



General Anthropology

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Distinguished Lecture

Anthropology and the Search for Home: Reflections of an Immigrant Ethnographer

By Ruth Behar
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When Professor Robert Myers wrote to me in 2017 asking if I would deliver the 2018 GAD Distinguished Lecture, I was incredibly honored. And to be honest, I was also very surprised. I've always seen myself as an outsider to anthropology, someone who found a niche in the margins of this expansive and generous discipline. I was allowed to cling to my personal, poetic, vulnerable approach to anthropology only because there were plenty of "real anthropologists" carrying out the serious theoretical, comparative, and politically committed work we were supposed to do.

So I'm not sure if I'm here today because I'm no longer an outsider or if it's precisely my condition as an outsider that might make my voice relevant at this moment when vulnerability seems to define everyday life.

This is a time of acute awareness and distrust of outsiders. It is a vehemently anti-immigrant era, frightening in its hatred of those "Others" who have gone in search of a home beyond the borders of the nations they come from.

Deportation is a word that has become sadly commonplace in the United States. For those undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America who live with the anxiety and fear of experiencing this expulsion in the flesh, theirs is a state of unspeakable terror, beyond what most of us can comprehend. And they are the "lucky ones." A yet more dire situation confronts immigrants fleeing for their lives, trying to reach the border to seek asylum, and being greeted by hunger, thirst, and violence that bring them to the edge of death. Coming together in a

(See *DL*, page 2)

Campus Inequality

Using Campus Ethnography to Reveal Social Inequality

By Susan B. Hyatt and Paul R. Mullins
IUPUI

In 1944, 70 year-old Ira Johnson settled in a home at 311 Bright Street in Indianapolis, Indiana. By the time of his death 30 years later in 1974, a university had acquired most of the property around Johnson's home, leaving his house as only one of two still standing amid a sea of parking lots. [As his obituary](#), published in the *Indianapolis Recorder*, Indianapolis' African-American newspaper, noted, the noise and other disruptions necessitated by the construction of a new law school adjacent to his property had made it unpleasant for Mr. Johnson to continue spending his days sitting on his front porch and watching the world go by. "He did not like the noise, the machinery or the people moving about" the author of the obituary wrote. "So he refused to sit on the porch and watch progress. He liked it even less when a parking lot came up to his back fence. The house offered him security and comfort, so his last days were spent in his home, his last hours in his chair. As he sat there, he entered into eternal sleep."

[This poignant story](#) is one of many we have uncovered that reveal the history of our campus, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, and its legacy of displacement. Our multi-method project elicited oral histories from surviving African American elders who were forced to relocate by campus expansion. The project resulted in a 2010 collection edited with a community elder,

(See *Campus*, page 7)

Bioarchaeology

Situating Roman Bioarchaeology Between Anthropology and Classics

By Kristina Killgrove
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Roman bioarchaeology is perhaps a strange topic for an essay in a general anthropology journal, but it is also out of place in most classical studies publications. That's a problem – not just for the job prospects of its practitioners, but for a full understanding of the humans who inhabited the ancient world. For the classical world we have historical records, almost all of which were written by educated, wealthy, powerful men. Just the *known* "lost works" of Greek and Roman antiquity fill an entire Wikipedia entry! And yet, more than one reviewer of my anthropology grant proposals over the years has reminded me of the old role of classical archaeology as a handmaiden to history. Archaeology can help fill the

(See *Bioarchaeology* page 10)

In This Issue

Behar on *the Search for Home*..Page 1

Hyatt and Mullins on
Campus Ethnography.....Page 1

Killgrove on
Roman Bioarchaeology.....Page 1

*Recent Finds in
Paleoanthropology*.....Page 13

Ethnographic Reviews.....Page 16

Film and Video.....Page 18

(DL Continued from page 1)

“migrant caravan” offers the best chance of survival. In a Trumpian universe, this represents an “invasion” that must be stopped with military force.

It hurts to observe the dehumanization of people from the other America, the America I too am from. What is unusual about my feelings is that I can't separate the heartbreak I feel about the plight of fellow Latin American immigrants from the heartbreak I feel about the rise of Nazi ideology and anti-Semitic violence. Being a Latina and a Jew defines my life and gives direction to my work, but never before has the confluence of these two identities – Latina and Jewish– felt as intense as it does now.

The Jew was Europe's perennial outsider. Expulsion, which Jews experienced throughout their history in Europe, was an early form of deportation. It culminated in the industrialized extermination of the Holocaust. Tasting that hatred here in the United States after eleven Jews were shot down while praying at

the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh has filled me with fear. But I feel an aching uncertainty about whether to speak as a Jew, or retreat to what Virginia Dominguez called “the Jewish closet in anthropology.” Jewish anthropologists frequently choose not to address their identity, not to do research on Jewish subjects, preferring to focus on subjects that seem more pressing, less self-centered, subjects that won't put us in the awkward position of needing to apologize for the actions of other Jews.

At the age of twenty-one, when I entered graduate school, I was drawn to anthropology's incessant journeys and voluntary periods of exile, its constant movement between places, its desire to find magic and enchantment elsewhere, its wish to champion and preserve endangered languages and cultures, its commitment to supporting the struggles of those who suffer. To live as an immigrant, between homes, between languages, between cosmologies, made sense to me. It had been part of my lived experience since childhood. That I could pursue this state of being as a profession shocked me, inspired me, scared me. And it still does today.

Anthropology embodied a peculiar search for home that only made sense to those who were seduced by its promise, as I was. The promise wasn't that you would find home. The promise was that you'd have unfettered permission to engage with the world in the manner that immigrants do—obsessively aware of fragility and impermanence, and grateful for moments of connection.

*
My own first home was in Cuba, where my brother and I and our parents were born. All four of my Jewish grandparents chanced to migrate to Cuba in the 1920s. Abuela, my paternal grandmother, a Sephardic Jew, came from a small town near Istanbul. Her parents had arranged for her to sail to Havana and wed a wealthy Turkish Jew living there, but he grew impatient for her to arrive and married someone else. An uncle in Havana took her in. To pass the time, she sang Sephardic love songs and played the oud, attracting the moody man who was to become my Abuelo, my paternal grandfather. Abuelo, for his part, had left Turkey to escape inscription into Ataturk's army; he could have gone to any of a dozen towns in Latin America that were attracting Sephardic men in his situation, but he chose Havana.

Baba, my maternal grandmother, fled impoverishment and anti-Semitism

in Poland to join her father, the first in her family to arrive in Cuba. She took it upon herself to work hard to help get her mother and six siblings out of Poland. Thanks to her efforts they were spared an almost certain death in the Holocaust. Baba found a job in the general store of the shy man who would become my Zeide, my maternal grandfather. Zeide was from a logging town in Russia. After his father tumbled from his horse and broke his skull, his mother couldn't support him, so his older sister urged him to join her in Buenos Aires, where she'd settled. She awaited him at the port, but he got on a boat to Havana. When he insisted he needed to get to Buenos Aires, they told him he had two choices: stay in Havana or go back to Russia. So he stayed, took the first job he found working on the railroad, and I lost my chance to be born in Argentina, the land of the tango. He and his sister didn't meet again until they were both retired with grandchildren. By then Zeide had been an immigrant a second time, entering the United States as a person of “unsettled nationality,” a description many of us might identify with today.

These stories about how my grandparents found their way to Cuba are enchanting, but there was a sad racist history underpinning their emigration to the island. Like many European Jews, they wished to come to the United States, but the door was closed. Starting at the end of the nineteenth century and reaching its peak in the 1920s, the rise of anti-immigrant ideology in the United States led to the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, the same year the United States border patrol was established. This bill imposed a quota system based on the 1890 census that limited the number of immigrants entering from Southern and Eastern Europe, millions of whom had made their way to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Boas, a German Jew, had arrived during this wave in 1887. The law was aimed at Jews and reflected growing anti-Semitism, but others, including Italians and Greeks, and the Japanese through further legislation, were also targeted. In turn, desirable immigrants from Northern and Western Europe were encouraged to enter the United States. While immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were restricted to 9%, Northern and Western Europeans received 86% of the quota. Prescott Hall, who founded the Immigration Restriction League and was a believer in eugenics, defended the new law. Speaking from a white suprem-

General Anthropology

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acist perspective that is sadly being invoked today, he asked, “Do we want this country to be peopled by British, German, and Scandinavian stock ... or by Slav, Latin, and Asiatic races, historically downtrodden, atavistic, and stagnant?” The anti-immigration cartoons of the era vividly reveal the haunting similarity to the current wave of antipathy to immigrants seeking to come across the Mexico-U.S. border.

The fact that my grandparents were unwanted immigrants in the United States led to my being born Jewish in Cuba. My grandparents made Cuba their America because the America to the north was closed off to them. But they were only welcomed in Cuba because at the time the governing elite wanted to whiten the Cuban population, which had seen an increase in Black citizens after the end of slavery. European immigrants, including Jews, were viewed as an asset. And then, after the Cuban Revolution, when Fidel Castro came to power and moved the country toward communism, we became desirable immigrants when we arrived in the United States in the 1960s. We’d acquired symbolic capital as refugees from communism.

I grew up speaking Spanish at home. Maybe because lullabies were sung to me in Spanish, I longed to live in Spanish-speaking countries, to know the places that inspired the literature I loved and the mysterious Sephardic heritage I knew little of back then. Shortly after we arrived from Cuba, when I was ten, we were in a car accident and I spent a year in bed in a body cast recovering from a severe leg injury, a traumatic event I revisit in my novel, *Lucky Broken Girl*. Forced into immobility, I dreamed of movement, restlessness; I imagined myself one day as a woman without a country or permanent address, a vagabond, and a writer telling the stories of her travels. In order to achieve that goal, I needed an education.

But as I grew up I had to confront my father who thought a proper girl should wait at home until a man came to marry her. She didn’t need an advanced education and shouldn’t be traveling on her own. Papi didn’t know how to say, “*Mi niña*, don’t go away. We’ll miss you.” I applied to colleges secretly. When letters arrived offering me scholarships, he was furious at me for daring to challenge his authority. I begged him to let me go and he’d use his favorite English expression to end my entreaties: “Case closed!” I’d escape to the staircase that led up to our cramped apartment in

New York to read books. Night after night, I cried. My mother did too. She knew how much I wanted to study. It was the late 1970s and the hopes and dreams of the feminist movement had crept into our household. I remember my father saying, “*Estás echando a perder a tu madre*.” I was “ruining” my mother by sharing my feminist ideas with her. Finally, he relented, but I wasn’t sent off into my future with any good will. Curiously, when I went off to college my mother started working as a secretary at NYU, also without my father’s blessing. She got a job checking the spelling on diplomas and came to love being employed so much that she didn’t want to retire. She obtained good health insurance for herself and my father that has been a godsend in their old age.

I thought I would be a writer and a scholar of Spanish and Latin American literature. Stumbling into the field of anthropology, I was astonished to learn that a profession existed where you could spend stretches of time somewhere else. It was a profession that demanded you get out of the library and interact with real people in a real place and try to understand their lives. For a bookworm like me, this was a little frightening but ultimately thrilling. Naturally, my father thought that studying anthropology I would squander all of his immigrant sacrifices. But I wanted anthropology’s passport and fought for it. I rushed to complete my undergraduate degree in three years to save my parents money on my college expenses. Then I went straight to graduate school to become an anthropologist. I was fortunate to be granted a fellowship that covered all my costs. That was my first taste of freedom.*

The immigrant soul of anthropology emerged from the experiences of two of its founding immigrant ethnographers, Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski. Their uprootedness became the foundation for a scholarly practice. But as anthropology emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, it was privileged white Euro-American men, and only a few privileged women, who traveled far and wide, bringing back dispatches from New Guinea, Africa, Alaska, and the jungles of South America, places that appeared to be at the ends of the earth. The “Other” had held on to ancient traditions and superstitions, and though mired in poverty, lived contentedly, in a world of “enchantment.” In contrast, anthropologists, and the society they represented, had become modern and scientific. The

“enlightened” condition of modernity ought to have guaranteed happiness and peace, but instead civilization had yielded discontents, barbarism, and war. The need to understand this paradox inspired the early anthropologists to go on far-flung journeys. Leaving behind the cosmopolitan world they came from, they looked for magic while remaining complicit in the inequities of the colonial power structure.

From the earliest days, there were other voices, other genealogies, through which to think about the purpose of our profession. In an oppositional move, the African-American writer and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston chose to work in her hometown of Eatonville, Florida. As she noted in 1935 in the introduction to her book, *Mules and Men*, “Dr. Boas asked me where I wanted to work and I said, ‘Florida’... I’m going to tell you why I decided to go to my native village first. I didn’t go back there so that the home folks could make admiration over me because I had gone up North to college and come back with a diploma and Chevrolet... I was just Lucy Hurston’s daughter, Zora... I hurried back to Eatonville because I knew that the town was full of material and that I could get it without hurt, harm or danger...”

At a time when anthropologists were expected to do research in far-flung places with exoticized strangers, Hurston carved out a method by which to work among people who knew her intimately; many knew her since birth. Both an insider, who was “just Lucy Hurston’s daughter, Zora,” and an outsider who had gained New York sophistication, she couldn’t imagine anyone in Eatonville as the “Other” and in the process created another way of speaking as an anthropologist.

When I was in graduate school, no one spoke of Zora Neale Hurston. Now the American Anthropological Association gives prizes in her honor and even created a button in 2018 honoring Hurston that was given out as conference swag. As a result of Hurston’s legacy, anthropologists can go everywhere—to far-away places and home. An existential orphanhood seems to propel us on these journeys. We embrace in-betweenness, unsure if the feeling of homesickness will strike upon departing or arriving. Either way, we are more aware than ever of the emotional attachments and political commitments that animate our journeys.

Whether we travel near or far, how are we to understand what home means

in an age of extreme and constant mobility? We live in an era in which over 244 million people are residing outside the country of their birth, an era in which more than a billion people travel for leisure each year. Immigrants on desperate journeys rub shoulders with tourists seeking adventure and enlightenment in places they deem exotic. While a tourist swoons over a ride in an old Chevy convertible in Havana, an immigrant child from Syria named Alan Kurdi drowns in the Mediterranean Sea. There is great irony in the way a few can travel and consume the world in luxury while masses of refugees yearn to be able to work to build a home where they can live in dignity and rest their heads at night and dream.

We have witnessed the displacement and destruction caused by hurricanes, earthquakes, unstoppable wildfires. Homes flooded, burned to the ground, fallen to ruin. Homes gone in the blink of an eye. This past year thousands have lost every last possession in Houston, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and in Butte County and Ventura County. I will take home the dust of lost California homes in my lungs. And there is the homesickness, the internal exile so many feel, as webs of political lies enshroud American democracy. Even those who've never left home share in the unsettledness of the immigrant experience.

Air travel, the media, and the web, have brought human beings closer, making possible numerous intercultural encounters that would have been inconceivable in the past. If tragedy strikes anywhere, we learn about it instantly. Our capacity to feel compassion for another's suffering is put to the test each and every day, in a way that earlier generations never knew. Much of the horror in the world that we experience comes to us in a virtual format. We are exquisite spectators, watching human sorrows unfold on a screen. When we tire of it all, we can power off. The fact that we can power off is both terrible and good. We'd go crazy if we didn't power off and enjoy life. But it is also possible to be driven crazy by thinking about all the horror in the world that we're doing nothing about. It is overwhelming to know so much about what is happening in the world and to recognize that we can do so little.

I'd love to be able to say that anthropology offers a solution to our woes. It doesn't, of course. But our faith in journeys of displacement and homecoming can give us glimmers of hope in a dark time. Our work consists of slowly build-

ing an understanding of a couple of human beings at a time, slowly learning in detail the dilemmas those human beings face in sustaining their own humanity.

From my years as a traveler I know what other anthropologists know too: I need not fear being a stranger in a foreign land. There is kindness in the world. I think this is a message that bears repeating these days.

In anthropology I became the grown-up immigrant child who made homesickness a profession, the immigrant child who kept reliving the experience of displacement. That's how I ended up living in a small village in northern Spain, then in a town in northern Mexico, eventually finding my way to Cuba and coming to understand my family's sorrow about the island they'd lost. Everywhere I went I was treated with good will and generosity. I depended on the kindness of strangers.

*
People would ask, "What do you want with us here?"

I felt I had little to offer.

"I want to observe your lives. I want to listen to your stories."

I remember María Rivero, one of the first people I met in the Spanish village of Santa María del Monte del Condado, asking, "And if you die here, what should we do?"

I didn't know what to say. I was twenty-one. Wasn't I too young to die?

She replied, "Don't worry. If you die, we'll bury you here in our cemetery."

I found myself in the company of aging farmers who had an intimate relationship to the earth. People raised rabbits, chickens, pigs, sheep, and cows in stables that were within their houses. There was no telephone and you went to the bathroom in the stable with the cows. Growing up in Queens, New York, I had never been in such close company to cows! I was taken in like a granddaughter, and as such, I was expected to work on the land. I learned how much it hurt your kidneys to pick potatoes. The summer months were occupied with gathering hay, harvesting wheat and rye, caring for vegetable gardens, and picking pears, cherries, and apples, ending with the grape harvest. Winters, besides being long, were bitterly cold; you stayed in the kitchen most of the day, because it was the only heated room.

Franco had died in 1975 and Spain was trying to rise from the ashes of years of dictatorship. It was 1978 when I began my fieldwork. A rural exodus had taken place before my arrival and the

children and grandchildren of the farmers I met had left the countryside to begin new lives in Madrid and other cities. The farmers felt abandoned. Out of nowhere, I appeared, asking for their stories, wanting to bear witness to their efforts to remain on the land at a moment when urbanization made it seem foolish and backward to grow your own food in little villages. It would take years for the organic food movement to emerge, and for there to develop awareness about protecting the beauty of local spaces and customs. The villagers I met felt no pride; they were ashamed and humiliated to be working "like brutes" on the land, as they so often said of themselves. I was drawn to them and their rootedness, something I lacked and longed for, I who come from a lineage of uprooted ancestors.

The villagers were devout Catholics. So I steeped myself in Catholic beliefs, rituals, and practices. The rosary was recited daily. Everyone went to mass on Sundays, except for the shepherd and an anti-clerical coal miner born in the village. I could have refused to participate, but that would have been disrespectful. I learned to recite the rosary in Spanish and kneel at the appropriate moments in the mass. Just to see how it felt to do such a thing, I crossed myself during mass when everyone else did. The village documents I consulted for my research were church documents kept by the priest in his house. Every time I went to examine the documents, he offered me a glass of sweet wine. "It's the wine from the mass," he'd say with a smile.

Because I spoke Spanish and was from Cuba, people assumed I was Catholic. The pressure to conform to a Catholic social order was huge in those first years after Franco's death. I felt scared to tell people the truth. I wanted desperately to belong, to be part of the village, to be part of Spain. A crucifix hung over my bed. I took it down in the evening and put it back in its place in the morning. My paternal ancestors, five hundred years ago, had thought of Spain as a beloved homeland. But they'd chosen exile rather than give up their Jewish identity, culture, and faith by converting to Catholicism. Why was I so cowardly? I acted like a *conversa* who kept her Jewishness secret. All I knew was that people had taken me in and come to love me. I couldn't bear the thought of losing that love. So I hid. What began as an innocent effort to do as the natives did, so I could enter into their world, became an act heavy with the burden of Sephardic history. Fortunately, I was eventually able to come out of the Jewish closet in Spain,

as the country went through a collective soul-searching, confronting the violence of its distant and recent past, offering citizenship now to Sephardic Jews, and unearthing the mass graves of those killed by fascist supporters of Franco, bringing the horror of their history into the open.

But for many years, I felt ashamed of my dissertation, which became my first book, where I wrote about land tenure, inheritance, and communal agriculture, suppressing the literary aspirations I'd had when I went off to college. My professors approved it, but I was disappointed. I see that same despair plague my graduate students when they finish their dissertations. Had I done justice to the people I knew? There were so many more stories to tell, so many more nuances to describe, knots still left to untangle.

Only recently have I come to feel that my presence in Santa María served a purpose. Now in Spanish, the book has become a resource for the children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the villagers I knew forty years ago and for many others from that region of Spain. The pictures I took – about 2000 of them— were scanned and are in the possession of the village and have become part of its intangible heritage; they have been posted on the website for the community created by Francisco Llamazares, the grandson of María Rivero. In true twenty-first century style, an Ethnographic Museum now exists in León that has placed in glass cases all the farm tools I once saw people work with, and they are archiving the pictures I took at a moment when no one thought it was worth photographing people at work on the land. The people of Santa María shared their lives with me and I gave them back the gift of a time now gone.

On my most recent return to Santa María in May, 2018, accompanied by my husband David, we spent most of our time with Francisco Llamazares, who has become not simply the village's webmaster but the village's most enthusiastic ethnographer. After spending the day in the village with his family and various neighbors, we went to the city of León for tapas and dinner. While having drinks at a bar, a young man came in. Francisco introduced Tonio as being from Santa María, as being a grandson of Amparo, who I knew from the village. I didn't know Tonio. He'd grown up in Madrid, taken there by his parents who were part of the rural exodus to the cities, and had married, had a child, and become a chef. He wanted a change and had come to live in León with his family. He planned to reno-

vate his grandmother's house and move to the village.

I was intrigued by this idea of reverse migration and we settled into a lively conversation. I then asked Francisco and Tonio if I could photograph them, and it was only then that I took a closer look at Tonio's tattoos. On his right arm, he had tattooed "the Chef," but on his left arm I saw an image that was eerily familiar. As he held up his left arm and then showed me the photograph that the tattoo had been modeled on, I realized why the photograph was familiar. I had taken it!

The photograph was from 1984, when I used to take pictures with a square format Rollei, which I preferred because I could look down into the camera's viewfinder and then look up and gaze into the eyes of the person that I was photographing. I always enlarged the pictures I took and gave them to the people I photographed. Little did I know that one of these photographs would end up etched into the flesh of a grandson who had grown up in the city, far from the rural life of a grandmother that I came to know through my fieldwork. Tonio was searching for home, just as I was through my anthropology. I had not expected my work to serve as a map back to an abandoned ancestral home that had acquired new meaning for a new generation. That sense of possibility is, for me, anthropology's saving grace.
*

In Mexico, I spent many years in the 1980s and 1990s, living in a small town in San Luis Potosí where I crossed paths with a street peddler named Esperanza Hernández. She was outspoken and I found her intimidating, never expecting I'd get to know her very well, but she convinced me she had the most interesting life story of any woman in the town, challenging me to write a book big enough to encompass everything she'd experienced—hunger, poverty, neglect, parental violence, domestic violence, the death of her babies from consuming the rage that poisoned her breast milk, and being named a witch by her neighbors, but also how she found strength by appealing to the spirit of Pancho Villa and found redemption by recognizing that her life was a story worth telling. *Translated Woman*, the book I wrote, was where I began to be a vulnerable observer, asking questions about how her story trav-

eled across the border, and what it meant that she had chosen to tell her story to me.

Esperanza never let me forget that I could cross the border easily while she could not. I traveled heavy with the awareness that my family had attained a fast track to citizenship in the United States because we were Cubans with symbolic capital as refugees from communism. As a result, I, an immigrant child, had gained the extraordinary mobility of being able to travel wherever I pleased. Esperanza opened my eyes to the open wound of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Esperanza couldn't read or write, but she was a talented oral storyteller. I found her mesmerizing to listen to. I learned from her how to tell a good story. Her rage, her irreverence, her criticism of the society in which she lived, taught me to be braver, more fearless. In opening herself to me, she helped me find the voice to do the writing I'd been longing to do—honest, poetic, political, and personal.

I was fortunate to be able to say farewell to Esperanza before her death in October, 2014. Although initially she feared the gossip of her neighbors, she finally spoke with pride about her story being enshrined in a book. Her youngest son, who took care of her as she was dying, showed me how he kept the Spanish edition of the book wrapped in layers of plastic to protect it from getting dusty. Then it was tucked away on a shelf deep inside a cabinet in the room that houses her altar, protected by the Virgin of Guadalupe's serene gaze. He treated the book like a jewel. I was hugely grateful for that respect. But the book was something both more humble and more precious—a souvenir of a time when two women, two strangers, dared to embark on a conversation with each other. One was an anthropologist with a degree and a pen but voiceless, the other a street peddler with a voice that would not be silenced. Together, as a century ended, our paths crossed, again with a serendipity I could not have planned for, and we became co-mothers of a book.
*

I used to spend hours looking at the old black-and-white family photographs my mother and grandmother were able to salvage in the midst of our hurried departure at the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. It was those pictures that gave me my first vision of Cuba. When I was growing up, the laws of both my

home country and my adopted country forbid me to return to my childhood home. As the years passed and it became obvious that we wouldn't be returning to live in Cuba, the old photographs became proof that we once had a home on the island.

Being Cuban-born and the child of exiles, the decision to return was wrenching. It required fortitude to turn my back on my family and not feel I was acting monstrously in choosing to visit the island they had left under such duress. Carrying that guilt, I was afraid to take any joy in being in Cuba. Truth be told, I was terrified most of the time I was in Cuba. I had anxiety attacks. I had heart palpitations. I was dizzy. I cried. I had nightmares. Ghosts followed me as I walked the streets of Havana, trying to trace the footsteps of my parents, my grandparents, my great-grandparents. Would I disappear into an alley and never be heard from again? But there were moments when I felt strangely safe, as if an angel were watching over me, and I'd say to myself, "Nothing bad could ever happen to me here. This is where I was born."

All I wanted, at first, was to stand in the places where I had stood as a child, as if I could somehow reclaim those places by inhabiting them again in my adult body. Poems were what I could write. It took years of visits before I could figure out how to be an anthropologist in my native land. I wandered into the synagogues out of curiosity, to see what Jewish memories had survived amid years of revolution, and gradually a book, *An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba*, emerged. It took the form of a series of vignettes that explored moments of epiphany in my encounters with Jews on the island, in whose presence I always felt, "There but for the grace of God go I."

Working with the photographer Humberto Mayol, I documented how Jews in Cuba held on to material objects as markers of their Jewish identity. They held up for my gaze those relics they had saved—a photograph of the last *quinceañera* celebrated at the Jewish community center in Havana in 1959, the year the revolution began; the prayer shawl that belonged to a beloved grandfather from Turkey; a postcard sent from a concentration camp to a rural Cuban town, which was one of the most surreal discoveries.

And then there was Daniel Esquenazi Maya, who expressed his Jewish identity in a different way, through the tango—a form of music and dance, as well

as a sensibility, that was born in Argentina, or more precisely, in Buenos Aires. Thanks to Daniel Esquenazi Maya, I first heard the tango and fell in love with it in Cuba, my native land.

Daniel lived in a rooftop apartment in Old Havana. His parents were Sephardic Jews from Turkey, but everybody in the building called him "*el polaco*," the "Pole," the term by which Jews are often known in Cuba. He wasn't religious, but when he became a widower, he began to go to synagogue, in part to receive the care package they offered the impoverished elders. His thunderous voice rose above the others when intoning prayers and chants. That voice had been trained through years of being a tango singer. He had hundreds of 78's of songs that Carlos Gardel, the great icon of Argentine tango, once sang. An informal shrine to Gardel, who died young in a plane crash at the height of his international popularity, took up an entire wall of his apartment.

Daniel spent his weekends singing tango songs at local cultural clubs in Havana. He sang every chance he got, not just when he was at the clubs. His neighbors, he said, thought he was a madman on the roof, always singing his tango songs. But he won himself an audience. Daniel was one of the most photographed, filmed, and interviewed Jews on the island, where the miniscule group of a thousand have become an exotic tribe, like the !Kung of the Kalahari desert, observed and celebrated by tourists, anthropologists, and well-wishers.

Just before his death, Daniel had heart surgery. He struggled to get used to a pacemaker while suffering from asthma. Unable to leave his bed, his rooftop home became a prison—he couldn't go down the stairs to reach the street. Neighbors competed to care for him, hoping to cart away his meager possessions once he died. To cheer him, I asked Daniel if he'd sing a tango. He smiled sadly and half-sung, half-whispered the exilic words immortalized by his beloved Carlos Gardel:

*Mi Buenos Aires querido
Cuando yo te vuelva a ver
No habrá más pena ni olvido.*

*My beloved Buenos Aires
when I see you again
there will be no pain or forgetting.*

Daniel expressed passionately all the brokenhearted nostalgia of an immigrant, even though he'd never been to Buenos Aires. In fact, he'd never left

Cuba. Through meeting Daniel in the port city of Havana that gave shelter to my Zeide who left Eastern Europe with the aim of joining his sister in Buenos Aires, I came to love that other port city's music and dance.

I love the tango's lyrics, which express an obsession with lost things, lost places, lost passions, and inconsolable goodbyes. I love the dance because it is a way to embody loss and time's inevitable passing, a way to embody farewells and the longing to return to moments fading to oblivion.

For me, the tango is a metaphor for the anthropological journey, with its twists and turns, its serendipity, revelation of secrets, its refusal to accept the limitation of borders, its circle of arrivals and departures, its hopes for real communication between people, its shared mortality, and its nomadic search for home. We strive to express the fullness of what we experience when we take an anthropological journey, knowing what we write can never encompass the fullness of the realities we had the privilege to enter into. As Isadora Duncan famously remarked, "If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it." The anthropologist must go on the journey, just as the dancer must dance.

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When I entered the field of anthropology four decades ago, I was struck by the hardy temperament of anthropologists. I'd heard that anthropologists usually had their appendix removed before going to do fieldwork in remote regions of the world. You didn't want to die of appendicitis in the field. Of course, other things could go wrong. The appendix was a symbol: there were only so many precautions you could take. Anthropologists were putting themselves at risk. Such was their dedication they were willing to dispose of an appendix to carry out their fieldwork, not to mention enduring physical discomforts, illnesses like malaria, and other calamities.

In my first encounters with anthropologists, they seemed to me larger than life. They'd worked in Africa, New Guinea, and Bali, the kinds of places where anthropologists were supposed to do their research. I wondered if I'd ever fit in. I recognized that I was the kind of woman who "could drown in a glass of water," as Baba, my maternal grandmother, used to say, looking down at female relatives and friends who were too delicate, easily depressed, "*ella se ahoga en un vaso de*

agua”—but I knew, having stayed with Baba many times, that she suffered from nightmares. She’d wake up screaming, uttering desperate cries for help, certain she had barely escaped being chased in a dark alley. But at least while awake, she tried not to be one of those women who drowned in a glass of water.

Going into anthropology, I tried my best to toughen up, but I soon realized I needed to find another way, another path. I needed heart, I needed poetic words, I needed to know it was okay to drown in a glass of water.

Objectivity and distance became the hallmarks of classical ethnographic methodology in an effort to gain a coveted place among the sciences in the academy. But a price was paid to tear ethnography away from the humanities and the arts: we silenced the story of the ethnographer’s enmeshment with a certain people in a certain place in a certain moment in time, and how knowledge is produced in this messy, haunting, unrepeatable process. But why do ethnography if not to enter into the extraordinary fullness of people’s lives? Why do ethnography if not because we are moved by the beauty and sorrow and fragility of human existence, and by the gift that we have been there to witness it? Why do ethnography if not to create memory in a world that rushes toward erasure?

Our era is ruled by science, technology, engineering, and math, the STEM fields of knowledge that keep producing the iPhones and airplanes without which we could not live our contemporary lives. The unfortunate result is that resources are diminishing for the humanities and the arts, and we are ultimately depriving ourselves, and possibly generations to come, of the intellectual and artistic tools necessary to be able to reflect deeply on our lives.

In such a world, at such a time, ethnographers shouldn’t be afraid of vulnerability. I much prefer to drown in a glass of water if I can communicate something about humanity in a way that hasn’t been attempted before.

Ethnographers seek to enact the presence staged by Marina Abramovic in her performance, “The Artist is Present.” In this work, she sat at a table and invited strangers to sit across from her so they could gaze at each other for as long as they wished. She didn’t move or speak. People stared, smiled, whispered to her, and sometimes wept. Her attention never wavered; she was present with each person.

What I want to hold on to going into the future is this commitment to pres-

ence. The Ethnographer is Present. We sit across the table from other people, for days, weeks, months, years, a lifetime, and we listen, and become witnesses to the lives of those who choose us to carry their stories. Nowadays we might stay in touch via Facebook, but our practice is still to be there.

As an immigrant ethnographer, it is through this constant attempt at presence that I will continue to search for home. It is an endless search, an ever more complex search. As Pico Iyer puts it, “Home now has less to do with a piece of soil than a piece of soul.” If Iyer is right, then I have to say that my soul is in many places, many homes, and for this I both blame and thank anthropology for giving me a passport that I hope hasn’t yet expired.

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(Campus continued from p. 1)



[PHOTO #1]

The Price of Progress: IUPUI, The Color Line, and Urban Displacement. A rich cache of digital resources illuminate changes in the Indianapolis urban landscape. These sources include local newspapers, Sanborn Insurance Maps, and Polk City Directories that reflect the too-often submerged and neglected stories of the once-vibrant African-American neighborhood that was dispossessed 50 years ago. In addition to consulting these historical sources, our students have participated in Mullins’ summer archaeological field schools. These are held on or adjacent to our campus, where we have uncovered important artifacts, lurking under the asphalt pavement of prosaic parking lots, or in the modest backyards of the closest residential neighborhood just to our north, Ransom Place. From such sources we reconstruct the story of segregation and Black life prior to the 1960s.