This section is primarily for the use of AAA members for the purpose of addressing issues that relate to the discipline and practice of anthropology. The Anthropology Newsletter reserves the right to select and edit letters. All letters must be clearly marked for Anthropology Newsletter Correspondence, be typed double-spaced, not exceed 500 words and consist of a signed original plus an electronic copy whenever possible. Letters published reflect the views of the correspondents; their publication does not signify endorsement by the American Anthropological Association.

Potential for Mischief

Considering that terms have been misused by politicians to arouse racial prejudice—as "pure Aryan" was by Nazi propagandists—anthropologists should learn not to attach the word "pure" to racial designations, even when they mean to refer to a very minor situation that relates neither to individuals nor group.

The terms "pure Caucasian" and "pure Amerindian" have begun to appear even in leading journals of physical anthropology. The reference is to YDNA haplotypes. A haplotype is the pattern on a segment of DNA, and YDNA is a tiny fraction of a person's DNA that does not recombine each generation, a non-combining part of one of the smallest chromosomes, the Y chromosome that determines male sex.

I know of no haplotype, even of these small bits of DNA, that approaches entirely in ordinary words by scientists in the past. Editors and those who review manuscripts should prevent the publication in professional journals of language that so easily could lead to such misinterpretation.

Gabriel W. Lasker
Wayne State University
School of Medicine

MIS-statements on Race

The proposed AAA statement on "race" (April 1997 AN, p. 1), however we define it, deserves rethinkin and rewriting, and so do some of the gratuitous comments contained in the article.

The argument concerning the relative magnitudes of intergroup and intraingroup differences is specious as written, for it confuses means differences between populations and ranges or extremes within populations. Of course hypertrrophic dwarfs and hypergiant people differ more (in size) than Nilotics or Bantu forest pygmies (as a group), but so what? On the question of "boundaries," some breeding populations remain reproductively isolated by major oceans or vast distances, which is how they come to differ in the first place. Even today the people of Orabi are reproductively isolated from the Navajo who now surround them, and they in turn from the millions of "Ainjool" of recent advent. So there are boundaries, despite what the proposed statement asserts. As to racial purity [sic], the draft proposers undoubtedly realize that nothing is absolutely pure, even Ivory soap. To be meaningful the proposers might prefer to provide target estimates of gene flow, per generation or per millennium, or admixture estimates (M) for selected living populations.

When the article goes on to human identification (so-called "forensics") in parasitic diseases, the Correspondence on page 6.

See Correspondence on page 6

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Telephone: 703/528-1902

Fax: 703/528-3548

Home Page: http://www.ameranthassn.org

E-mail: To access any individual at AAA by e-mail, prefix the individual's first initial and last name (up to 8 characters) to the following addressing: address@ameranthassn.org. For example, to reach the AM Managing Editor, write saltcm@ameranthassn.org

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