



# AIDS & ANTHROPOLOGY

## BULLETIN

The Newsletter of the AIDS and Anthropology Research Group

### AARG MEMBERS RESPOND TO COMMENTARY ON AIDS IN CUBA

The AIDS and Anthropology research community has been abuzz since the publication in the October Anthropology Newsletter of a commentary entitled "AIDS, Public Health and Human Rights in Cuba." The Anthropology Newsletter is the official newsletter of the American Anthropological Association (AAA). The commentary, written by Nancy Scheper-Hughes, provoked much discussion at the AAA meetings in November.

In summary, Scheper-Hughes praises the Cuban government's AIDS control program which includes mandatory HIV testing and quarantine of HIV infected persons. Further, she discusses the failure to control the epidemic in the United States, ascribing this to an unwillingness to make human rights, such as the right to privacy and protection from discrimination, secondary to public health. Scheper-Hughes accuses the social science literature of "concealing a massive, collective denial of the mounting deaths" and refers to the "largely, irrelevant anthropological literature on AIDS." She specifically attacks the value of education as a public health policy and reasserts the existence of "real risk groups."

Reactions among AARG members was swift. Some AARG members have written letters or called AAA to register their dissent with the viewpoints expressed in the October commentary. Several individuals changed their AAA presentation to

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### DUES INCREASED FOR 1994

The AARG Steering Committee voted to raise dues for 1994. Dues for regular members are now \$20, and student dues are now \$5. Foreign or unemployed anthropologists may still receive the Bulletin at no cost. Please complete the enclosed form and send it with your check, made out to AARG, c/o Moses B. Pounds, AARG Treasurer, 5224 Even Star Place, Columbia, MD 21044-1832.

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### DID YOU PAY?

If your address label is marked with a black square, this means that our records indicate that you have not paid your 1993 dues. You should have received a letter asking to pay your 1993 and 1994 dues. Please send your check today!

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explicitly respond to Scheper-Hughes. In addition, the AAA Task Force on AIDS discussed the commentary at length. At the AARG business meeting discussion centered on the concern that this commentary was published without consideration for the appropriateness of the material. Twenty-four AARG members sent a letter to the AAA stating their objection to the publication of the Scheper-Hughes commentary. The letter reads in part:

*The use of the AAA Newsletter to disseminate a single-minded ideological position with such potentially negative impact was neither professionally appropriate nor responsible... persons reading the article in the AAA newsletter may be led to believe that the essay represents the informed point of view of the profession on the quarantine question. It does not, and we register our objections to the publication and dissent from the point of view which it contains.*

Among AARG members there was widespread agreement that her commentary misrepresents and oversimplifies the AIDS crisis both in Cuba and in the United States. In her letter to AAA, AARG member Susan McCombie summarized her objection to Scheper-Hughes argument as follows:

*...I think Scheper-Hughes is out of step with the times with respect to AIDS public policy, and not well informed on the historical issues with respect to infectious disease and public health...historically, the problems has not been that infectious disease problems were exacerbated because political agendas interfered with disease control. On the contrary, problems arose when disease control was used to justify activities that reflected broader political and social objectives. The idea that the spread of a sexually transmitted disease is a consequence of weak government is not a new one. In a commentary to be published in the February, Stephanie*

Kane writes:

*"Ultimately the common good is never served at the expense of the individual: public health and human rights must coexist." Indeed, to condemn U.S. AIDS public policy for too much emphasis on human rights reveals a lack of information about the history of the epidemic. We encourage all you to contact AAA to express your concerns regarding the Scheper-Hughes commentary. It is important that the anthropological community at large be aware that our work on AIDS is neither irrelevant nor uninformed about the reality of the AIDS epidemic.*

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**SUBMIT COPY TO  
AAB**

All information for the next issue of AAB should be sent to: Claire Sterk-Elifson Department of Anthropology Georgia State University, Atlanta GA 30303. USA. FAX (404) 651-1718. Deadline: MARCH 10.

### 1993 AARG PAPER PRIZE

Merril Singer (Hispanic Health Council, Hartford, CT) is the winner of the 1993 AARG Paper Prize. The purpose of the AARG Paper Prize awards is to encourage HIV-related research and publications by anthropologists. Dr. Singer won the professional paper prize for his paper "AIDS and the Health Crisis of the U.S. Urban Poor: The Perspective of Critical Medical Anthropology." There were no entries for the student prize this year. The deadline for the 1994 competition is September 30, 1994. Papers should be original, 15-30 pages double-spaced. The sole or first author must be an anthropologist or anthropology student. Winners may not submit the following year in the same category. All papers must be in press, submitted for review, or in manuscript form at the time of submission. There is a \$100 prize for each award.

Send four copies to the Chair of the 1994 Paper Prize Committee:

Margaret Connors, Ph.D., Chair, AARG Paper Prize Committee, Harvard Medical School, Department of Social Medicine 641 Huntington Ave, Boston, MA 02115. Please indicate whether you are submitting for the professional or student prize.

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### TASK FORCE ON AIDS TO CONTINUE

The American Anthropological Association's (AAA) Task force on AIDS (TFA) held its last official meeting in November in Washington, D.C. As readers of AAB are aware, the AAA has dissolved the TFA in favor of the establishment of an AIDS Commission, slated to begin sometime early in 1994.

At the TFA meeting, however, individual members decided to pursue the possibility of continuing the TFA under the auspices of another organization. Although no decision was reached at the AAA meeting, there was strong sentiment by members that the TFA should continue to meet to discuss and respond to AIDS issues. A meeting to discuss the future

will be held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology in April 1994.

One possibility that has been proposed is for the TFA to become a Task Force of AARG. The AARG Steering Committee voted at their November meeting to sponsor the TFA if that request is made.

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### PAPER PRIZE SPONSORS SOUGHT

The AARG is seeking financial sponsorship of our annual paper prizes. We have just given out our second annual AARG paper prize (see this page) and we would like to ensure continued success of this prize by establishing a separate fund to support the prize. We encourage anyone who is interested in supporting the prize to submit a donation towards this effort. If you wish to make a donation, please send a check to: AARG, c/o Moses B. Pounds, AARG Treasurer, 5224 Even Star Place, Columbia, MD 21044-1832. Mark your check as "paper prize donation."

## **AARG SPONSORS ROUNDS TABLE ON FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

Submitted by J. Bryan Page  
Representatives of three funding agencies, NIMH, NIDA, and HRSA participated in a discussion of opportunities for support of AIDS research at the AAA meetings in Washington D.C. Ellen Stover, representing NIMH as Chief of AIDS Research, told the attenders that prospects for funding anthropological research were very good. Richard Needle, Chief of NIDA's Community Research Branch, outlined his agency's history of funding ethnographic research and its new endeavors involving anthropological methods in collaboration with surveys of injecting drug users. Gloria Weissman represented HRSA, which has small amounts of money for support of research, but uses them to great advantage through direct contracts to qualitative evaluators. In response to a question from the audience, the three guest speakers assured prospective investigators that applications addressing politically "sensitive" issues such as sex education for youth and needle exchange would receive full and thoughtful consideration by agency staff as long as they passed the extramural review process. The session was attended by about 65 people.

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### **Publication of Interest**

The Society for Applied Anthropology announces the publication of *AIDS Outreach, Education, and Prevention: Anthropological Contributions*, a special expanded issue of *Practicing Anthropology* (Vol 15 (4), Fall 1993). Guest editors Kathleen O'Connor and William L. Leap assembled 17 articles demonstrating the application of anthropological methods/perspectives to HIV/AIDS related outreach, education and prevention projects. Copies can be ordered from the SfAA Business Office, PO Box 24083, Oklahoma City, OK 73124; phone: (405) 843-5113.

## **BOOK OF INTEREST**

Richard Parker and the late Herbert Daniel, *Sexuality, Politics and AIDS in Brazil: In Another World*.

This book is an important mix of analysis, description, and personal experience, which not only captures the evolution of the epidemic in Brazil, but also illuminates the larger context. To order, contact: The Farmer Press, Ltd., Rankine Rd, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 0PR, United Kingdom.

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## **HEALTH RESOURCE and SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (HRSA)**

HRSA is funding anthropologists who are conducting AIDS evaluation research. If you would like further information, contact: George Sonsel, Deputy Chief for the Special Projects of National Significance Branch (303-443-9974) or Gloria Weissman (301-443-6560). Or contact the AAB editor.

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

by Janet McGrath

As I take over as the AARG Chair, I would like to begin by thanking my predecessors, Doug Feldman, Ralph Bolton, and Norris Lang. They have steered AARG since its inception and have done a superb job building the group and making it a home for anthropologists working on AIDS. I know all AARG members join me in given our heartfelt thanks for the fine work that they have done. It is my pleasure to have the opportunity to follow them as AARG Chair.

In this issue of AAB you will find a ballot to vote for a new Chair-Elect and three new Steering Committee members. Please take the time to fill out your ballot and send it in. To help you understand the importance of the election let me explain the roles of the Chair, Chair-Elect, and the Steering Committee.

AARG is an interest group of the Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA). The Chair is responsible for organizing and running the meetings and overseeing other AARG business, including communication with the SMA. The Chair-Elect assists the Chair and becomes Chair the following year. The Steering Committee is responsible for making organizational decisions, and planning AARG activities. A diverse and active Steering Committee is vital for AARG to be able to respond to the needs and interests of the diverse community of anthropological scholars working on AIDS. Being a Steering Committee member represents a commitment to work to keep the organization healthy and strong. Please consider the candidates listed on your ballot (see elsewhere in this issue) and cast your vote today! Finally I hope you will feel free to contact myself or any of the Steering Committee members if you have any suggestions for AARG activities. Our goal is to represent you and we need your help and input!

I look forward to working with all of you over the next year.

I can be reached at:  
Department of  
Anthropology  
Case Western Reserve  
University  
Cleveland, OH 44106-  
7125  
Phone: (216) 368-  
2287; FAX: (216)  
368-5334; Internet:  
jwm6@cwru.po.edu

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### CALL FOR PAPER

Language on the  
Margin: Vernacular  
Terminologies of  
Populations at Risk  
for HIV  
1994 AAA meeting;  
deadline March 1,  
1994.

A session is being  
organized to examine  
vernacular  
terminologies used  
by groups at risk  
for HIV infection.  
Gender and ethnic  
variation,  
connections with  
other facets of  
discourse, and the  
relation of usage to  
identity and action  
are all possible  
topics. Please  
contact Stephen  
Eyre, UCSF  
Adolescent Med AC-  
01, San Francisco,  
CA 94143-0374. FAX:  
(415) 476-6106.  
Internet:  
eyre@itsa.ucsf.edu.  
William Leap will be  
the discussant.

**VOTE VOTE VOTE VOTE**

All AARG members are asked to kindly vote in our 1994 AARG election. Your official ballot is in this issue. Please complete the ballot and mail to:

Janet W. McGrath  
Department of Anthropology  
Case Western Reserve University  
Cleveland, OH 44106-7125

All ballots must be postmarked by February 10, 1994.

Only AARG members may vote. It is required that you sign or print your name on the return envelope in the upper left-hand corner (or directly onto your ballot if you prefer) for it to be counted. Your vote will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for your nominations.

The two candidates for the Chair-Elect are: VOTE FOR ONE

**Michael C. Clatts, Ph.D.** (Researcher, NDRI, Inc., New York). Interests: AIDS and injection drug use, AIDS and homelessness, AIDS and street ethnography; USA.

**William L. Leap, Ph.D.** (Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, The American University, Washington, D.C.). Interests: AIDS and language, USA.

There are 10 candidates for the THREE positions of the Steering Committee:

**Judy Benjamin**, Binghamton University, SUNY, Binghamton, New York.

**Doug Feldman, Ph.D.** Associate Professor, University of Miami, Department of Psychiatry, Miami, Florida.

**Janis Hutchinson, Ph.D.** Department of Anthropology, University of Houston, Houston, Texas.

**Stephanie Kane, Ph.D.** Department of Criminal Justice, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

**Pearl Katz, Ph.D.** Public Health Analyst, Health Resource and Services Administration. Silver Spring, Maryland.

**Stephen Koester, Ph.D.** IV-AIDS Project, University of Colorado, Denver, Colorado.

**Kate MacQueen, Ph.D.** Research Anthropologist, Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia.

**Susan Scrimshaw, Ph.D.** School of Public Health, University of California, Los Angeles.

**Philip Setel**, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts.

**Elisa Sobo, Ph.D.** Department of Anthropology, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Seizing the Moment

Fourth National Graduate Student  
Conference on Lesbian, Transgender,  
Bisexual, and Gay Studies

The organizers are especially interested  
in papers exploring mass cultural  
representations and appropriations of  
queer experience, but welcome proposals  
addressing any aspect of transgender,  
gay, bisexual, and lesbian studies.

The meeting will be in Austin (Tx) at  
the University of Texas; dates: March 3-  
5, 1994.

Please submit materials to:  
English Department, Parin 108  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Austin (Tx) 78712-1164

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### National Symposium "Indigenous Knowledge and Contemporary Social Issues"

The University of South Florida and the  
Sun Coast Organization of Practicing  
Anthropologists announce a symposium  
scheduled for March 3-5, 1994 in Tampa  
(Fl). Papers concerned with  
development, property rights, science  
and morality, contemporary epistemology,  
application and related issues are  
invited.

To submit abstracts or for more  
information contact: Sue Davis, Division  
of Conferences and Institutes,  
University of South Florida, 4202 E.  
Fowler Ave, MGY 153, Tampa (Fl) 33620-  
6600; phone: (813) 974-0573.

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### Fellowship

The Institute for Health and Social  
Justice announces a one-year Fellowship

for candidates  
interested in the  
health  
problems of  
impoverished,  
underserved  
communities in the  
US and developing  
countries. Topic  
for 1994-1995 is  
*Women, Poverty and  
AIDS*. Requirements:  
Advanced degree and  
demonstrated  
interest in topic.  
Contact: Kristin  
Nelson, Partners in  
Health, 113 River  
St, Cambridge (MA)  
02139. Deadline:  
April 1, 1994.

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### MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY QUARTERLY

*The Medical  
Anthropology  
Quarterly* is looking  
for reviewers for  
manuscripts as well  
as manuscripts.  
The editor is: Ann  
V. Millard,  
Department of  
Anthropology,  
Michigan State  
University, 345  
Baker Hall, East  
Lansing, MI 48824-  
1118.