

Blackwater USA, that a significant chunk of both governmental and corporate bodyguard work in Iraq has been outsourced. More than one U.S.-employed mercenary is in Iraq for every ten U.S. soldiers. These American deaths are not counted as military casualties, allowing the Pentagon to underreport the costs of our invasion and occupation. Many of Blackwater's mercenaries are "veterans of some of the most repressive military forces in the world, including that of the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and South Africa's apartheid regime" (Berkowitz 2004).

This is also the first American war in which the Pentagon is using high percentages of its own reserve units instead of active-duty soldiers, another key element of outsourcing. By definition, military reserves support themselves, and do not require full salaries, housing and other maintenance from the federal government, until they are called up. When Marx and Engels coined the term "reserve army of labor," I doubt that they could have imagined the situation in which we find ourselves, well-described by my dead father's humorous social mobility threat to me: "Shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in three generations."

We are now pulling police, fire and EMTs from the homefront, where they are desperately needed, and sending them abroad to fight. According to journalist Anne-Marie Cusac (2004), we are not only using reserves as frontline troops in an unprecedented way, we are bankrupting them in the process: they lose income from second jobs, they lose overtime pay, and delicate family economic and childcare arrangements are destroyed. Attorneys report a blizzard of bankruptcy filings of reservist families.

But regular enlisted troops are also underpaid and suffering economically, there is a rash of soldier suicides in Iraq, and dozens of servicewomen have been raped by their own military comrades. Barbara Ehrenreich (2004) reports that about 25,000 families of servicemen and -women are eligible for food stamps. Hardship is so widespread on military bases at home that private charities deliver free food and other goods there. Bush's 2003 tax cut for the wealthy even failed to extend a childcare tax credit to 200,000 military personnel. And the Veteran's Administration is an open scandal for its appalling failure to provide medical care to vets. In "his 2005 budget, Bush proposes to raise veterans' health care costs through increased drug co-payments and a new 'enrollment fee', thus driving an estimated 200,000 vets out of the system and discouraging another million from enrolling" (Ehrenreich 2004). Just as Brett Williams (2004) documents new predatory lending among the American race-minority poor, so the same jackals are fastening on military families of all races thrown upon

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Lee Baker

This past April, we joined forces with the American Ethnological Society to host our spring conference in Atlanta, Georgia. It was a resounding success thanks to the indefatigable efforts of Don Nonini, Dana-Ain Davis and Erik P. Revely. John Clarke came from England and Micaela Di Leonardo (*see lead article*) came from Chicago to strike the keynotes during their thought provoking and evocative addresses. Perhaps more importantly, graduate students, faculty members, and undergraduates, including a rather large contingent from Wesleyan (brought down by Gina Ulysse) participated in a very exciting and successful program. Registration was higher than expected and we actually came in well under budget when all the accounting was finished. Dana-Ain was busy with the spring conference as she organized the program for the AAA conference this coming November. We have another great program and the "invited sessions" will be exciting as they at once reflect upon the contributions of one generation while introducing the work of another group of upcoming scholars in the critical study of North America.

Our membership remains about the same, as well as our budget- in good shape. Treasurer Sarah Horton and I are closely monitoring both. We will be launching a new website; once in operation, it will be located at www.sananet.org. So stay tuned.

I am also delighted to announce that our membership elected two new people for leadership positions within our organization: Jeff Maskovsky as President-Elect and Gabriela Vargas-Cetina to serve as an at-large member of the board. Jeff has already provided years of leadership for SANA- - recently completing a three-year term on the SANA Program Committee and he was also the Conference Chair for our inaugural spring conference in Windsor, Ontario in 2002. Jeff is a model activist/scholar and will bring energy and an infectious sense of the unbounded possibilities to our organization. He is currently an assistant professor of urban studies at Queens College CUNY. Gabriela (Gaby) has played a vital role in expanding our ties with colleagues in Canada and Mexico. Gaby attended graduate school at McGill and is Professor of Anthropology and Researcher at la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. Her unique networks have already served to enrich our organization and we are glad that she is willing to help SANA better represent North America by developing these important relationships. She has also been one of the chief organizers of our upcoming conference in the Yucatán. Please join me at the SANA business during the AAA conference in room "Franciscan A" at 12:15pm on November 19, 2004 to extend a heart-felt congratulations and a hearty welcome to their new positions.

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