

Lee D. Baker

SIGNING OFF

In this issue, we are launching a new series edited by Raymond Codrington titled “Hip-Hop beyond Appropriation.” The first installment is by Micah Gilmer, who is the new student representative to the ABA Board. His partner and wife, photographer Jamaica Woodyard Gilmer, provided the image on the cover—“Hempza: Musicians with Microphone.” We also have poetry by Signithia Fordham and a special essay by my colleague Charles Piot—a revised lecture he gave at public forum addressing the Duke lacrosse case held on Duke’s campus February 12, 2007.

This is my last issue, and I have enjoyed playing the role of editor over the last three years. When Arthur Spears first launched *Transforming Anthropology* (*TA*) seventeen years ago in 1990, the ABA had 101 members: 80 were professional members and 21 were student members. In the very first issue, founding editor Arthur Spears mentioned the need for more quality submissions while A. Lynn Bolles, who was serving as the secretary/treasurer, noted that publishing a journal was a serious financial commitment. In some respects, little has changed. In other respects, many things have changed and changed dramatically. In a good month, the ABA boasts 200 professional members and 100 student members. Our journal is still the major financial commitment for our section, and we still need more people to submit their best work—we still do not have a backlog of articles. One thing has never changed; *TA* is a distinctive and special journal that serves an important constituency and niche and is an excellent forum for critical scholarship and creative expression.

Sometimes it is important to remember that *TA* is what we do, and we do it well. Together with mentoring, our annual academic program, and contributing to the American Anthropological Association (AAA) as a whole, *TA* is the keystone of our section, and I have both faith and confidence that it will remain the signature program of our section. We do not have spring conferences, nor do we have a sustained outreach program. We do have a competitive and stable journal that contributes important research and engaged dialogue that impact the field in lasting ways. Not only does it serve as our journal, but in important ways it also serves as a vehicle for critical discourse among members of our cognate sections—Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists, Society for the Anthropology of North America, Association for Feminist Anthropology, Association of

Latina and Latino Anthropologists—associations that do not support a peer-reviewed journal but for whom many of their members choose to publish in *TA*.

It is my hope that we continue to do what it takes to sustain this journal. I have had the privilege and benefit of building on the good and hard work of Arthur Spears, Brackette Williams, and Irma McCLaurin. I am more than happy to join the ranks of “former editors,” knowing that Deborah A. Thomas and John L. Jackson, Jr. will take the journal to new heights and in new directions. Collectively, their commitment, alacrity, and creativity will lead *TA* to new horizons and sustain it for the next generation of scholars. I took over the leadership of *TA* as the AAA made a commitment to digital publications and literally bet the farm on AnthroSource. For *TA*, this has been a mixed blessing. In the inevitable turmoil this brought on for all sections as well as the AAA at large, *TA* has not only survived; it has thrived. This journal has actually been held up as one of the success stories because we have been able to adapt better than some of our peer sections to this new publishing environment.

I am more than happy to admit that the Association of Black Anthropologists and *TA* are peerless, but in today’s scholarly environment wrought by AnthroSource and wicked neoliberal budgetary models employed to sustain it, *TA* has found itself for the first time in an explicitly competitive environment, where pages, dollars, clicks, and citations are each counted, measured, listed, and analyzed. In terms of size, there are only two other sections that have a similar membership base, which also sustain a peer-reviewed journal: the Society for Anthropology and Humanism, which publishes *Anthropology & Humanism*, and the Society for the Anthropology of Work, which publishes *Anthropology of Work Review*. Although it is hard to quantify, and I do not like to, the journals that many people consider our peers include *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, *Anthropology and Consciousness*, *City and Society*, and *Culture & Agriculture*. Each of those journals has a larger section with which to support it, and I would say we are in good company in terms of the types of journals with which we are often compared, but we should keep striving to improve.

As I transition from having a direct role in editing the journal, I will still be involved from a different position. AAA president Alan Goodman has asked me

to chair the allocations subcommittee of the awkwardly titled Committee on the Future of Print and Electronic Publishing, which is expertly chaired by Alisse Waterston. Alisse is a supporter of and contributor to *TA*. When they asked me to serve in this important role, I was explicit that I was committed to sustaining a diverse portfolio of publications and that small sections provided important dialogue and discourse and make the field of anthropology more robust. In short, I signed on as an explicit advocate for *TA* who was willing to fairly balance the needs and expectations of each section. It never ceases to amaze me that people can intuitively understand the value of a diverse portfolio when it comes to stocks and bonds for their retirement savings but need to be convinced of the value of a diverse ecosystem, a diverse array of publications, or a diverse cohort of graduate students. Alisse, Alan, and incoming AAA president Setha Low do not need convincing; they understand the added value *TA* provides to the field.

Although it has been a costly investment, our relationship with University of California Press has been beneficial. They are very good at what they do and have been reasonably responsive to our specific needs while delivering top-notch services. *TA* is now fully on-line and incorporated within AnthroSource as well as published on-line through Pro-Quest. We are now also accepting all submissions through an electronic editorial workflow system, which has greatly enhanced the editorial process. It took some doing, but the editorial infrastructure, technology, distribution, and production of *TA* is stronger now than it ever has been, and the journal is now on par with all of the major journals in the field. The last three years have been an important transition, and after seventeen years of growth and development, *TA* can rightfully take its place alongside other mature journals. The success of the journal, however, lies first in the contributors, as well as the reviewers. And the folks who have done the most in terms of reviewing, submitting, and inviting people to submit to *TA* have been our contributing editors—who are just the finest group of colleagues I could have asked to work with. Thank you all. I have to give special thanks to some reviewers who are not part of the editorial collective but who have stepped up to offer timely and expert reviews. Let me give special thanks to Alan Goodman, Jonathan Marks, Thomas Patterson, Stephan Palmie, Kevin Cokley, William A. Little, Susan D. Greenbaum, Ana Aparicio, Nan A. Rothschild, and Paula Cruz Takash, who each offered particularly substantive and timely reviews. Special thanks to Robert Adams, Kevin Michael Foster, Fatimah Jackson, Leith Mullings, Jeff Maskovsky, Maria Vesperi, Marla Frederick, Drexel Woodson, and Dana-Ain Davis, whose special commitment to *TA* made these

last three years fun and rewarding. There are many people to thank, and I offer apologies for anyone I missed. John and Deb, of course, have been so crucial to the success of *TA*, and it has been both a joy and a pleasure to work with them. It is with confidence and humility that I turn over the helm and let them sail.