“Let’s Go Brandon”  
Walking Women Evolve  
Plantation Logics at the NFL Combine  
How to Change a Bicycle Tire  
Herding Heritage  

Counter-Exotic Moves  
Grandfather Experience  
If I Could Only Imagine  
Homesick  
Somatic Agitations  
TikTok, Truckers, and Travel Bans
ur conference “Unsettling Landscapes” theme brought to mind a sad joke: When José finally secures a perch atop the flagpole after having been denied a seat in all sections of the stadium, he is touched when the huge crowd stands, looking up at him and singing: José can you see? José can you see? José can you see? A Nuyorican View of Unsettling Landscapes.

Ana Celia Zentella, a Puerto Rican/Mexican linguist known for her “anthropolitical” approach to linguistic research, and professor emeritus at the University of California, San Diego, will deliver the Distinguished Lecture, “José Can You See?: A Nuyorican View of Unsettling Landscapes,” at the 2022 AAA Annual Meeting in Seattle, Washington, November 9–13. Her lecture will address the role that language, particularly distinct varieties of Spanish and English, plays in obscuring or unmasking our views of unsettling landscapes.


Ana Celia Zentella

These issues by centering politics in what I refer to as anthropopolitical linguistics. How can an anthropopolitical linguistic approach counter linguistic intolerance and promote social justice?

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Plantation Logics at
the NFL Combine

At the annual
NFL Scouting
Combine, Black
Football players’
every movement
is measured,
quantified, and
appraised. The
Event’s college-aged
men are at the heart of
football’s billion-
dollar industry.

By Tracie Canada

Jordan Peele’s Get Out revamped the horror genre with its skillful play on the idea that anti-Black racism is horrifying, and horror filled. The film centers on the idea that Black folks’ bodies are so desired and valuable that white people would bid on them, acquiring them for themselves. This grisly revelation comes late in the film, when the audience learns the party they’re watching is not a party at all, but instead a silent auction. The bidding occurs during a weekend when the Black protagonist is meeting his white prospective family, enduring what feels like an interview.
In March 2022, I visited the Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana, where the Colts usually play. I was there to witness the public portion of the NFL Scouting Combine, a spectator spectacle of hundreds of players aiming to become members of what the professional league calls the “NFL family.”

Togethert he “job interview of a lifetime,” the combine is a five-day-long event for invited college juniors and seniors who hope to be drafted into the National Football League in April. It involves a brief orientation to NFL processes, interviews with team administrators and league representatives, chats with the media, opportunities to network with other prospects, and the part I was there for—a performance of on-field skills and drills. Interested spectators could reserve free tickets to enter the stadium on four different days to watch as football players were tested, measured, quantified, and analyzed in front of coaches, administrato, r media.

I was herded into the bustling stadium along with the trail of other attendees. Most were dressed in paraphernalia supporting their favorite college teams and players, past and present. Before entering the stands, we were handed a program for the day and NFL-branded headphones. Putting them on, I learned that we could follow along with the commentators as they broadcast live on television.

The stadium was strikingly quiet. Without music or commentary coming through the speakers, there was a consistent hum of white noise—voices and machinery echoing through the bowl-shaped structure designed to seat at least 60,000 people. Players were down on the field with those organizing the drills. Fans were in the stands surrounding the field, anxious and excited—nearly all of us gathered to watch the gridiron.

Among the 324 players in attendance, 12 groups, according to playing position. Each player received a number within his group and each group wore a certain color. As I made my way to my seat, the players in the group closest to the end zone, about 25 of them, were stretching to prepare for the first round of testing. Two other groups were mapped out on different sections of the field, already partaking in separate events.

Football depends on specialization; there are different playing positions for offense, defense, and special teams. Each position was allotted a particular time during the combine to guarantee that players would be tested alongside those with similar skill sets; each test designed to address position-specific challenges. A quarter-back would be asked to throw the ball in a variety of high-pressure situations, while a running back would need to demonstrate his agility and ability to elude tackles.

“He’s a white guy,” I heard the white woman beside me say, as he pointed to a name in the program that corresponded with one of the prospects down on the field. “There aren’t many. Only two in this group,” she shrugged before moving on to the next point of conversation with her companion. It was an astute observation, but unsurprising to anyone who follows college and professional football.

Half of Division I college football players are Black, and non-white players account for 75 percent of the NFL—statistics clearly visualized by an overwhelming majority of Black players down on the field. Further, because of racial stacking, which tends to racially segregate athletes by playing position, Black players were overrepresented in most groups. Thus, the combine is an event focused primarily on the potential of the Black male athletic body. This isn’t new. William Rhoden explains that the sports industry depends on “black muscle,” a note that underscores the physical labor required for the system to persist.

These athletes, the best young football players in the country, have been preparing for this moment their entire college careers—many of them their entire lives. Embodied details matter. The drills at the combine present a snapshot of what those with power know: player performance will provide the best data to measure NFL potential, even though most of these events would never take place in this way during a real football game.

Scouts use a linguistic shorthand to reference an athlete’s personality and work ethic, but most importantly, how his physical body is “built” and how it moves on a field. These comments about players reference their “above-average fluidity,” “size to overwhelm certain opponents,” and “huge hands with rare weight-room power,” for example, make up the few qualitative notes that mark strengths and weaknesses. Immense focus is instead placed on quantitative stats, including height, weight, arm length, hand size, bench press reps, and 40 time. By the end of the event, each player is reduced to a bundle of numbers. One single stat will determine their overall performance: a grade that signals a prospect’s alleged worth, value, and potential position. This year, players were ranked between 5.52 and 4.1, or the combine insinuates a range that somehow encapsulates the performance of hundreds of players.

What the fans in the stands were witnessing—up to 7,000 people on the busiest of the four days—was the public professionalization process of the amateur football body. These young men are deemed “student athletes,” a notion touted as the cornerstone of intercollegiate competition in this country, even though its accuracy has long been challenged and deemed a fallacy because this business thrives on unpaid athletic labor. Due to their statistical overrepresentation in the sport, amateurism enacts tangible harms that particularly impact Black athletes.

The potential to be drafted into the NFL presents an opportunity for these athletes’ efforts to finally and literally pay off. Yet former players have called attention to the combine’s exploitative nature and racist overtones. Colin in Black and White, the 2021 miniseries produced by Academy Award-winning producers Ava DuVernay and athlete-activist Colin Kaepernick, made headlines because the first few minutes of the show strikingly compare the combine and the slave auction block. In his co-written memoir, retired defensive linemen and Pro Bowler Michael Bennett also associates the event with slave auctions, troubling the ways in which players are treated “like a potential porterhouse,’ as their bodies are studied, prodded, prodded, and objectified.

In the combine, players are demeaned, talked about as if they are pieces of meat for sale, something that became clear as I followed along with the omnipresent televised commentary in my headphones. This quantifying of the Black body traces back to plantation slavery, as hierarchy between pseudoscientifically determined biological races was rationalized through measurements of number, plight physical difference. Skull size, bone density, lung capacity, and nervous systems, among other biological features, were studied to downplay Black intelligence and stress Black laboring potential. This race science developed in a way that prompted scholars like W. E. Burford to write against the idea that Black athletes were biologi- cally equipped to excel physically.

Sitting in the stands, watching the combine, one might be unaware that these myths of racialized sporting prominence have been dispelled. Here, predominantly Black athletes are evaluated on a number of physical skills and abilities to determine their value to NFL teams. A form of speculation, a statistical calculus influenced by the number of draft picks allotted to each team, which teams need to fill certain positions, how much money can be spent to draft players, and which players’ bodies might hold up best under strenuous professional play. These decisions question the value of Black labor in the marketplace in a way that is disturbingly reminiscent of how Michael Ralph discusses the ties between slave insurance and life insurance. Black athletes are classified as property and treated as machines, argues Harry Edwards; their performing and productive bodies fuel the league’s capitalist imagi- nary, for as long as those bodies remain physically capable of performing.

Age matters here; these players were recently sitting in college classrooms. With over 300 players in attendance, 103 universities were represented, and 60 of those universities received invitations for more than one player. Some athletes had participated in major post-season games, called bowl games, played just a couple of months earlier. But consider games
like the Goodyear Cotton Bowl Classic in Arlington, Texas, and the Allstate Sugar Bowl in New Orleans, Louisiana. These events are named with obvious but not-often-discussed references to the commodities that sustained the economies in these southern geographies through slave labor. This rhetorical choice is important because it signals that the past is not yet past, in the words of Christina Sharpe.

The combine has been televised since 2004 on the NFL Network, before moving to the more accessible ABC/ESPN in 2019. These broadcasts are accompanied by constant and cacophonous commentary and analysis from journalists and pundits and former players in newspapers, and on television shows, radio programs, podcasts, blogs, and news websites. Keep in mind that since these players exist in a liminal phase—no longer college players and not yet professional athletes—they are not paid for this labor. But the media frenzy surrounding both the combine and the draft acts as a monetized segue between the college football season—a billion-dollar industry—and the upcoming NFL season. It’s a never-ending, yet highly predictable, cyclical spectacle which lasts all year long and depends on laboring Black college-aged men.

Former players have called attention to the combine’s exploitative nature and racist overtones.

“Those guys are special. You just expect freakish things.” —NFL COMMENTATOR

The combine drew fewer spectators on the final day. Noting the strangeness of the day, players preferred quiet.

“Look at how he’s put together. That’s a big, strong man.” —NFL COMMENTATOR

I filled my camera roll with photos and videos of the different stations on the field. I didn’t want to forget what I was seeing. But revisiting them now, I’m moved by the effect of this technological capture. Uncontextualized, these are just unnamed Black men, bodies moving, performing, jumping, running, and catching on a football field. I’d managed to visually represent what Ben Carrington theorizes as “the black athlete,” a constructed and idealized man reduced to being recognized by what his hypermasculine, physically advantageous, unthinking, animalistic body can do. These men have now become an abstraction preserved in my cell phone and by the NFL’s official statistics of their performance. Franz Fanon might describe them as “objects among other objects.”

It’s no wonder, then, why Billy Hawkins wrote about the college sport system as “the new plantation” or Rhoden described Black athletes as “forty million dollar slaves” or former tight end Martellus Bennett reconstituted the league’s acronym as “Niggas for Lease.” There’s an underlying focus on labor, exploitation, racialization, and anti-Blackness that is all on public display at the NFL Scouting Combine. Its eerie similarity to both a slave-trading past and a horror film in the present, is stranger than fiction. The James Baldwin quote applies: the combine is a clear example of history being trapped in these athletes.

Tracie Canada is a cultural anthropologist with research and teaching interests in race, sport, kinship, and the performing body. She is an assistant professor at Duke University and is currently working on a book project about the lived experiences of Black college football players. In her current and future projects, she aims to highlight what football, and its Black players, can tell us about power dynamics in the contemporary United States.

An Pan, multimedia designer, illustrator, and culture lover. His works focus on decolonizing design, culture exchange, and Asian futurism. He enjoys traveling and doll collecting. http://anpadesigns.com

This piece was selected as a winner of the AAA’s AnthroDay Student Unessay Competition in the middle school division. Inspired by the World of the Move exhibit, this year’s unessay competition focused on migration. Selected prompt: “Do you or your family have any stories about moving? If so, share one!”

Gabriella Valdez Hasselstrom is a sixth-grade student at The Classical Academy in Colorado. In her free time, she enjoys fencing, golf, history, reading, and writing. Her exposure to anthropology is through extensive family travels, most recently to several European and Latin American countries, where she explores various aspects of different cultures.
Working Out Anxieties

WHAT DOES CROSSFIT TELL US ABOUT EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY AND PRIVILEGE?

By Katie Rose Hejtmanek

I begin the night before. I check the website for tomorrow’s Workout of the Day (WOD). What will it be? How much will it hurt? The workout is a tough one called Fran. Will I puke from exertion? Will I get “Fran lung”? I shouldn’t have checked the website, now I won’t sleep.

The logic of CrossFit is that workouts are variable (different each time), intense (hard), and functional (use movements that reflect everyday tasks). And if you regularly attend an hour-long group-fitness class you can complete a Hero or Girl workout, like Fran. Unlike sports where athletes practice their specific events, CrossFit emerged as a fitness regimen to train Navy SEALs and first responders, those performing warrior tasks, not playing games. It prides itself on one-on-one training and mind challenges with its daily workouts often published on the gym’s website the night before. Can you adapt to the extreme workout thrown your way? How will you push through?

“3…2…1…Go!™” yells coach, as the clock beeps for each second and then louder on the “go.” My heart spikes and my stomach drops.

“This hurts so bad,” I think, two minutes into the workout of 21 thrusters (front squats with a barbell that you then thrust overhead), followed by 21 pull-ups, then 15 of each in sequence, and, finally, 9 of each. My muscles are burning with pain, filled with lactic acid. Lactic acid build-up is a biological process: as the body moves, muscles metabolize energy and produce lactate. Lactate can generate more energy, unless the body is producing more of it than it can expel, and it builds up in the blood. As lactate accumulates, the blood becomes acidic, which the brain identifies as a toxic environment. To detoxify and pay a lot of money to push themselves to punishing points of exertion alongside others before or after a day of professional office work. We aren’t actually training for war; we are just practicing as if we were. I stumble to the pull-up bar for the last time. I have nine pull-ups left. My anxiety is gone. Now all I feel is pain and a deep desire to finish, to make it all stop. I pull my body up four times. I drop down. I look at the clock, it’s at four minutes. Hoping to finish this workout in 20 seconds, I jump back up and do two more. I drop down. I take a deep breath and jump back up. I pull my body up twice. I hold onto the pull-up bar, negotiating with myself, “If you do it one more time you won’t have to jump up and down again.” I pull hard but I can’t get my chin above the bar for a full rep. I drop. “Katie, FINISH!!” Coach screams.

I jump up and pull as hard as I can, feverishly kicking my legs to propel myself up and make my chin go over the bar. I do. I let go and collapse on the ground. The workout took me less than five minutes.

CrossFitters in the United States sign up and pay a lot of money to push themselves to punishing points of exertion alongside others before or after a day of professional office work. We aren’t actually training for war; we are just practicing as if we were. CrossFitters calls it “Fran lung,” because it is an association with this workout; to medical scientists it is “exercise-induced pulmonary edema”: when the lungs can’t keep up with the heart, fluid builds up in them. Coughing is the body’s reflexive act to help expel the fluid.

We lay around on the ground, cursing the pain as we move, talking about our times: Did we go faster than the last time we did Fran? Did we take fewer akimbo breaks? Where did we go wrong?

“I’m not coming tomorrow,” someone says.

“You should. Move your body around, everything in me hurts.” Coach yells to herd the next group of CrossFitters into a circle. We watch them, anxiety written on their faces. Coach looks at our gaggle of human debris and dismisses us with an “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

At the turn of the twenty-first century, CrossFit emerged as a rogue exercise method that demanded participants tap into a “primal” need to be extremely physical, in the words of journalist-CrossFitter J. C. Herz, finding “redemption in their willingness” to be so. CrossFit fashioned itself as an activity that makes one feel alive through enduring physical pain; this intensity, so CrossFit lore goes, is what it...
Fit enthusiast Amy tells me: felt and then disciplined. As fellow CrossFitters through which the pursuit of physical fitness method for (mostly) white Americans to deal with apocalyptic fears that their world of power and privilege is coming to an end. By conjuring and calming the anxiety of physical pain during workouts, my CrossFit associates and I practice managing existential anxiety and physical pain in the present. CrossFit is designed to be anxiogenic, with its varied and intense workouts preparing warfighters for battle. CrossFit is also designed to calm this anxiety. Coaches program workouts to cultivate subjectivities that learn to push through pain and anxiety by thinking, “I have been training my body to suffer this pain, I can do this!” CrossFit also encourages the scaling of workouts, especially for white collar professional participants like me and my colleagues, to make any series of tasks achievable for any individual at their own level of competence. The mental game of WODs for most non-special forces participants is to find a way to push through and scale a workout so that it’s hard but doable, to be able to manipulate the situation and oneself to make the impossible possible. The anxiety of CrossFit workouts is in conversation with the anxiety of ontological being. Analyzing anxiety in a small country, anthropologist Nutsu Batiaishvili argues that anxiety, unlike other forms of worry or panic, is projected at outward objects but its ultimate source of fuel is the overdetermined potentiality of the self. Batiaishvili builds on Martin Heidegger’s anxiety about being-in-the-world by arguing that being-in-the-world as any number of potential forms of me is what is problematic in anxiety. CrossFit workouts illustrate this form of anxiety. The painful experience of previous CrossFit workouts gives rise to the anxiety of future workouts: “What am I capable of?” “Will I be able to talk myself through the pain?” “Will I scale the workout correctly?” “Which me will show up to do Fran—the one who will push through the pull-ups or the one who will rest more?” But CrossFit anxiety is a simulation or fantasy. One needn’t go to the gym or push oneself to push or develop Fran lung. But people do, as a leisure activity. Why? Perhaps it’s a form of what sociologist Stephen Loring calls edgework, a skillful negotiation of boundaries between life and death, chaos and order, during high-risk activities. Or maybe it’s pretend edgework, as the stakes are not life and death, but rather practice for the seemingly sharp edges of everyday life. CrossFitters are probing anxiety in a voluntary, simulated high-stakes environment in order to practice managing anxiety. This prepares CrossFitters, like Amy, to handle highly stressful (varied, intense, anxiogenic) life situations outside of the gym. CrossFit’s high-intensity combinations of pull-ups, thrusters, burpees, deadlifts, and other exercises cause anxiety and elicit anxiety’s antidote. It requests the capable embodied self show up at the gym as rehearsal to brave a work meeting, have a tough conversation, or to manage one’s to-do list. What is interesting is that this braving and managing includes finding a way to scale a workout or work meeting so that it fits one’s capabilities. The anxiety conjuring and calming in CrossFit is a privileged way of being in the world. The physical pain is not really a life-and-death experience and scaling the world to fit one’s capabilities means one is always proficient. Therefore, CrossFit is a way to play at thinking one is overcoming something dangerous rather than actually facing the existential anxiety of nonbeing. Always being capable—at the pull-up bar or barbell rack—is a way for elite white Americans to practice dealing with ontological anxiety by mobilizing existential privilege and power. The day after Fran, we all show up, sore and coughing. “What’s the punishment today?” We will practice overcoming it, soldiers winning our simulated war with anxiety.

Katie Rose Hejtmanek is associate professor of anthropology at Brooklyn College, CUNY. Her forthcoming work includes an ethnography on CrossFit, Training for Life: The Promise of CrossFit, a collection on the Anthropology of Anxiety, and an edited volume on strength sports, Strong A(s) Feminists: Power in Strength Sports. KHejtmanek@brooklyn.cuny.edu
How to Change a Bicycle Tire

By Luis A Vivanco

While out biking...

...you get a puncture!

What to do?!

"Looks bad..."

AAA to the rescue!*

*Not that one, this one...

D.I.Y. Checklist

- Hands "OK" ✓ Wrench (maybe)
- Patch Kit or new tube
- Pump ✓ or → Pro Tip: Carry three on your bike
- Tire levers ✓ x3

Meet the players!

Tire

Tire bead

Rim

Lube

You will need to separate the tire bead from the rim

Let's go!!!

1. Flip bike, remove wheel.

1. Shift gears to smallest rear cog.
2. Undo quick release or loosen bolts
3. Undo rim brakes

2. Deflate tube, pull back tire bead on one whole side.

* Easy: Use tire levers!
* Kinda Hard: Pinch tire, pry back with hands

3. Remove tube. Inspection time!
Find hole and offending source.

Run finger inside tire. Find and remove thorn, glass, etc.

4. Patch or replace tube.

PRO TIPS:
- Follow patch kit instructions
- No patch kit? Try duct tape or crazy glue

5. Slightly inflate tube and replace in tire.
Work tire bead into rim, finish at valve.

PRO TIPS:
- Avoid pinching tube between tire & rim
- As it gets hard, pinch tire from top to bottom

6. Completely inflate tire, replace wheel & pedal on!

Did I reattach my brakes? I guess I'll find out...

THE END

An avid cyclist and comics creator, cultural anthropologist Luis A. Vivanco is Professor and Chair of the Anthropology Department at the University of Vermont. You can learn about his ethnographic and historical research on bicycle mobilities, cultures, and politics at: www.illustratedwheel.com
ON THE MUTABLE POWER OF SEMIOTIC PEEKABOO.

By Janet McIntosh

On a grey day in February, I headed to Easton, Massachusetts, to browse at one of five newly christened “Let’s Go Brandon” (formerly “New England for Trump”) stores. It nestled in a modest strip mall, next to a low-key hair salon and across the street from Lemery’s Auto & Motorcycle repair. At a table inside, a cheerful middle-aged white woman arranged a careful stack of red, white, and blue socks. Her pink sweatshirt read “Let’s Go Brandon/FJB”—short for “Fuck Joe Biden.”

A man with feathered grey hair and a black leather jacket came through the door with a delivery of paper towels. He engaged the clerk in a chat about the several “Freedom Convoys” headed to Washington, DC, that week to protest mask and vaccine mandates. The stores had been gathering donations, and he planned to join the Boston convoy. The clerk said she’d been waving flags at intersections in support of the truckers. She gestured to her red pickup outside the store, bedecked with two American flags and a huge navy blue “LET’S GO BRANDON” announcement flapping from the back.

I explored the merchandise while they chatted. Exuberant flags, T-shirts, bumper stickers, and buttons announced that MAGA (Make America Great Again) isn’t going anywhere; that Trump supporters love God and guns; that vaccination mandates violate freedom; that Blue Lives Matter; that Biden “pees sitting down.” And again and again, that signature line: “Let’s Go Brandon.”

The slogan became a tongue-in-cheek rallying cry for former President Donald Trump in October 2021 after the Sparks 300 NASCAR race at Talladega, Alabama. Brandon Brown, a NASCAR Xfinity Series driver, had just won, and an NBC reporter stood interviewing him in front of the grandstands. A group of young men in the bleachers were in a raucous political mood, tearing off their T-shirts, fist pumping, and chanting: “Fuck Joe Biden!” When the microphone captured their strains, the reporter tactfully suggested they were chanting “Let’s Go Brandon.” Since then, the phrase has been uttered on the floor of Congress, stitched into Republican ball gowns, and hashtagged across the right-wing nation.

Hostility toward Biden is hard for many liberals to understand, but the steady stream of lower- to middle-income Trump enthusiasts who use this store come not only for swag but also solidarity. Many will be feeling the pinch of inflation and the global supply chain crisis. Some will have been frustrated for years by corporate outsourcing that stripped American factory jobs; others may be middle-class suburbanites and small business owners angry about where...
their tax dollars are going. Spurred on by right-wing media, they are frustrated by what they see as unfair favoritism and “entitlements” handed out to immigrants and people of color. And they resent the way “elitist PC whiners,” with all their cultural capital, have seemed to denigrate white and working-class identities while functioning as oppressive language police protecting the feelings of undeserving groups.

The shly “Let’s Go Brandon” slogan is a quintessential Trump-era rejoinder to such grievances. As Ben Rhodes, former speechwriter for President Obama, wryly remarked, Trump’s rise was predicated on “saying things that the other guys won’t,” often through sweeping disparagement of his enemies and norm-violating candor. Trump’s “supporter-created cyber domain” has been a sitting president.

Trump’s “supporter-created cyber domain” followed his lead with a swell of “shitpost- ing”: angry, provocative, and often ironic social media sprinklings. All of this has widened the Overton window of acceptable political discourse—to the point that you can now buy “Let’s Go Brandon” socks with an image of President Trump giving the double middle finger. If, in the words of Lauren Berlant, “anti-PC means ‘I feel unsafe’” socks like these strike a blow for freedom.

There’s been a long history in the West linking working-class masculinity to impolite and “improper” speech, a dynamic the sociolinguist Peter Trudgill referred to as “covert prestige.” Politesse may be status-lite and “improper” speech, a dynamic the Onion referred to as “fractally recursive.”

Breaking the verbal rules and making it fun has become part of the Trump brand, with supporters exulting in flags and T-shirts that read “Fuck your feelings” and “No more bullshit” as they champion draconian anti-immigrant policies.

The “Let’s Go Brandon” slogan can thus be a loci, for some, of gleeful affective energy that bespeaks resentment toward the very idea that one might have to mince words. And so, for instance, the right-wing political satire magazine The Onion reminds us, barbed humor can be a powerful political weapon.

Most famously, the mysterious oracular figure known as “Q” signaled his for a couple of years in cryptic fashion about the coming violent “Storm” waiting to overthrow the Democrats for a Trump-led totalitarian state. Q’s signaling was so opaque that “digital armies” of “Anons” dedicated hours, days, and months of time on social media to collectively decoding what they thought they could glean from underlying meanings. In all these cases, the gap between signer and signified is exploited, hinting at imminent right-wing power and violence while attempting to skirt charges of hate speech or incitement.

Elsewhere, I have given the name “alt-signaling” to the right-wing pattern of using indirect or cryptic semiotic forms to gesture toward sinister meaning. But alt-signaling isn’t just about dodging accusations. When the speaker’s deeper meaning takes clandestine form—sometimes even in plain sight—it benefits from the status of secrecy, a quality that, as Graham Jones elaborates, can bring the frisson of power. Alex Pillen has described a flattening, fun, and sometimes aggressive jokering in Sri Lanka called hore that is based on “obvious pretense.” The speaker says something that isn’t quite what they mean, but because the pretense is so obvious, Pillen argues, “[the speaker’s] superiority is confirmed by the obviousness of the joke.”

In a more sinister vein, the power of this peebokao from behind the ramparts sometimes stems from its intimations of violence. The US right-wing “militia-sphere” has ramped up its activities on social media, stoking a “martyr myth” that they are imperiled by liberals, gun control, and COVID-19-related restrictions. Brandishing their weapons has become a widespread response to this feeling of disempowerment. And so, for instance, the right-wing clothing and gift store BringAmmo.com sells “Let’s Go Brandon” wrapping paper, with their menacing web address interspersed in smaller font.
Through such repeated associations, the phrase “Let’s Go Brandon” becomes saturated with the notion that the right wing is—or will be—in combat with an existential enemy.

Evidently, such whispers about the preparations of a violent alternative state appeal to those on the outermost reaches of the right wing. A grainy photograph posted to Twitter in early 2022 shows a “Let’s Go Brandon” slogan on the wall of a store. Some of the contexts in which it’s used can feed off each other, and—probably sinisterly—potentially sinister.

Still, some Biden supporters recently found a way to keep laughing. The new genre of “Dark Brandon” memes feature Biden carrying out heroic political feats with glowing eyes. The images reappropriate the Brandon concept while mocking the “Dark MAGA” memes that earnestly view the “Dark Brandon” slogan as an image of Biden carrying out heroic political feats.

Some of the contexts in which it’s used suggest gleeful hostility as it hums in resonance with all the signs surrounding it, be they swastikas or the “Make Liberals Cry Again” flag on the store wall. It may seem juvenile, but it’s semiotically effective, genuinely galvanizing, and—in some hands, anyway—potentially sinister.

Janet McIntosh, professor of anthropology at Brandeis University, has conducted cultural and linguistic anthropological research in East Africa, South Africa, and the United States. She has written two award-winning ethnographies, The Edge of Islam: Power, Personhood, and Ethnoreligious Boundaries on the Kenyan Coast (2009) and Unsettled: Denial and Belonging among White Kenyans (2016), and is the coeditor, with Norma Mendoza-Denton, of Language in the Trump Era: Scandals and Emergencies (2020). She is currently writing a book on embodied language and necropolitics in the US military.

Colleen Pesci is a visual artist, educator, and curator/founder of The Casserole Series. www.casseroleseries.com
wandering that school’s redolent halls and mingling with that petalled crowd and never knowing the difference.

my hometown friends are merely faces in my chlorotic yearbook: have those trellis kids with tendril hearts forgotten me yet?

iii. POLLINATE MY BLOSSOMS

it’s ridiculous that i cultivate nostalgia for that home but i feel wilted when i see the people who also grew there.

the last time i saw them, the taste of goodbye lingered on my lips like bread and wine and i don’t know how to resurrect hello after eight years of silence.

wandering through my old, ivied neighborhood, i wonder if it missed me, and i kneel in my gethsemane, and i trowel a hole through the memory of my home.

cultivar people in my new town talk about that place and i think about how the soil nourished me in that place. but i don’t know that place anymore, and after so long, it doesn’t know me.

even though i have sprouted since i got here, i am still taking root because i am still floral homesick.

This piece was selected as a winner of the AAA’s AnthroDay Student Unessay Competition in the high school division. Inspired by the World on the Move exhibit, this year’s unessay competition focused on migration. Selected prompt: “Do you or your family have any stories about moving? If so, share one.”

Kate Rowberry is a high school junior who has studied anthropology through Sierra College. She enjoys writing and loves linguistic anthropology because it embodies the intersection between words and people. Her work has been recognized by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers and appeared in the Global Youth Review.

TikTok, Truckers, and Travel Bans

WHEN COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS BROUGHT CROSS-BORDER TRANSIT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA TO A STANDSTILL, LONG-HAUL TRUCKERS DEPLOYED SOCIAL MEDIA TO BYPASS THE TRAFFIC BACKUPS, BUILD COMMUNITIES OF CARE, AND KEEP THEIR SUPPLIES MOVING.

By Rebecca L. Upton

TRUCKS STOP

The line of long-haul trucks seems endless, stretching several miles from the South African border; a few engines idle but most are switched off in the effort to conserve fuel and are tacit recognition that no one will be crossing anytime soon. The air is hot and dusty. It is September 2020, and medical workers in hazmat suits make their way down the line of trucks, swabbing throats and noses, distributing masks, and checking cargo. Frustrations are running high, as the usual backups along the Tlokweng border have been exacerbated by confusing COVID-19 protocols and delays that put drivers in precarious positions, weighing personal health and safety with the need to deliver freight across the region.
Ernest Bongaka is a 35-year-old long-haul trucker who has been driving for almost 10 years but who has never encountered anything like the traffic back-up along the border. He works for a large local company, headquartered outside of Gaborone, Botswana, and transports everything from building materials to perishable goods, traveling across multiple borders several times each week. Ernest and his friend Macdonald, who drives for a different company based in Gauteng, South Africa, grew up together in the small village of Malapelo along the border of the two countries. Fascinated by engines and trucks of all sorts, the friends became certified drivers and worked locally in Botswana for a beverage distribution company. Ernest knew me there, but then, full stop. That barrier would close for a day, close with no warning, with nobody telling us anything! Prior to the pandemic, some trucking companies had informal crossings in the region advertising that with their own in-house clearing operations and bonded transfer agents, drivers and clients could easily move through customs without facing delays, VAT, or unexpected fees. As Ernest told me, “If you work for one of those companies you get a nice cab and an easy haul, things would be pretty seamless, no penalties for anyone, they weren’t stuck hanging around Beithridge or Kazungula [border posts with notoriously long lines for truckers and tourists alike], but after COVID, everyone became the same... all of the drivers, all of the trucks, nobody moved.”

Other barriers to movement were even more profound. Macdonald and Ernest both described days-long quarantine periods while awaiting test results and without sufficient running water, toilets, or adequate space to socially distance from other drivers, adding to the public health crisis. As Ernest says, “It was so ironic, we were treated like we were criminals, we were locked up and yet they had no ways to keep anyone safe; we had to figure it out ourselves, take it into our own hands to stay healthy.” According to the SA Long-distance Truckers Facebook page in May 2020, trucks were queued for nine days or more and “[P] oliace...escorted trucks into Lusaka and parked off...[a]ll the drivers were loaded into a bus and taken to a university building and left there under heavy police guard to quarantine in inhumane conditions.”

This despite drivers not showing any symptons of the virus. Trucks were also not allowed to offload to feed their fear of ‘carrying COVID.’

The vilification is reinforced in varied national testing and contact-tracing policies. For instance, instead of general community testing, Botswana implemented a “sentinel testing” strategy, with a focus on points of transit, villages close to borders, and points of entry, meaning that truckers and other migrants were tested most routinely. Tswana officials also implemented a color-coded permit system where holders could only cross into certain geographic zones during certain times a day to keep contact and the coronavirus at bay. Eventually, and similar to reports of what was happening in eastern Africa, Ernest and Macdonald began to follow posts online offering drivers negative COVID test results for sale, bribes to bypass the restrictions, lengthy interviews at customs, decontamination processes, and temperature and vaccination checks that were disrupting the flow of goods as well as individual driver paychecks.

Even with COVID restrictions in place, informal cross-border trading activities continue, and people communicate. Barriers are porous along these transportation corridors and images such as those of financially strapped Zimbabweans crossing the Limpopo River near the Beit Bridge border post into South Africa, exchanging cigarettes and beer for Polokwane but might be held up back in Pretoria, then I will, all I have to do is post something on SouthAfricatruckers and things will move.”

During the first year of COVID, when personal protective equipment was hard to find, when supply chains stalled, and even simple masks were limited or nonexistent, particularly in remote areas, Ernest made certain that boxes of sanitizer, hand wipes, and soap were included in his load. In Francistown, Botswana, along the eastern corridor of the country and a highly trafficked route for transport throughout the entire region, much of the local population were without reliable boreholes or plumbing and using “tippy taps” instead. Made by attaching a jerry can of water to a stick, dowel, or branch and operated by a foot pedal connected by a rope, tippy taps are an adjustment to a global crisis, but clean water could increase handwashing and contactless cleaning. But in Francistown and villages outside of Dakwa, near the border, boreholes became the norm, and twine were in high demand and low supply. Ernest and two of his colleagues brought a load of cans (there are often excess Jerry cans—they bring you takeaways, any kind of food,做za, pap, biltong or chocolate, sometimes beer, and definitely Fanta while you were in the border queue...they were wearing in and out of the trucks as we were lined up, delivering it all since we couldn’t move. You could yell to them if you needed something, but mostly they began to just deliver things to people from online... nobody wanted to face the queue then anyway... so, TikTok, Insta, WhatsApp if you were in a group, the motorbike delivery guys would get your message and find you in the queue... sure they made money but it was the idea, that someone was going to bring us things when we were stuck...we liked that and so did the same on a bigger, international scale.

In this way, the rise of TikTok as a traveler’s or trucker’s aid is a necessary means through which communities of care, safety, and supplies continue to travel even as physical cross-border movement grinds to a veritable halt. Technologies such as this are familiar as social movements and political organization (from the 2011 Arab Spring to Kenyan artisans entering a global economy using iPhones) are facilitated through such tools. Mobile phones are essential, and it is not surprising that the uptake of social media and mobile apps have been so tremendous in Africa. In Botswana, landline technology has been...
quickly outdated, eclipsed a decade ago by mobile phone usage. As Ernest reminds me, “If I didn’t have my phone, I wouldn’t have family, nobody would have food, and I’d be lost [laughs] literally…” The “family” he refers to are mainly other truckers and people on the road with whom he connects with along the way each week (girlfriends, friends, business partners). Ernest doesn’t use the phone to actually make calls, like many in the continent, he uses SMS, TikTok, or Twitter to communicate.

With their physical mobility restricted, drivers use other hashtags such as #truck_driver_south_africa, #truckersofsouthafrica, #africantruckdrivers, among others, as ways to update people on their well-being, travel status, and road and border closures. Truckers and their communities create social networks of care and encouragement and even help one another combat disease through sharing resources and bringing them to hard-to-reach communities. Where once truckers used CB radios to connect, they now deploy TikTok to broadly (and visually) share experiences and information, voice opinions, and film the impact of the pandemic on personal and professional lives.

THE LAST MILE

In a region where HIV/AIDS has been part and parcel of everyday life for generations, there are roadmaps for how to protect communities through behavioral change. Donor agencies and governments have long strategized how to best disseminate medicines and improve health literacy. Communications approaches to motivate community members, NGOs, volunteers, practitioners, and others) may not have to. Ernest and Macdonald find themselves in a region where HIV/AIDS has been part of everyday life. Yet nations in Botswana, work well in addressing the impact of HIV in everyday life. Yet nations in Botswana, work well in addressing the impact of HIV in everyday life. Yet nations in Botswana, work well in addressing the impact of HIV in everyday life. Yet nations in Botswana, work well in addressing the impact of HIV in everyday life. Yet nations in Botswana, work well in addressing the impact of HIV in everyday life.
IN FOCUS

IN SEARCH OF MONGOLIA’S DEEP PASTORALIST PASTS.

By Oula Seitsonen, Jean-Luc Houle, and Jamsranjav Bayarsaikhan

Back in 1909, Finnish archaeologist Sakari Päläsi became the first to document many of Mongolia’s iconic archaeological monuments. He travelled through the vast steppes on an expedition with the famous linguist G. J. Ramstedt, and along the way they recorded ancient sites, such as the 3,000-year-old Bronze Age khirigsuur burial mounds and deer stones carved with depictions of flying deer, as well as Mongolian pastoralist customs and folklore. Inspired by Päläsi’s journey, Oula Seitsonen and Jamsranjav Bayarsaikhan retraced their 1,000-mile-long route through the expansive landscape 110 years later, with the aid of some state-of-the-art archaeological methods.

Herding Heritage

A herder family migrating from their winter camp to summer camp in the Mongolian Altai, with their disassembled ger (yurt) packed on top of an old Soviet truck.

OULA SEITSONEN
While some of the monuments had been lost in the turmoil of time, and others recently reconstructed and reused as sacrificial sites, over 200 new archaeological sites were located along the way. Pälsi and Ramstedt relied fully on the local knowledge of northern herders in the face of this weather cycle can even take place twice in a 24-hour period. You might wake up on an early June morning to warm weather and suddenly find yourself in a snowstorm with a snowfall of up to half that time, it included seven car breakdowns, with improvised repairs sometimes in snowstorms, and driving through a flash flood that washed the tracks away.

Fieldwork in Mongolia habitually requires great patience and a readiness to improvise. Most places are without mobile phone connection, which demands preparedness to overcome all kinds of unanticipated challenges by oneself. The often non-existent infrastructure, unpredictable weather, and extremely long distances and travel times place great stress on vehicles, typically old and rundown Soviet vans and trucks. Pälsi and Ramstedt trekked for three months on horseback, and although they managed to make the same trip in about half that time, it included seven car breakdowns, with improvised repairs sometimes in snowstorms, and driving through a flash flood that washed the tracks away. It is not unusual to experience all four seasons within a 24-hour period. You might wake up on an early June morning to warm summer weather that suddenly falls to sub-zero temperatures, then struggle through a snowstorm with eight-foot visibility through the day, before finally setting up camp in melting snow puddles. On some occasions, this weather cycle can even place twice in a day. Strong winds, rain, and thunderstorms are common.

Traveling across the steppes is also a delightful experience that reminds us of human resourcefulness, friendliness, and goodwill. Navigation in the roadless terrain often takes place on a kind of macromapping, with just an approximate idea of the probable directions based on general landscape features such as mountains and valleys or following telephone lines. Of course, Global Positioning System (GPS) and satellite imagery assist in navigating but are often inadequate on a local level. In our experience, the traditional “Mongolian GPS” (in Mongolian, Ньи Амьсны ГРС), which involves accepting generous invitations to drink tea and eat with the herder families in their gers while asking directions, is often the most effective means to find your way across the steppes. Pälsi and Ramstedt relied fully on the local ways of living, traveling, and clothing, and this is a useful approach even today. Horseback travel was and is a flexible, and sometimes the only, way to traverse the rugged terrain, as it has been for the past three millennia. The traditional gers offer a durable and comfortable choice for accommodation. And directions are best found by asking around and chatting with people.

In 1909, Pälsi became the first professional archaeologist to record many archaeological site types in Mongolia. During his trip, he developed field research techniques, such as photography and detailed mapping, which then formed a basis for Finnish archaeological documentation methods. Some decades later, he also wrote the first manual for archaeological fieldwork in Finland. A century on, many field methods in the harsh steppe conditions are similar to those used by Pälsi, coupled with state-of-the-art approaches such as drone mapping, laser scanning, and 3D-modelling.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY PURGES AND NOMADIC REVIVAL

Besides archaeology, Pälsi and Ramstedt made insightful ethnographic observations and photographed the built environment, customs, religious beliefs, and herding practices of the people they met. We photographed many of the same places just over a century later to compare changes and continuities. The largest visible change in the Mongolian built environment and cultural legacy took place during the Great Repression—the Communist purges of 1937–1939 (in Mongolian, Ньи Хамаахийдлээ). During the purges, most of the Buddhist monasteries that had until that time acted as havens of civilization, culture, trade, and administration on the steppes were destroyed and nearly 20,000 monks were murdered. This caused massive changes in the socioeconomic dynamics, cultural environment, and spiritual and cultural heritage of the steppes. Many people were forcibly moved and resettled on collective farms, where rather unsuccessful attempts to farm the unsuitable steppe lands were made. It was only after the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 that Mongolians were able to revitalize their long-silenced religious legacy. They commenced a vigorous spiritual revival that included restoring their former sacred landscape, rebuilding temples, and uncovering many Buddhist treasures, such as statues and monastic complexes. This religious renewal has also included locales reconstructing some archaeological monuments recorded by Pälsi, which have been modified to become part of modern ritual complexes. Today, many newly rebuilt temples and monasteries mark the Mongolian landscape. During our 2019 trip we were able to return the photographs taken by Pälsi in 1909 to some communities, who were able to witness for the first time these spiritual sites as they had been before their destruction. We also tried to locate the descendants of the shamans Ötöö-böö, immortalized by Pälsi in his world-famous photographs, but this turned out to be impossible owing to the large-scale relocations of people during Soviet times. Alongside the spiritual restoration, the collapse of Soviet rule in Mongolia allowed people to get back to their traditional nomadic lifeways, moving out from the collective farms and spreading on the steppes in family and clan groups. Today, herders live in their gers and move according to an annual nomadic settlement pattern. Caravans between their summer and winter camps typically include the herders driving animal herds on horseback and their families following in old Soviet-built jeeps or trucks loaded with gers and other gear. The length of the annual migrations varies in different parts of the country depending on local conditions, from less than 10 miles to over 100 miles. This appears to have been the situation since Bronze Age times, based on our settlement pattern analyses.
We shifted to work at the Albai Mountains in the westernmost tip of Mongolia at the border of Mongolia, China, and Russia in 2012–2014, and after that in the Züünkhangai region in northwestern Mongolia that was a blank spot in the archaeological distribution maps.

DEEP PASTORALIST PAST

The most remarkable example of the lengthy and deep resilience of Mongolian pastoralist habitation was encountered at one of the sites we excavated in Züünkhangai. Altogether, we have recorded over 1,000 sites in Züünkhangai since 2015, ranging from Palaeolithic find locations that predate the last glaciation to ancient settlement sites, modern campsites, and sky burial places. Many Mongolians practice the ancient sky burial tradition, where a body is left to lie on the steppe so it can return into the great circle of life. Such sites are recognizable by their low grave markers and occasional scattered bones. Most ancient habitation sites in Mongolia have little soil to excavate, typically only about a foot of archaeological deposits. This was what we anticipated to find also when digging a Bronze Age find location near the ZK513 site, which we had recovered with two of our colleagues Natalia Égüez and Juan José García-Granero, and the bones from the site acted as a pastoralist winter camp also in the past. The narrow valley at ZK513 with its protective cliffs on three sides and accessible pastures below has offered a good seasonal settlement site for herders through time. Our finds from ZK513 highlight the long-term adaptive strength of Mongolian pastoralists and the development of complex pastoralists and the development of complex pastoralist and herding practices, despite the coming and going of past and present empires, wars, pandemics, and nations in the wider world. This local-level long-term cultural endurance might also offer a key for the survival of Mongolian pastoralist lifeways in the turbulent twenty-first century.

Our colleagues Batsuuren Byambadorj and Tuurshijargal Tumbarbaatar excavating at Züünkhangai.

A 3,000-year-old Bronze Age khirigsuur and a herder with horses in Khanuy Valley.

FINDING ANCIENT PASTORALIST SETTLEMENTS

Past pastoralist habitation sites the world over are typically ephemeral and poorly visible, and appear to the untrained eye as an “invisible” archaeological record. Jean-Luc was among the first archaeologists to focus, about two decades ago, on Mongolia’s ancient herder settlement sites, starting in the Khanuy River Valley in north-central Mongolia.

Khanuy Valley was also visited by Pälsi and Ramstedt on their 1909 survey, which was one reason why Oula joined Jean-Luc and Bayarsaikhan there. The site is best known for Mongolia’s largest khirigsuur monuments, Bronze Age burial ritual sites that date to about three millennia ago and display a similar architectural vocabulary over great distances. K히르기수어 pluralizes into k히르기수어 in English.

Khirigsuur exhibits a central burial mound surrounded by a rectangular or circular fence and have an array of characteristic satellite features, such as small sacrificial mounds on their eastern side that typically cover a horse skull facing eastwards and sometimes hooves, and on their western side stone circles containing burnt fragments of sheep or goat bones. Their general geographical orientation is similar across their large distribution area, suggesting the structures might have been oriented according to some celestial features. It seems possible that rituals at khirigsuurs were seasonal and related to nomadic migrations and to emerging social complexity since the Bronze Age. Especially fascinating, is the way that khirigsuur continue to have a place in the local spiritual landscape and carry heritage importance and value for local people. For example, it is not uncommon to find recently sacrificed horse heads on top of these ancient burial mounds, telling of locals’ strong ties to their ancestors.

The habitation site surveys in Khanuy Valley were based on a combination of ethnography and systematically digging thousands of shovel probes over vast areas. The material dug up from the shovel probes, such as millennia-old ceramic sherds and faunal remains, allowed us to make a connection between the monumental landscape and ancient pastoralist seasonal mobilities between winter and summer campsites. In the past, the requirements for fitting seasonal settlement sites on the steppes were largely analogous to those of the modern pastoralists. These included suitable, water-absorbent soils on gentle slopes, protection from the harsh elements such as strong northerly winds, access to water and firewood, and, most importantly, good pasturelands. Modern pastoralist winter camps are typically situated in sheltered locations inhabited throughout the long Mongolian winter, which can last over half a year. Our studies show that many modern winter camps have acted as wintertime settlement sites for over three to four millennia. Following the settlement pattern studies in the Khanuy Valley, we decided to test the lessons learned further afield. This was the starting point for our ongoing Western Mongolia Archaeology Project (WMAP).

digging about a foot deep we noticed that the deposits at ZK513 kept on going, and as we continued exploring them, they just went on deeper and deeper. We reached the permafrost about three feet down, and in the end the archaeological layers reached nearly six feet deep.

Based on the radiocarbon dating of charcoal from various features and the material cultural context we know that predate the last glaciation to the present day. The narrow valley at ZK513 has its protective cliffs on three sides and accessible pastures below has offered a good seasonal settlement site for herders through time. Our finds from ZK513 highlight the long-term adaptive strength of Mongolian pastoralists and the development of complex pastoralists and the development of complex pastoralist and herding practices, despite the coming and going of past and present empires, wars, pandemics, and nations in the wider world. This local-level long-term cultural endurance might also offer a key for the survival of Mongolian pastoralist lifeways in the turbulent twenty-first century.

Oula Seitsonen, Sakarín Pontín Ilarín, Oula, is the chair in Finnish studies at Lakehead University, Ontario, Canada, and an archaeologist and geographer at University of Oslo, Finland (PhD 2018). His research interests cover a wide geographical and temporal range, from the early pastoralists in Mongolia, East Africa, and Fennoscandia, to Svalbard mining heritage. His recent book Archaeologii of Hitler’s Arctic War (2021) discusses the heritage of Nazi Germany presence in Finnish Lapland during the Second World War. Besides Mongolia, he has followed Finnish archaeologist Sakari Pälsi’s travels elsewhere, from northern Fennoscandia and western Russia to Alaska and Canada.

Jean-Luc Houle is a professor of anthropology in the Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology, Western Kentucky University, United States (PhD 2010). His PhD dissertation was one of the first to deal with the ancient pastoralist settlement site archaeology in Mongolia, and he has directed archaeological expeditions in Mongolia for over 20 years. His research interests include the social and ritual landscapes and territoriality of mobile pastoralists and the development of complex pastoralists and the development of complex pastoralist and herding practices, despite the coming and going of past and present empires, wars, pandemics, and nations in the wider world. This local-level long-term cultural endurance might also offer a key for the survival of Mongolian pastoralist lifeways in the turbulent twenty-first century.

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Walking Women Evolve

FOR SUPEREFFECTIVE LOCOMOTION, LOOK TO WOMEN. THEIR ENDURANCE MOBILITY HAS SHAPED THE EVOLUTION OF OUR ENTIRE HUMAN SPECIES.

By Cara Wall-Scheffer

Elitizing women and girls’ athletic ability is routine in American culture. “Throwing like a girl” and other phrases create a cultural norm of suggesting that women and girls’ physical process is severely lacking. Women are paid less in all fields, but athletes have the worst gender pay gap, with some data showing that men are paid 150 percent more than women. There is a growing body of evidence from people working in sports media, from people working with children’s physical education, and from people working in biomechanics, that athletic ability generally, and the value we give to certain kinds of athleticism has a strong cultural component: being encouraged to throw leads to better throwing abilities regardless of sex or gender identity.

As more funding has been moved into girls’ and women’s sports, women have begun winning all-gender competitions, particularly in competitions that have a strong endurance component. When we actually look at women and “women’s work,” we find that women more constantly and consistently across the lifespan, they walk in groups with people of varying ages and genders, and they are always carrying something. Furthermore, we know that women have been doing this not just for decades, not just for centuries, but for millennia. By understanding our evolutionary history, we get a special insight into human populations cross-culturally (e.g., running quickly), and are probably not representative of characters that exist based on the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness (EEA). The EEA helps us to refocus our research questions to the ecosystem and behaviors of our evolutionary ancestors. Humans have incredibly variable phenotypes both within and between populations but the meaning of these patterns of variation make sense only within the context of the EEA. So, tying what people actually do universally with potential (reproductive or inheritable) benefits of that activity help us better understand our evolution.

When we look at what women do across cultures, numerous features of their activity patterns are striking. In addition to daily walking across long distances, women also tend to walk with others while balancing numerous loads around their bodies. Children are only one load that women consistently carry cross-culturally. Women carry a wide range of toolkits and baskets, household goods, and food materials. While women do seem to walk slowly while carrying these loads, the loads themselves can be 20–40 percent of their total body mass, and they are more likely to be walking while carrying than doing almost any other daily task. It seems reasonable then that it is probably important to understand something everyone does all the time and also is most likely representative of our EEA. Given this environmental framework, what specific aspects of locomotion can help us understand human mobility from an evolutionary perspective?

Once we have established our EEA, modeling how much energy people use when doing these key tasks is one of the best ways to understand how humans might have evolved. Energetic methods of understanding locomotion bring people into a lab or have them walk around outside to measure their metabolic energy expenditure. Under typical workout-style cultural interpretations, people are interested in which activities use the most energy; when we are considering tasks evolutionarily, we look for which activities use the least amount of energy and which morphological elements can help us reduce energy even more—like long lower limbs or having a lower center of mass (COM). This is because when we save energy while walking—the task we do more than any other—we have extra energy for other tasks we must accomplish. From an evolutionary perspective that would be making games and, ultimately, building a species. We know that when women are able to reduce the amount of walking they do—for example, when a wall is built in their town—they can also reduce the amount of time between pregnancies, which helps sustain the population and prevents it from going extinct. Similarly, providing women with help for their tasks—alternating who walks, who carries, and who makes the tools—increases the communal energy available to a reproductively active population.

When we’re looking at energetic models of human mobility throughout our evolution, we are thus interested in how women might be able to save energy doing locomotion that allows them to continue to gain access to food, water, and community, as well as to reproduce (the alternative being extinction). One option evolutionarily is to be smaller—and this is because absolutely small bodies use absolutely less energy. Human females are smaller on average than males in any given human population for exactly this reason—females use less energy to walk overall, and thus can simply allocate any additional caloric intake to their fitness. But this comes with a trade-off. Even though you might use absolutely less energy, most small endotherms use relatively more energy to do specific tasks. The clearest example of this is maintaining body temperature—because small endotherms have a relatively high surface area to volume ratio, they lose heat at a high rate and so must have a higher metabolism to maintain the same body temperature as a large endotherm. This is the general framework of understanding why a mouse lemur must eat high quality insects, whereas a gorilla can sit around eating low quality grass—the mouse lemur must eat relatively more calories to maintain its mass and activities than a gorilla. This paradigm has generally been used to downgrade women’s bodies as susceptible to unfortunate trade-offs—women use relatively more energy to walk (or run) and therefore are less efficient at locomotion than men. Yet when women walk with loads—even the exact same load as men (which means the load is a relatively larger percentage of women’s mass since they are absolutely smaller)—they use both absolutely less energy and relatively less energy. This means that by every energetic measure, women are able to carry loads more effectively than men, which makes sense given that women carry loads universally. This might explain why women can outperform men during ultramarathons as well—the combination of efficiency and economy allows them to have increased endurance.

Understanding the basis for this potentially astonishing outcome takes us to another way of investigating locomotor mobility from an evolutionary perspective. This second approach looks at parts of the body preserved in the fossil record, such as bone shapes, sizes, and lengths, and measures these variables on living people. Then we investigate whether there are correlations between how people with certain body measures use their limbs. For example, do people with longer lower limbs gain some sort of advantage over people with shorter lower limbs? Does this matter if the limbs are absolutely longer, or just in proportion with overall stature? What is it about longer
higher center of mass increases a body’s stability, which is particularly important when women carrying loads, especially loads that might stick out away from you, like a pregnant belly, a spear and tubers, or a toddler held on one hip. Many studies have shown that increasing stability reduces the metabolic cost of walking, because the small perturbations to remain stable can actually be quite metabolically costly; women’s lower center of mass reduces the need to spend energy constantly re-stabilizing.

Women aren’t just walking effectively when they are by themselves, they are walking effectively when they are walking with others.

This increase in stability also appears to allow women to vary their walking speed, at least within a reasonable range, with no change in the metabolic cost to do so. When we consider human mobility from an ecological perspective, we often consider how people move between key locations for their success—between their home and where they will get food and water for the day. Interestingly, the relationship for endothermic mammals between walking speed and the metabolic cost to go a given distance is a u-shaped curve. If you can imagine a graph of this u-shape, with speed on the x-axis and cost to go to the place you need to get to on the y-axis, you will see that there is a speed at which you can walk to your destination for the least amount of energy. Most people will choose to walk at this speed when they are walking by themselves. It is also true that people with relatively wider pelvis have a very broad base to this curve (very u-shaped), whereas people with narrower pelvis have a more v-shaped curve. Smaller people also have a more u-shaped curve. This means that, on average, women can walk at a relatively wide range of speeds without any change to their metabolic cost for walking a given distance. This saving of energy is a key part of being an excellent endurance athlete. Athletes who use less energy are often the ones who win races that combine speed and endurance. Because of their evolved body shape, women are the ones who can travel long distances for the smallest amount of energy. We can be confident that women are excellent movers by any measure, and that the EEA which includes load carrying and sociality has selected for women’s particular morphology. Women aren’t just walking effectively when they are by themselves, they are walking effectively when they are walking with others, which helps groups maintain social cohesion and is a crucial aspect of humans’ success as a species.

We should also note that many of us are no longer in our EEA—we don’t walk to work, we don’t carry our babies, and we don’t gather our water from wells (or water holes)? Humans, of course, are much, much more than their bodies. This means that your role as a backpacker to the women in your group might not be the best use of your social capital, but it does mean that coaxing a woman to be on your ultramarathon team is definitely a wise decision, especially when the race involves carrying your own gear. If you identify as a woman, know that you can economically walk in community with others—for example, racing to your next class, perusing produce at the farmer’s market, or marching together for reproductive rights! Our evolutionary history has shaped our morphologies and correlated mobility patterns but how we choose to spend our energy is strongly influenced by other cultural factors.

An anthropologist of the role that women play in driving human evolution, Cara Wall-Scheffer has observed, measured, and followed people walking, dancing, and skipping her whole life. She will be traveling to Prague on a Fulbright this year to dive more deeply into how managing body temperatures changes people’s choices about when to carry and how fast to walk.

Dear Diary,  
Today, Mother said, “You don’t have to go to school!” “Why?” I questioned. “They burnt it down.”

I think she means the Nazis, the ones who’ve been mistreating the Jews. I guess it makes sense that they burnt down the school; it’s all Jewish students, and has my synagogue connected to it. When I looked outside this morning, a couple of houses’ windows were shattered, with the glass littering the street. I assume this was also the Nazi’s fault.

Mother gave me this diary to practice my writing, since I won’t be at school for a while. She’s looked unsettled all day. I just feel surprised—I never thought the Nazis would affect me.

Dear Diary,  
What a night I’ve had. Rumors have been circling all through Freiburg im Breisgau, that the Nazis were deporting Jewish children to some sort of camp. Since I’m only 11, I would go to that place, which is supposed to be very bad.

So, Mother hired a professional smuggler who picked up me, her, Father, and my brother, Gene. She brought us across the border, from Germany to France, where we have relatives. The smuggler winked at the border guards, and we thankfully made it across without getting caught.

Dear Diary,  
I’ve been living with my cousins for six months now in Alsace-Lorraine. I don’t go to school or know anybody besides family. I haven’t stepped foot outside once, because if the police see me, I’ll be sent back to Germany and then to one of the camps.
Gene is with a different part of the family, and there’s only one other cousin my age that I live with. But she’s always mean and bullying me about having no friends. So, my best friend is their pet, a beautiful bulldog. He’s what’s keeping me from going insane in this verychanged world.

May 15, 1939

Dear Diary,
Today is a wonderful day! Mother and Father managed to obtain visas and buy tickets on a ship to Cuba called the MS St. Louis! It’s a stunning luxury liner, and we have just boarded in Cherbourg, France.

So far, Captain Schröder has shown unbelievable kindness towards Jews. He makes sure that the Gestapo on board don’t mingle with us and has even covered up all pictures of Hitler. I can’t wait to start fresh, away from Nazis and my cousin’s house.

May 27, 1939

Dear Diary,
After 12 pleasant days at sea, we’ve arrived in Cuba. There’s a one-day delay to get off the boat.

May 28, 1939

Dear Diary,
There’s been another one-day delay to leave the ship.

May 29, 1939

Dear Diary,
This is the third day we’ve been in Havana’s harbor. On the ship, I overheard people talking about the camps. I now know what they are. I hope we don’t return to Europe.

Author’s note: The St. Louis returned to Europe, and the passengers could choose whether to go to England, France, Belgium, or Holland. My grandfather’s family went to France, where around 50 percent of the passengers who returned there were murdered. He lived in a French orphanage for a year. Luckily, he and his family obtained tickets to New York on the final boat from France to the United States. He worked his way up from selling toothbrushes door to door to attending New York University (NYU). Later, he was accepted to the NYU Grossman School of Medicine and became a dermatologist.

The piece was selected as a winner of the AAA’s AnthroDay Student Unessay Competition in the high school division. Inspired by the World on the Move exhibit, this year’s unessay competition focused on migration. Selected prompt: “Do you or your family have any stories about moving? If so, share one.”

Dani Halperin is a sophomore at Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua, New York. Anthropology interests her because she can learn about other people’s societies and cultures in different time periods. Outside of anthropology, she enjoys playing varsity field hockey.

Counter-Exotic Moves
DANCING ACROSS THE ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN WORLDS, AFRICAN CHOREOGRAPHERS AND DANCERS CHALLENGED REPRESENTATIONS OF AFRICA IN EUROPE IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

By Alice Aterianus-Owanga

A street in the busy Parisian neighbourhood of La Chapelle echoes with the cracking of wooden sticks and clapping of palms on sabar drums. The vibrating sound escapes from the ground floor of a sports hall where 40 women and one or two men are watching Yama Wade with extreme concentration, executing the dance moves she demonstrates. Tall, slim, and dressed in a light colourful boubou that flows with her steps, Wade walks around the group of students, holding a sabar stick in her hand, scrutinizing each dancer with careful attention to correct a mistake, poor posture, or hesitant arm gesture. Half a dozen musicians sit behind a line of sabar drums in the corner of the room, accompanying the class with their polyrhythmic phrases, dissecting some sabar phrases to ease the students’ understanding—attentive to Wade’s indications, following her instructions.
Wade, who has lived in Paris since 1992, is a highly respected master of the Senegalese music and dance performance, sabar. Dozens of students from all over Europe flock to learn its steps and rhythms by attending dance classes or travelling to Senegal for intensive workshops. On this day of her annual workshop in Paris, Wade teaches a complex dance rhythm called mbahine, that has now faded a bit in Dakar sabar ceremonies, but that sabar enthusiasts in Europe appreciate for its roots in the old sabar traditions. She explains that in recent years, she has reconsidered the way she teaches this step and stopped marking the beginning of the dance move by tapping the right foot twice on the floor. “We [sabar instructors] used to say that to teach white people, we will mark the time with two taps on the floor like in dagar, because Western people need to have the rhythm on the floor. But mbahine is not like that, that is dagar.” She then shows the subtle difference between mbahine and dagar, which are often confused because they are danced in similar ways as in dance classes, but that should, in her opinion, remain differentiated.

Wade is committed to maintaining what she calls the “authentic knowledge” of sabar as it was in the days before she left Senegal. She aims at transforming the aesthetic, meanings, and specificities of some dances gathered under the label “African dances.” Before Wade, several dancers moved both across this transnational cultural matrix that Paul Gilroy seminally conceptualized in 1993 as the Black Atlantic, and a more precise route that several current scholars describe as a Black Mediterranean. Through their moves, they took part in reimagining the images of African dances and their transmission abroad through dialogues with global Black and African political struggles, former Senegalese President and poet Léopold Sédar Senghor’s ideology of Négritude, Katherine Dunham’s dance anthropology, or, more recently, through projects of de-Westernization of movements and pedagogies.

REPLACING AFRICA AT THE HEART OF THE BLACK ATLANTIC IN THE 1970s

The emergence of African dance classes in Paris on the cusp of the 1970s, arose in connection with the post-1968 era of bodily liberation and with a particular moment of reconfiguration in Franco-African relations, which led to a renewed interest in Africa. This was perceptible politically and economically with the establishment of the political construct that Jean-Pierre Dozon described as “Franco-African state capitalism”—the paradoxical reinforcement of a reciprocal political and economic integration between France and its former colonies, for example, through the attribution of big markets and influential positions to French companies in African independent states or by the exponential growth in African workers called to work in French industries—and by a considerable increase in mobility between France and its former colonies.

African music, moves, and aesthetics were introduced and appropriated as part of a growing enthusiasm for non-Western bodily experiences. This market first developed in richer areas of cities, in venues such as the Maison des Jeunes Saint-Michel, the Cité Internationale, and above all the American Center on Boulevard Basquais. It is then, apparently, in 1968, that Elsa Wolliaston organized parties where artists from Europe, the Americas, and Africa improvised jam sessions, and where she was invited to give the first African dance classes in Paris. Born in Jamaica and raised between Kenya and the United States, Wolliaston first trained in piano, ballet, and contemporary dance, notably with Merce Cunningham and the dance anthropologist Katherine Dunham. Influenced by Dunham’s interest in African repertoires, she decided to move to Paris in 1968, when she was 22 years old, to develop her career. During an interview in a Parisian café next to her dance studio, she recounted to me how this move to Paris represented above all a way to get “closer to Africa.” She felt far from the roots of African dance while in the United States, and she saw Paris as a platform for her personal research project. Speaking about this arrival in France with the historian Nélela Delanée as part of their conversation about the American Center, she talked about how she met the “black world” gathered in Paris:

“I am an American and yet I knew nothing of the jazz world or the black world. I discovered them at the [American] Centre—for example Lesoy Ribbs, who read his poems to music by Archie Shepp. The Haitian Henrik Duplan and the American Suzanne Buijne started giving dance lessons, and I started two, with Congolese musicians, with Lucky Zebila, with Guem. I shuttled between Paris and Africa, because I wanted to teach not...
Fig. 216x450 to 558x678

Yama Wade instructs dancers at her annual sabar workshop in Paris, July 2017.

Somatic Agitations

FOCUSING ANTHROPOLOGY’S METHODOLOGY ON THE SOMA COULD HELP US UNDERSTAND HUMAN BEING MORE KEENLY. WHAT CAN WE DISCOVER BY ENGAGING OURSELVES IN OUR INTERIOR BODILY EXPERIENCES?

By Mitra Emad

Ethnography starts with immersion in settings, experiences, and people. For me, currently, such immersion proceeds from the rubbery tread of a lavender-colored yoga mat. I wonder if it is possible to engage our interior experiences of the body as a kind of “somatic anthropology.” Might I conduct an ethnography of the inside of my body, to seek the stories and experiences of my own internal bodily being?

I find this question agitating. Interestingly, the root of “agitate” from the Middle English agitāre borrowed from Latin agitāre is to set in motion, to move, drive ahead, arouse, or disturb. It captures the forward thrust of airline travel and the ah-ha moment of a new thought, discovery, or insight. The story begins at the onset of this agitation.

I was almost 21 when I flew to Paris in 1988. I was a dancer and was asked to teach African dance classes at the Cité universitaire. Eager to learn more about this repertoire, his students asked him to teach elements of sabar, which was barely spoken of in Paris dance classes at the time. Talking with me about this first experience of teaching sabar, he described his total disappointment:

“... To the point that I almost yelled at my students. [...] Because I thought it was innate, that you are born with it. I put something together [choreography], and I couldn’t remember what I had put together. When I changed the steps, people said “no!” It was a class that went wrong. I went home and called my father. I just understood that being a good dancer is not only about dancing in sabar dance circles, when the whole Medina [Dakar district] and everyone else are cheering for you, that girls think you are handsome. In fact, I’ve just understood that it’s as technical as ballet, or as complex.

From then on, Rose Junior decided to learn more about the different dances of the sabar repertoire, their origins, and ways of performing the movements, under the guidance of an elderly aunt. While gradually focusing on sabar, his teachings remained framed by the pedagogy acquired at Mudra Afrique. In later explanations he recounts advocating the purification and embellishment of these dances, which he intended to present in their most refined version. Denouncing the overpopularization of other African dances and music, his pedagogy aimed both to preserve the traditional “purity” of sabar and to enhance it through Western choreographic approaches, such as Mudra Afrique and its adaptations of the theories of Négritude. Their distinction between a cultivated and a degrading way of approaching African dances, and their wish to differentiate themselves from exotic visions denying the technicality of these dances, would be renewed by generations of sabar instructors who settled in Paris and other European cities in the following decades.

Indeed, the 2000s saw the diversification of the field of African dances and the rise of a sector devoted to sabar. It was at this time that Wade became famous and developed her project of de-Westernizing dance pedagogy by criticizing the choreographic approach of these dances and teaching her students the unrestrained way to dance sabar and interact with musicians.

The transmission of African dance repertoires is a complex and much debated product of histories of mobility, relationships, and cross-fertilizations between Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

These classes for African dances, although partly reproducing an exotizing fascination for Black bodies, cultures, and traditions, also and paradoxically fostered many attempts at creating visibility for Black and African artists in French and other European cities. Counter-exotic practices emerged from conversations between travelling artists, Black political leaders and intellectuals, and ordinary dancers and enthusiasts who moved throughout the Atlantic and, increasingly, Mediterranean worlds. These transoceanic movements still influence neighbourhoods like La Chapelle with sabar moves, and link Paris and Dakar within a common translo-sonic and kinaesthetic landscape.

Anthropologist Alice Aterianus-Owanga is currently a Marie Curie Fellow at the University of Cape Town. Her PhD dealt with hip-hop music, politics, and identity in Gabon. She then developed a four-year re-search project about dance, migration, and identity constructions in “African dance” classes between Europe (France and Switzer-land) and Senegal. Her current research deals with the social practice of Afro-Latin dance genres and the tactile production of urban identities in Cape Town.
I am engaging the possibility of turning anthropologist’s methodology to the soma in order to understand more vividly. Could it be that everyone is an ethnographer of the “field” of the human body? I’ve come to understand that these somatic experiences are never devoid of anthropology, in all its rich capacity to agitate human stories and meaning. The tales we tell ourselves and each other—yoga and meditation create meaning, lasting and naturalized.

**SOMA ON THE MOVE**

Agitation begins when we are just about to do something. What’s the beginning of the story? What happens when we move our bodies with the attention to the internal experience of that movement (soma)? What is anthropologist’s methodology to the soma?: What is the soma? What is soma’s relationship to the body? What is soma’s relationship to the body’s relationship to the world? What is soma’s relationship to the body’s relationship to the world’s relationship to the world?

I begin by focusing on what has come forward in the experience of movement. First there is a valley. Then there is an arid, flat area. Then there is a movement—muscles in a state of persistent low-level contraction. In some places in my body (my abdomen, quadriceps, and pelvic muscles) the muscular contraction is a more acute buzzing, gripping, or holding. This feeling of being just about to do something is an agitating feeling. Then there is a valley. And then there is an arid, flat area. Then there is a movement—muscles in a state of persistent low-level contraction. In some places in my body (my abdomen, quadriceps, and pelvic muscles) the muscular contraction is a more acute buzzing, gripping, or holding. This feeling of being just about to do something is an agitating feeling. Then there is a valley. And then there is an arid, flat area. Then there is a movement—muscles in a state of persistent low-level contraction. In some places in my body (my abdomen, quadriceps, and pelvic muscles) the muscular contraction is a more acute buzzing, gripping, or holding.

**Entering Liminality**

Sometimes I have the where-withal to ask myself, So, what would it feel like to notice the energetic field from your tailbone to your crown?—Fieldnotes, June 3, 2019

I feel my feet more firmly planted on the floor. Or if I’m sitting, I notice my sit bones making contact with the chair. I can even press my feet and my sit bones down a little bit in order to get that sense of connection to the floor, the earth. Usually there’s a heavy sigh. Suspicion. And... everything is softer. Wow. The back of my neck is softer, my shoulders have glistened down, my lower back is eased, my abdominal muscles are softly engaged. This is so much more comfortable! Why don’t I do this all the time?

When you fall, you engage the most powerful parts of your nervous systems. There are parts of our bodies that are designed to protect us, to keep us alive, and they don’t always turn off when we decide we might be done with them. While I think about the system of somatic health-care practitioners who can be so profoundly engaged with our bodies, I have also learned more about the inner workings of my body in these last five years than in all the 51 years before that. And it’s not just that I was ripe for an anatomy lesson. This engagement with interoception as a regular practice, brought me into the body directly and clearly, in a way that I had never experienced before.

And I still get scared. Last autumn, when muscles in my right leg and hip started to spasm again, I had to lock up, I called on my yoga therapist. She didn’t persuade me not to be scared or reassure me with platitudes; she brought me back to the muscles involved more familiar. With guided me slowly, softly making the movements smaller, visually connecting parts of my body that had become disconnected. After a few minutes, she used the word “balm,” and I began to cry. Tears running down the sides of my face as all the muscles in my legs and hips softened, and the spasms. She showed me that I could take care of myself. That I could soothe and care for the wounded parts of myself. In polyvagal theory, the ventral vagal system engages through connection with others. Others who share their vagal system with you through their facial expression, tone of voice, eye contact. You know you are safe when the person or people near you are smiling, speaking in soft or easy or fluid or low tones of voice, making engaging eye contact, perhaps offering a light touch on the hand or arm. That session with my yoga therapist and teacher occurred over Zoom. I couldn’t see her eyes sparkles, but I could hear her voice—steady, kind, full of compassion, but not particularly emotional. When she said the word “balm” it was almost an afterthought. As she spoke, I wasn’t even looking at the computer screen, just listening with my gaze softened and my eyes sometimes closing. But there is resonance, from her house five miles away to my eureka home yoga studio and office. Through a laptop. Technologies mediate but don’t control the connection that allows her verita’s voice to resonate with mine. And perhaps this resonance is also built from memory. I remember her eyes sparkling during yoga therapy sessions before the onset of pandemic restrictions, her hand on my shoulders, her voice asking me as she applied light pressure, “Can this soften even further?” Even now as I write this, I experience that softening.

**In the Liminal Space**

Quiet the body (posture, breath, *progressive body scan* style relaxation)

Quiet the breath (low & slow, awareness at the nasal, sense withdrawal)

Quiet the mind (concentration, mantra, “witnessing”)

Fieldnotes, June 4, 2019

On the first day of the three-day therapeutic yoga workshop, I find myself lying down on a heavy rubber yoga mat laid over a sparkling clean hardwood floor. My knees are bent, my feet flat on the floor. I am with a group of 10 women, representing every decade of life from 40 to 80. This particular training is not oriented towards turning us into yoga teachers. It’s called SomaYoga CPR and it’s a sort of emergency medicine approach to yoga. We are all tired, in some degree of pain, and have spent swaths of time in our lives in the service of others. We are teachers, nurses, social workers; we are mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts; and we are lesbian, bisexual, and straight. We are mostly white, mostly middle-class women with $3000 to spend on this three-day workshop in this northern Minnesota town.

Our instructor cues, “Close your eyes or your mind. Notice your breath and feel it. Notice the curve of your spine—where is it touching the mat and where not? Sense your breath flowing. Arch your low back a little. Soften back to neutral.” “Wait a minute,” I think, “What is neutral?”

She mentions a sense of comfort, but before I can wonder what comfort feels like in this position, other cues from the yoga instructor: “Press your tailbone down into the mat. Notice your lower back muscles contracting. Now release that contraction, slowly and consciously soften those muscles.”

I follow along and suddenly notice that the fairly consistent pain in my lower back has disappeared. I didn’t know I could do that; interesting to consciously contract and then consciously release that contraction, to soften the muscles that I didn’t even know I had. Now she cues us to tuck our tailbone upwards by curling the pelvic floor, softening the low back, and drawing the navel down towards the spine: “What do you sense as you open up these glands and tissues?”

Later the instructor talks about a kind of amnesia. It seems that there is a forgetting that goes on in the body and therefore I couldn’t connect with parts of my body when I wasn’t focusing on them. Our instructor describes the habits of modern life that make possible a kind of forgetting of the trunk of the body. This particular yoga training process invites us to engage in moving from the periphery to the core of our body. Our instructors discuss digestion, of not only foods, but of our thoughts, emotions, and actions. The phrase “rest and digest” is embodied fully in action as we begin to familiarize ourselves with the slow movements of the extensor muscles of the back body, followed by the core or abdominal muscles of the front body. This “arch and flatten” movement is ideally combined with breath awareness.

Then we move on to “arch and curl,” a bigger movement with elbows and shoulders involved. The teacher begins her cues here focused on the curl originating with movement of the abdominal muscles, where or at my head and shoulders come up. We hold the curl, then focus intently on the slow release back down. I find that making the arc and also felt this was a continuation of the release and when I let that arch go and fully relax, I hear myself audibly sigh.

After working on my shoulders, I could stretch my stomach muscles and hips. “Increased awareness.” “Release of hypervigilance, my eyes feel softer, I am more aware now.” “All of the nurturing attention made me want to cry.” “My feet felt nourished with a sandbag.” “Taller, I feel thoracic freedom!” “Unmasking, connecting to source/spirit.”

“Softer, surrendering to that middle space.” But agitation is difficult too. Many of us also spoke about a headache or feeling nauseous after practice. Some felt cold and wept. Some were in an extra sweater or blanket. Some of us noticed a kind of amnesia and could not feel the body parts that to the instructor cue our attention. Some noticed an ebb on the sensation of the experienced exhaustion after the practice.

By the end of our workshop, we learn that the specific movements from these practices are panadics—conscious contractions that involve moving the origin and insertion points of a muscle closer together, on purpose, then very slowly and consciously moving them back into a relaxed, supple state. The latter certain habits have held sway (like crouching over a computer screen, for example), the more...
I close my eyes and slow, low breath. I lay down at home after the workshop and my body accomplishes something in somatics: each small step that builds the cake, moves us into a new practice. If you are trying to hit a ball with a racket, pedal a bicycle, dance a tango, or bake a cake for the first time, you will be learning movements in a specific order, with a specific precision—perhaps entire new movements that you have never done before. This is the means whereby a body accomplishes something in somatics: each small step that builds the cake, moves the bicycle, dances the tango, gets the ball into a welcoming house of the body that is a birthright no matter what the battering that body has taken at every turn of life. What is it to feel the us-ness of others surrounding us, agitating the tensions—pandiculation and contraction—that we have trained (bracing, holding) that we have been conditioned to release the constant state of contraction that eases if I bend my knees. My neck feels stiff. Where are my shoulders? An odd feeling that I can’t find my shoulders. My feet are gone too. I remember the instructor encouraging us to press our feet into the mat and I try it. And just like that my whole body comes into the field. I find I miss the others, the voices, the bodies around me, nestled into their own mats and blankets and bolsters. What is it to need someone—someone to cue the practice, to speak the balm to bring us back into a welcoming house of the body that is a birthright no matter what the battering that body has taken at every turn of life. What is it to feel the us-ness of others surrounding us, agitating the same process of discovery, of change? For healing, for growth, for relationships for trauma resolution, we agitate together. We consider, we occupy ourselves with, bring up for discussion, deliberate.

We discover what happens if we apply the ranging, exploratory, questing joy of discovery to our own relationships with our frayed, fragile, stalwart, and sometimes disintegrating bodies. Let us in 2022 AAs, please be an anthropologist within anthropology, within within each of us is an anthropologist of our own human bodies.

Mitra Emad is a yoga therapist in training and the associate dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

Charlotte Corden is an illustrator and fine artist whose work often centers around what it is to be human. She has an MA in anthropology from University College London and has studied at the London Fine Arts Studios and the Arts Students League of New York.

A new open-source platform, Public Knowledge Edge Project, at Simon Fraser University that makes submitting and accessing data, including multimedia formats, easier. We also initiated a new forum for our journal editors to share issues, concerns, and best practices with each other, structured in the same way as the forum for Section presidents. American Anthropologist editor Elizabeth Chin and Executive Board member Petra Kupping are cochairing this new forum along with support from Janine Chiappia McKenna, director of publishing. If you are or have a journal editor in your Section, please join us for our next forum in September. We look to this new forum to be a great resource as we address the many changes in academic publishing and move into a new publishing agreement this next year.

The established Department Leaders Summer Institute, a program for new chairs or directors of anthropology programs, was held over three days from June 22 to 24. Many thanks to Daniel Ginsberg, director of education and professional practices, for once again putting together an information-packed program to support our many department leaders and to our wonderful presenters Elizabeth Bready, Jim McDonald, Denise Brennan, and Timothy Smith. Participants engaged in discussions, case studies, and workshops on work/life balance, establishing a department culture, implications of accessibility and equity, budgeting, tenure and promotion, alumni relations, working with the administration, and so much more.

We are excited to have many chairs who joined us for a second time! And speaking of leadership, we are gearing up for the AAA nominations season. This is a fantastic opportunity to work alongside your colleagues in advancing our Association’s impact and advocacy. As someone who started working with the AAA as a graduate student representative at the Section level, I can attest to the positive impact that serving has had in my own work. Be on the lookout for more information from Gabriela Vargas-Cetina, the AAA’s secretaries and chair of the Nominations Committee.

For many of us, these last few weeks of summer will be filled with analyzing data gathered over the summer to prepare for publication, evaluating company performance and planning for the fourth quarter, finishing contracts and reports, creating or updating our syllabi, and making travel arrangements or WiFi arrangements for the Annual Meeting in Seattle, Washington, from November 9 through 13. We are very excited about the many activities and enhancements to the Annual Meeting this year and look forward to seeing you all, in person or virtually.

Before moving on, I want to close with a reminder to vote in the national and local mid-term elections on November 8. As the many announcements in our Communities forums note, we are grappling with decisions and pending actions that impact the futures of all of us and our research and advocacy can make a difference.

Let’s move our voices to as many forums and opportunities as possible, and let’s work to assure that we vote and that every vote counts.
After the success of our first traveling exhibition, website, and publications on RACE: Are We So Different?, the American Anthropological Association now brings the same lens of science, history, and lived experience to another timely yet timeless topic: migration and displacement. World on the Move: 250,000 Years of Human Migration recently debuted at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in Washington, DC, the first stop on a tour of US libraries through 2025, after which it will go on a broader international tour.

World on the Move reframes how we think—and talk—about migration and displacement. It challenges people to consider the scale, composition, and time-depth of human population movements, the variety of reasons that lead people to leave their homes, the range of ways in which migration affects both those who move and those who stay, and the future of human mobility in our changing world. The accompanying website offers resources for libraries, educators, families, and kids to keep the conversation going.

Drawing on a wealth of case studies from across human history and the breadth of cultures, the exhibit encompasses stories, images, and objects that will help people appreciate migration histories—their own and others—and emphasize how migration is a shared human experience that connects us all.

To highlight the different reasons and circumstances behind human mobility in different times and places, the exhibition uses “Crossroads” as a storytelling framework. Crossroads are intersections where people from different places meet. Crossroads also symbolize connections between cultures and moments when crucial decisions are made. Rather than following one group of people on the move, we ground ourselves in one location and watch as diverse groups come and go over the millennia.

The exhibition features four very different places as Crossroads: Beringia, The Mediterranean, Central Africa, and East Los Angeles. With this theme, the exhibition highlights human movement, interaction, change, and transformation. It encourages us to compare migration experiences from a wide diversity of times and places, prompting questions about how today’s migration stories are similar to those of long ago and far away, and how they are unique.

The World on the Move exhibition was developed in partnership with the American Library Association, the Smithsonian Institution’s Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, and Smithsonian Exhibitions. Support for planning and developing the exhibition has been provided by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Office of the Smithsonian Institution’s Secretary, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, and William Hearney. Learn more at UnderstandingMigration.org.

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AAA Executive Board Actions

MAY 2020
- Authorized Executive Director to renegotiate the contracts in effect in St. Louis to postpone the 2020 Annual Meeting until the next available year (2020) with the aim of avoiding contract penalties.
- Appointed an Executive Board Working Group to work with staff to identify a general outline of a plan by June for staging a viable alternative to an in-person Annual Meeting in St. Louis in November 2020.
- Received a final report from MPAAC Working Group on Virtual Attendance and Participation.
- Received the FY 2019 Annual Audit as prepared.
- Accepted the Federal 990 and 990FT Tax forms and the Virginal state form for 2019 as prepared by the auditor and recommend it be signed and submitted.
- Approved the creation of quasi-endowments for Society for Humaneistic Anthropology for a writing award and Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology for a general award fund.
- Approved the 2020 Franz Boas Award for Exemplary Service to Anthropology to Carina Heckert; The Anthropology in Media Award to Hugh Gusterson; Minority Dissertation Fellowship to Amos Hagan; Gender Equity Award to Deborah Thomas; Robert R. Testor and Family Prize for Excellence in Anticipatory Anthropology to Wendy A. Vogt and Carin Emmerson; Bower Latin American Fellowship Fund for Travel to Julio Villa Palomino.
- Approved the updates to the 2021 Strategic Implementation Plan.
- Authorized MPAAC to receive an annual budget of $100,000 as outlined in their report.
- Revised the name of the Minority Dissertation Fellowship to Dissertation Fellowship for Historically Underrepresented Persons in Anthropology.
- Revised the MPAAC charge so that the AAA President-Elect serves as one of the cochairs on the Committee.
- Adopted the updated 2020 version of the AAA Statement on Human Rights.
- Approved the AAA Statement of Agricultural Land Investments and Socially Responsible Retirement.
- Agreed to waive registration for guest presenters for the two Admitted the updated 2020 version of the AAA Statement on Human Rights.

JUNE 2020
- Approved the creation of a AAA K-12 non-voting membership with a $19 fee.
- Approved proposed journal pricing from Wiley for 2021.
- Agreed to next the AAA Executive Office to approve any future journal institutional subscription price increases at five percent or below.
- Adopted a definition of “previously published,” as drafted by the Publishing Futures Committee.
- Forwarded the letters of interest to the AAA President for appointment of new editor(s) for Open Anthropology.
- Approved an allocation from AAA reserves up to $1.77 million to cover the projected 2020 AAA operating deficit due to projected revenue shortfalls and proposed changes in expenses resulting from the global public health emergency and its accompanying economic impacts.

JUNE 2020
- Approved a revised 2020 Gift Acceptance Policy.
- Approved the EB Working Group Report on the fall 2020 Event Series and alternative to the cancelled Annual Meeting and urged the committee to share with the EB a refined proposal as soon as can be done.

NOVEMBER 2020
- Approved the budget for 2021 (with a revision in December).
- Created Working Group to review AAA Nomination Process.
- Agreed to share summary of the editor survey with journal editors, presidents, and treasurers of publishing Sections.
- Authorized the Publication Futures Committee to distribute a questionnaire to publishing Sections regarding publication production.
- Approved the update to the Journal Editor Memorandum of Understanding.
- Approved AAA paying membership dues (but not Section dues) for Editors during the years of an editor’s term, by requesting reimbursement.
- Approved additional language in the Authors Agreement concerning image copyright.

DECEMBER 2020
- Authorized funds ($40,000) to hire a facilitator to assist the Executive Board, MPAAC, and Section Leadership with planning and updating the 2021 Strategic Plan.
- Approved the proposed vote of Society for Urban National Transnational Global Anthropology of their members (by changing their bylaws) to rename their Section to Critical Urban Anthropology Association.

MAY 2021
- Approved the 2021 AAA slate of candidates for the spring Election.
- Adopted the AAA Guidelines for Establishing and Administering Endowment Funds.
- Withdrew funds in 2021 from AAA strategic reserves (up to $526,327) to pay for the replacement of the Association Web site.
- Approved the proposal of vote of Society for Urban National Transnational Global Anthropology of their members (by changing their bylaws) to rename their Section to Critical Urban Anthropology Association.

MAY 2021
- Approved proposed Statement on Anti-Transgender Legislation, which was an update from a previously adopted statement in 2018.
- Established the AAA Emiko Ohnuki-Tierny Book Award.
- Established a quasi-endowment for the Society for Visual Anthropology to fund their annual Field and Media Awards given at their annual festival.
- Accepted the 2020 Federal 990 tax forms and state of Virginia forms as prepared by audit firm and accepted their audit.
- Agreed to pause “land acknowledgments” and “blessing ceremonies” until the issue has been studied by the newly created Task Force that explores the historical relationships between anthropology and anthropologists and American Indian and Alaska Native Nations.
- Commended the work of Anthropology News editor, Natalie Konopinska, AAA Publishing Department, and volunteer authors for their excellent work and the EXCEL Awards earned in 2020.
- Commended the editor of Economic Anthropology (and SEA) for the hard work to increase the journal’s growth and receiving an Impact Factor based on the first six volumes of the journal.
- Commended the editors of Feminist Anthropology (and AFA) for the successful launch of the journal.
- Agreed to look into modeling options and a transition plan for a unified copyediting and managing editor service of the portfolio of journals.
- Authorized staff to begin creation of an orientation for leaders and editors on running a professional editorial office with best practices in managing workflow.
- Agreed that all journals that are part of the current publishing agreement move to standardized templates.
- Agreed to eliminate print subscriptions with the exception of American Anthropologist with the next publishing contract in 2023.
- Authorized staff to investigate the potential for partnerships with other publishers, with a report back to the AAA Executive Board by July 2021. Quality, breadth, equity, and accessibility are the key considerations.

JULY 2021
- Received report of Nominations Process Working Group and approved some short-term recommendations for improvements to nomination process.
- Agreed AAA to work toward a hybrid approach to a publishing model for the next publisher contract, which would allow for some journals to publish in both print and online as traditional subscription journals and some journals to become open access.
- Approved the AAA Strategic Plan for 2021–2026

AUGUST 2021
- Approved an exception to our policy not to hold meetings in Chicago until such time as HB57 is either repealed or stricken down as constitutionally invalid. This would allow AES and APLA to hold a spring meeting in the state and an event with virtual programming to address the issue HB57.

SEPTEMBER 2021
- Established quasi-endowments for SMA to support the MASA (Medical Anthropology Student Association) Graduate Student Mentorship Award, the MASA Undergraduate Student Mentorship Award, the Student Paper Prize, Student Travel Awards, Contingent Faculty Travel Award and biannual awards (the George Foster Practicing Medical Anthropology Award, WHR Rivers Undergraduate Student Paper Prize, SMA Dissertation Award, New Millennium Book Award, Hazel Weidman Award for Exemplary Service to the Society for Medical Anthropology, Career Achievement Award and the Charles Hughes Graduate Student Paper Prize.
- Established quasi-endowment for the Society for the Anthropology of Religion to finance the Clifford Geertz Book Award.
- Approved the recommendation of the joint AAA/SIAA Margaret Mead Award Committee selection of Amber R. Reed to receive the award in 2021.

OCTOBER 2021
- Agreed to proceed with the 2021 Annual Meeting in-person participation under thoughtfully planned health and safety protocols, offering a virtual participation option as well.
- Approved the acceptance of funding and establishment of the Ina Rosenthal-Urey Award and thanked Elizabeth Brody and Marc Robinson for their outstanding generosity and support of undergraduate anthropology majors.

NOVEMBER 2021
- Accepted funding from Carole Browner to establish SLACA’s quasi-endowed “Art Ruhl Book Award” and AAA’s Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching and thank her for her generosity and support to both AAA and the ACA.
- Accepted funding from Setha Low for endowing of AAA’s “Setha Low Award for Engaged Anthropology” and thanked her for her generosity.
- Accepted Funding by the Dubal family for a new (provisionally named “Sam Dubal Memorial Award for Anti-Colonialism and Racial Justice in Anthropology”) and thanks the Dubal family for their generosity and support.
- Accepted FY 2022 AAA Consolidated Operating Budget.
- Accepted recommendations of Border Walls Working Group.
- Approved a recommendation of the Working Group Reviewing AAA Public Policy Statements.
- Commissioned a Task Force to consider the long-term recommendations from the Working Group Reviewing AAA Public Policy Statement report.
- Commissioned a Task Force (now a Commission) on Ethical Treatment of Human Remains.
- Made changes to the charges for the Association Operations Committee and Anthropological Communications Committee to allow incoming members to serve as chairs for either of these Committees.
Unessay Competition Winners!

In spring 2022, AAA invited students to join us in celebrating Anthropology Day by participating in the inaugural AnthDay Unessay Competition. Inspired by the World on the Move exhibit, this year’s unessay competition focused on migration. The contest was open to students in grades kindergarten through twelfth. Unlike a traditional essay competition, an unessay invites students to choose the format and product they submit. Students were asked to think creatively about the topic and respond to one of several prompts in a way that is meaningful to them. We are proud to publish the winning entries as part of this “Move” issue of Anthropology News in print and on the AN website.

MARCH 2022
- Authorized appropriation of funds from the Opportunity Project funds to support and in-person Spring Executive Board Meeting in Arlington, Virginia, and accessibility support for Anthropology Live Event Series pilot.

JUNE 2022
- Approved the proposal from Society for Psychological Anthropology to establish a quasi-endowed fund of $125,000 for the establishment of and SPA Editorial Associate Fellowship.
- Approved the proposal from Society for Psychological Anthropology to establish three endowed awards: the Ashe prize (from a $12,500 donation from Susan Greenhalgh) and two mentoring awards (funded by a $50,000 donation from Carol H. Browner) with thanks from the Executive Board for their generosity.
- Approved the Federal and State Tax forms for 2021 along with the 2021 Audit Report.
- Approved the Revised Strategic Implementation Plan.
- Approved “equity” as a new core value of the AAA publishing program.
- Approved the Biological Anthropology Section’s proposal to create a new journal: Quarterly Biological Anthropology Review.
- Approved a revised allocation structure for distribution of revenue to journals to provide editorial support to all journals.
- Established a new Association Interest Group—the Climate Change Interest Group.
- Approved the Section Health Plans as proposed by Society for the Anthropology of Science, Evolutionary Anthropological Society, and the Anthropology of Consciousness, which establish a timeline for raising their membership or becoming a Society, and the Anthropology of Science, Evolutionary Anthropological Society.
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- Approved the recommendation of the Awards Committee for the AAA award recipients for 2021.
- Received the interim report of the Task Force on American Indian and Alaska Native Nations and agreed to share this report with the Section Presidents.

CROSS REFERENCE
- ALICE ATERIANUS-OWANGA, “COUNTER-EXOTIC MOVES”

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American Anthropological Association

Unsettling Landscapes
2022 Annual Meeting • Nov. 9-13, Seattle, WA

Key Dates

Friday, September 9 –
• Registration deadline to appear on the program
• Deadline for presenters to register for Annual Meeting

Wednesday, September 14 –
• Deadline for speaker portal tasks
• Workshop organizers accessible presentation materials due

Friday, October 7 –
• Last day for refund requests and hardship waivers

Thursday, October 20 –
• Deadline for reservations in AAA hotel block

Monday, October 31 –
• Last day for standard registration rates

annualmeeting.americananthro.org

AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION