts of the world, especially in colonial or formerly colonial settings where the centrality of race was never in doubt. For example, a revisionist interpretation of Mead's pioneering research in Samoa might involve emphasizing its silence around U.S. militarism and imperialism in the Pacific. Similar critiques could be incorporated into re-reading other "classic" texts of the canonical literature (especially texts such as *The Nuer* by E.E. Evans-Pritchard (Hutchinson 1996), and Edmund Leach's *Political Systems of Highland Burma*) where colonial wars and colonial occupation remain outside the frame while fundamentally shaping "the data" recorded in the ethnography. I do not mean to single out these particular authors for criticism, because this criticism applied to most of their contemporaries, but to point to the indisputable fact that U.S. and British anthropologists worked in the slipstream of colonial and imperial power. They benefited from this global order in terms of obtaining funding for fieldwork; it underwrote their "freedom" to travel to faraway places under the sign of their imperial passports; it structured their interactions with informants in the field; and, it ensured their safety. For the most part, they did not analyze how their race and location mattered to the work that they did. Contrary to their assumptions, the "cultures" that they studied were not part of a democratic

¹⁰ One section of *The Crisis* was called "Along the Color Line," and consisted of news from around the colored world (Lal 2021:55).

Congress of World Cultures, different but equal (as imagined by cultural relativism), but emplaced within a structural divide on the other side of the color line.

3. Counterfactual History: Futures Lost and Found

[Slide 9]

I now want to indulge in some counterfactual history or speculative history. Another way to think about this exercise is that it is about futures that could have been but were never realized, futures lost, directions that anthropology as a discipline in the U.S. could have taken had it been institutionalized as a decolonizing discipline. This is not an exercise in wishful thinking; charting out paths not taken is an invitation to consider how to do so today.¹¹

Although this is far from my areas of expertise, I want to offer a few possibilities that a decolonized anthropology could have taken because it will help show why imagining otherwise is a powerful tool for thinking of the present. I am not organizing these alternatives in any order, and definitely not in a hierarchy of value. The premise of a decolonizing project is that one begins with the issues that emerge from the power asymmetries of colonization that are most important to the people and communities where we study. With that in mind, and also being aware that the first few decades of U.S. anthropology were heavily based on the study of Native Americans (including native peoples in Canada and Mexico) and of African Americans, and Latinx people in the Southwest (many of whom were also indigenous), and looking at these

¹¹ My approach here runs parallel in some ways to that undertaken by Dell Hymes in *Reinventing Anthropology* (1972).

topics very much as a non-specialist, here are some topics that might spring to anyone's list for a decolonizing agenda:

1) **The study of genocides and mass killings.** We know that settler colonialism resulted in the deaths of more than 90% of indigenous people in the Americas. So large a proportion of people died as a result, in fact, that scientists can detect it in climate records (Koch et. al. 2019). Similarly, the sheer numbers of people who died because of the slave trade from Africa to the West is astounding: eight million people are estimated to have died before reaching their destination.¹² This does not even count those killed **within** the continental U.S. by outright violence or premature death caused by sickness and labor exploitation during slavery, or in its aftermath. A decolonizing discipline would have made this a central feature of study. As U.S. anthropologists went abroad to study, they would encounter mass killings and genocides against native peoples in other settler societies, in Australia, Canada, Tasmania, Brazil, the Caribbean, and other parts of Latin America. Genocidal violence at a mass scale flared up persistently in the twentieth century through events as diverse as the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide, the horrors of Pol Pot or the killings in Indonesia, the violence that saw more than one million killed during Partition, the violence unleashed by King Leopold in the Congo or the Rwandan massacres, the killing of more than 150,000 indigenous people in Guatemala's "Silent Holocaust," and more recently, the mass killings of Rohingyas in Burma. Studying genocidal violence would have involved training in at least the following fields: forensic anthropology,

¹² Six million people died because of the slave trade in Africa alone, and roughly two million in the Middle Passage.

archaeology, law, oral and written history, linguistic anthropology, GIS, and human biology. In other words, a person who did this work would need training in four fields and far beyond it.

[Slide 10]

2) **The study of slavery and structural violence.** Such a focus would have led anthropologists to the study of carceral societies built upon unfree labor and forms of structural violence, from the plantation to Jim Crow, and later, to the prison-industrial complex. Whether one is talking about black and brown people in the U.S., indentured laborers in the Caribbean, Fiji, or elsewhere, or about the institutional forms that enable or allow violence to be perpetuated against those formerly enslaved or unfree, such a focus in a decolonizing science would be built upon multi-disciplinary training that apart from the four fields might involve the study of history, folklore, criminal justice, and the law.

[Slide 11]

3) **The study of legal treaties and the political systems that enable their abrogation or enforcement.** The history of U.S. settler colonialism is littered with the making and breaking of treaties with Native Nations, and this could not have escaped the attention of anyone studying Native Americans among the founding generation of anthropologists. A decolonizing project would have placed these political and legal issues at the center of the newly formed discipline.¹³

¹³ I recognize that many U.S. anthropologists have been involved in advocating for native tribes against the claims made by the federal government or local settlers in courtrooms around the country (Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997).

Such training would have equipped anthropologists to study not only the treaties made and broken in other settler states, but also in colonial settings where similar processes were at work.¹⁴

[Slide 12]

4) **The study of forced migration and internally displaced populations.** Another big issue that a decolonizing anthropology would have dealt with is that of Native Nations who were compelled to move from the places they traditionally occupied onto reservations, and Africans who were forcibly moved during slavery. In studying African Americans, the focus of the first generation of anthropologists was not on the different aspects of forced migration that slavery represented, nor even on the second great migration of Black people from the South to Northern cities. In the Southwest and West, shifting national borders due to colonial wars brought 80,000 Mexican citizens of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico to ambiguous status as U.S. citizens. Chinese laborers who came during the Gold Rush, and built the transcontinental railroad, South Asians who came to work the fields all along the West Coast, and Japanese who came in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, were all denied citizenship based on their race. Most of these populations did not become the object of anthropological research in the decades before the Second World War.

Studying forced migration, Indigenous land dispossession, internal displacement, and those immigrants deemed to be unassimilable might have shed some important comparative and theoretical light on what many anthropologists study today, namely populations forced into migration by war, development, ecological degradation, free trade agreements such as NAFTA,

¹⁴ I am thinking here of something quite different from anthropology's distinctive contributions to customary law recognized by the founding of APLA as a section of the AAA in 1976.

economic impoverishment, etc. Israeli settler colonialism, and the Nakba in Palestine in 1948, and the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1950 created two of the largest, and most enduring, refugee crises in the world. Forcibly displaced people now number 82.4 million according to UNHCR, a figure that includes 26.5 million refugees and about 48 million internally displaced people. Although anthropological scholarship on this subject has exploded, the question that we could ask is how such phenomena would have been studied differently today if the foundational texts of U.S. anthropology had been written about the forced displacement of Native Americans, African-Americans, and people of Mexican descent in the Southwest?

[Slide 13]

5) **The study of the kinship of humans and other non-human animals.** Studying Native American societies might have enabled a profound critique of early anthropologists' own species-ism, a hierarchy of beings in which humans were at the center, and white, western, men were at the epicenter. Multispecies anthropology's insistence that humans have always lived in more-than-human worlds, could have been an important outgrowth of studying Native American systems of thought and classification that might have enabled an early critique of the ecological degradation and species extinction created by capitalist expansion and "frontier" narratives. A decolonizing science would have put Native knowledges at the center of a multi-cultural scientific understanding of interspecies cohabitation.

[Slide 14]

6) **The study of reparations, landback initiatives, truth and reconciliation, redistributive and restitutive justice, and the redressal of historical wrongs** for slavery, mass

killings, illegal land seizures, and colonial plunder inflicted on brown and black people throughout the globe. Want to mention the brilliant roundtable organized by Dr. Bianca Williams and Dr. Deb Thomas on Reparations, Restitution, and Repair on Thursday.

To reparations for colonialism, we can add those for environmental harm, connecting environmental justice within and outside the borders of the United States.¹⁵ This subfield would require training in law, customary and indigenous law, political philosophy, historical anthropology and historical archaeology, and human rights and international law.

[Slide 15]

Land acknowledgement have now become a standard practice not only in U.S. higher education but in Australia and Canada as well. Many of them evade questions of responsibility, avoid mentioning the harm done, and do not apologize for those harms.

[Slide 16]

7) **Critical approaches to borders and nationalism.** This is where postcolonial theory meets decolonizing approaches most explicitly. In postcolonial nation-states, as the promise of liberation receded, a vigorous critique of nationalism began to emerge from subaltern groups, racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities defrauded by the national form, and people who lived between and across borders.

¹⁵ Opening the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the convenor of the Brundtland report, *Our Common Future* (1987) stated this case in the following way: “We can’t tell the Third World, ‘The waste-basket is full because we filled it, now you have to help us empty it.’” (Facts on File, June 18, 1992, 442).

By not focusing on these topics, the pioneering generation of anthropologists was able to live (un)comfortably within the larger rubric of colonial conquest and settler colonialism without directly challenging those aspects of its own condition of being. How far have we come as a discipline in fully integrating into our research the many ways that colonialism, settler colonialism, and imperialism shape our work? Without diminishing the enormity of what our anthropological ancestors accomplished, we see them better as fallible humans rather than as Gods or demigods. How we think of the history of anthropology has consequences for how we think of its future. There were many futures that were possible in the founding and consolidation of the discipline that were left by the wayside. We therefore cannot decolonize the discipline today without reinterpreting and rethinking the past.

3. Implications for Decolonizing the Discipline Today

Reimagining what anthropology **could** have been has implications for decolonizing the discipline today. After the protests of the last few years, most institutions of higher learning vowed to do more for racial justice and racial equality. Many of these efforts consisted of crafting well-honed statements about how opposed they were to racial injustice and a commitment to hire more people to do DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) work. But few institutions asked: If we continue to operate exactly as we always have, how will DEI work produce long-lasting changes?

[Slide 17]

Decolonizing the discipline means interrogating colonial legacies and structures by asking the following questions:

1) What has led us as a discipline to study what we do? What else could/should we be studying in order to become an anti-racist and anti-colonial discipline? Why have some questions become central to the discipline whereas other important questions have not?

2) How do the methods that we use enable or constrain decolonization? What kinds of methods, collaborative practices, etc. might be needed to shape anthropology into a decolonizing science?

3) How does one decolonize the discipline differently for students, practitioners, and audiences? How can departments rethink the work of mentoring and leadership to decolonize the discipline?

4) How would decolonizing principles shape the interactions between anthropological researchers and their subjects?

5) What would decolonized practices of accreditation look like? Who gets credit for scholarship?

6) What does it mean to decolonize pedagogy when classrooms become increasingly non-white? What does it mean to decenter the U.S. in the way in which we understand the discipline and teach it? How does one go about decolonizing the canon?

With these questions in mind, how might we further the project of creating anti-racist and anti-colonial anthropology departments? There is an essential part that is often overlooked, ironic because we see ourselves as the discipline that is most concerned about culture. What needs attention is the culture of departments – the ideas that are unreflexively held about what makes for academic participation and success, the everyday practices and processes that “go without saying,” and the “hidden curriculum” of departments. How does one think about

“white-norming,” the many (unwitting, unremarked, un-self-conscious) ways in which departmental practices assume that the faculty member is a white, upper-middle-class, cisgender, heterosexual, ableist, person?

A close and persistent critique of departmental norms about performance, excellence, presentation of the self, what makes a good teacher, and what makes for a good colleague would make it clear the extent to which “white-norming” serves as the *de facto* culture of most academic departments. To the extent that faculty and leaders are unaware of the extent to which normative whiteness shapes departments, they will continuously reproduce a structure of alienation in which BILPOC faculty, students, and staff will always be the ones who do not fit in. Changing the culture of departments means to think consciously and explicitly about the models of research excellence, teaching and mentorship, personhood, behavior, bodily comportment, sartorial forms, and everyday practices that measure everyone against a norm that can best be met by white, middle-class people. It is not as if BILPOC and other faculty cannot meet these expectations; of course, they can and they do. But to the extent that baked into the culture of departments is a certain type of normative individual who best meets its scholarly and social expectations, we are already far from inclusion and equity.

There is a big difference between meanings of inclusion that indicate that your presence is tolerated and “inclusion” in the sense that difference is central to what the department is about, so that the unspoken norm from which difference is measured is not anchored in whiteness. Inclusion should mean not to (unconsciously) hierarchize difference. Ideas of hiring more BILPOC faculty, and cluster hiring so that such faculty are not isolated, are important steps but they need to be accompanied or preceded by changes in department culture. For example,

believing that transformation will occur by counting BILPOC faculty or graduate students so that their numbers are “proportional” to their population in institutions of higher learning is to indulge in “bureaucratic numerology.”

Perhaps the place where such normative expectations play the largest role is in the construction of a research trajectory. What kind of research is considered path-breaking or original? What kind of publications are considered important? How is time devoted to working with communities, advising Indigenous groups about land claims, co-authoring articles with collaborators in the field, or with colleagues in the countries where one does fieldwork, or with students that one is mentoring, evaluated? How much credit is given for creating other media that speaks to the people with whom one is working rather than to academic interlocutors?

Discussions about anti-racism and anti-colonialism often center around the decolonization of the U.S. anthropological canon. It takes nothing away from the quality of those ethnographies that are considered to be “classics” and that have been more-or-less continuously taught in classrooms for several generations to say that meritorious and excellent ethnographies were written that may have been “forgotten” or that were overlooked because of the manner in which prestige hierarchies operated. For example, there has been a resurgence of interest in the work of Zora Neale Hurston, but during her lifetime, and well after, her work did not make its way into the anthropological canon. How many other such scholars are there whose work is not recognized and not taught as foundational to the discipline? If we think of the canon as a dialogue among texts—a conversation, a debate, perhaps even a disagreement—then we can think of which texts would best help us decolonize that conversation in our classrooms. In

rethinking the canon, volumes of historical recovery such as Harrison and Harrison's *African-American Pioneers in Anthropology* (1999) are critical.

Another place where decolonizing the profession is imperative is in the arena of scholarly publishing. There are several aspects to this: the politics of citation; how “anonymous” reviewers are chosen; who gets credit for authorship; how community-facing writing is evaluated by promotion and tenure committees; other forms of public-facing writing (activist research; community research); other genres apart from writing such as film, video, performance, etc. that may be better able to speak to the communities with and among whom the researcher is working.

Let's take the vexed issue of authorship. The gold standard for “counting” publications towards tenure and promotion in sociocultural and linguistic anthropology is the single-authored monograph and peer-reviewed articles. The single author thus serves to index a whole host of activities, from proposal writing to fieldwork to data analysis to paper and book writing. In most other scientific fields, those roles are distinct. Of course, any experienced fieldworker knows that data collection is never singular—many anthropologists have learned the mysteries of rituals from ritual specialists, shamans and other teachers in the field; relied on “key informants” to initiate them into the meanings and practices that inform everyday life; and, especially counted on “field assistants” who created access and acted as intermediaries enabling linguistic and cultural translation (Gupta 2014). A decolonized anthropology would consider seriously the “authorship” of this group of people, and question disciplinary norms and practices about who is listed as an “author” in published work. Why can our (usually non-white) teachers, translators,

and assistants in the field not be credited as authors?¹⁶ Finally, scholars in the Global South often complain that their expertise is rendered into data by scholars from the Global North who treat their academic colleagues as “local informants” whose work is not worthy of citation (ABA 2020; Harrison 2016a).¹⁷ Harrison cites the South African anthropologist Archie Mafeje’s (1998) use of the term “epistemological apartheid” to characterize the marginalization of scholarship emerging from the Global South (2106b:161).

[Slide 18]

Finally, there is the question of the responsibility of the anthropologist and anthropological knowledge to the people and communities with whom we work. Far too often, we only ask of student research proposals: Why do you care about this topic? Why is this a good place to do this research? Far too often, we do not **also** ask of our students: What is your investment in the place or community where you plan to do research? How will your research help the human and non-human beings who live there and call it their home? In evaluating what is considered “good” research, why do we not place more value on how our research benefits the

¹⁶ An immediate objection might be that we cannot list people as authors in order to respect the other mainstay of our disciplinary practice, which is to refer to people in our fieldsite only by pseudonyms. Although this is often done to “protect” our informants, there are many cases where people do not want to be anonymized and want their expertise to be recognized through authorship.

¹⁷ The Brazilian Association of Anthropology took out a statement against “cognitive extractivism,” one point of which is that foreign researchers needed to “consider local academics as partners and not informants, citing them properly” (ABA 2020; see also Harrison 2016a).

(non-singular, fractured) communities where we work? As the Brazilian Anthropology Association points out, far too much research originating in the Global North follows a “resource extraction” model of scholarship, in which data is extracted from contexts and communities with less power, and used to build reputations, but nothing is repatriated (ABA 2020). A decolonized anthropology does not assume that a resource extraction model of data collection results in better theory than an engaged model based on care, witnessing, and dense relationality of goals. The “outcome” of such research may not be measurable by tangible outputs (“deliverables”) such as journal articles, films, or museum exhibits, but may result in greater well-being, sustainability, or community bonding.¹⁸

Conclusion

I began this talk by listing a series of events in the U.S. that signal the frustration of a younger generation of scholars with the seeming inability of our discipline to jointly deal with questions of race and racialization at home, and militarism, imperialism, and predatory capitalism abroad. My argument is that in order to understand why we keep coming back to the same impasses, we have to go back to how U.S. anthropology was imagined by our disciplinary ancestors. Looking at the paths not taken, and reimagining anthropology as a decolonizing project, we might have inherited a different disciplinary structure and a completely dissimilar set of problems with which we were collectively grappling. Such a move would not necessarily entail looking at issues in other parts of the world through a U.S. perspective, or entail that the only meaningful fieldwork had to be done at “home,” but would shift what was being relativized,

¹⁸ I am grateful to Ramona Perez for suggesting this point to me.

and what was being provincialized. Although we cannot relive the past, we can certainly reimagine it, and such revisionism is sorely needed if we are to move ahead.

Anti-racism and anti-colonialism in the discipline has to proceed at both levels: reimagining our questions and changing disciplinary practices. I look at methods, our relationship to the people and communities we study, how we teach the canon, how we evaluate what constitutes “good” research, how we publish, and how we mentor students and faculty. I call for a hard look at our own disciplinary culture by paying attention to the everyday practices of “white-norming” that serve to alienate and “Other” students and faculty of color. Only by doing these two projects together will we as a discipline hope to truly achieve a racial reckoning.

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