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– *Introduction* –
**The Public South: Engaging History, Abolition,
Pedagogy, and Practice**

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New Dimensions of *Southern Anthropologist*

With this issue of *Southern Anthropologist*, we introduce several new features, which we hope will enliven conversations and expand the readership of the journal. In addition to traditional research articles, we are introducing slightly shorter *Field Reports*, which are ideally suited to reflecting on the research process, preliminary analysis of research in progress, reflections on emergent themes, and strategies for responding to dilemmas and challenges encountered in the course of field research. *Field reports*, which are typically shorter than *Research Articles*, also go through double-blind peer-review. A second feature, *Anthropology in Practice*, features writing from engaged scholars reflecting on the lived realities of applied and practicing anthropology, and any other aspect of anthropological practice. Finally, we introduce *Conversations* which are lightly edited transcript of conversations from the annual meeting, with a topic directly relevant to the theme of our special issue. *Conversations* go through editorial review with the journal, and the authors have the opportunity to read their transcript, correcting any errors, and adding references and notes.

These innovations respond to and extend the theme of the 2022 annual meeting of the Southern Anthropological Society (SAS): “Public Interest and Professional Anthropology in the South” which took place in Raleigh, NC. The CFP helped to bring out scholars in all stages of their careers, from undergraduates, Master’s and PhD Students to Assistant Professors, Emeritus faculty, and practicing anthropologists who are not necessarily based in a university. This diversity has a long history at the SAS as one of the few anthropology conferences which consistently

welcomes emerging scholars in this way. The enthusiastic response to the CFP was a clear sign that the SAS has a vital role to play as a forum for scholarly exchange. After holding a meeting online (“Tales from the Storms”) in 2021, it was heartwarming to see everyone back together in-person after a long Covid-related hiatus.

The 2022 call for papers led with a series of questions: “What does an anthropology of/in the South that is applied, public, or engaged look like? How are we applying anthropology, serving a public(s), and /or engaging contemporary politics particularly in this time of global pandemic and anti-racist protest?” These are questions that acknowledge the protests, and soul searching and organizing work across multiple sectors of society, in response to the 2020 police killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, and the earlier, much-publicized deaths of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice (2014), Walter Scott (2015), Alton Sterling, and Philando Castile (2016). The expanded public awareness of police violence, antiblackness, and racialized structural inequality dovetailed with uneven social impacts of Covid-19 pandemic and the disparate disruptions to the economies, lived experiences, and health and well-being of people living in the US and around the world. Anthropologists whose work often engages directly with human rights, violence, and health disparities responded to these twin crises with public talks, webinars, publications, and personal engagements with community. Our classrooms were in many ways transformed, not just because of the move to online learning, but also because our students urgently wanted to know how anthropology could speak to these issues.

The call for papers concluded: “The 2022 meeting of the SAS seeks presentations, posters, and roundtables illustrating the variety of ways in which anthropology is addressing the needs of the public (students, colleagues, government leaders, business clients, NGO funders, civic and community groups, etc.)” Not surprisingly, the conference elicited a wide variety of presentations, presenting research that responds to the present moment, engaging with larger disciplinary debates, and grappling with institutional and community histories.

The theme of this special issue, “The Public South: Engaging History, Abolition, Pedagogy, and Practice,” echoes the call for papers for the 2022 Annual meeting, organized by Matt Samson in collaboration with

Tim Wallace, Vinnie Melomo, and Amanda Reinke. Barbara Hendry and Majorie Snipes served as the program committee for the meeting. As editors for this special issue, Amanda Reinke and Helen Regis were keen to highlight current research by faculty and students who are wrestling with the legacies of white supremacy, ongoing transformations of higher education under conditions of neoliberalism, and partisan political attacks sweeping over colleges and universities. While these conditions are widespread, the predicament of faculty working in public universities in Georgia was especially concerning at the time of our meeting. Since then, conservative attacks on academic freedom have spread dramatically, with similar initiatives affecting faculty, students, and staff at universities in Florida, North Carolina, Texas and beyond. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Ed*, legislators in 20 states have introduced thirty bills targeting DEI programs (see also Cineas 2023). The *Conversation* “Pedagogy in Times of Crisis” (Daria et al., this issue), based on a panel organized by Amanda Reinke in 2022, is especially illuminating of how faculty remain determined to craft pedagogies that are grounded in the best critical insights and scholarship in our discipline.

A Vibrant Site for Interrogating the South and the World

Since its founding in 1966, the SAS has fostered scholarship that challenges typical representations of the South while contributing innovative work on labor, capital, migration, transnational connections, race, class, gender, identity, sexuality, health, religion, education, museums, foodways, art, heritage, coastal adaptations, and Indigenous communities and critically examining trends in archaeology, linguistics, and urban, applied, and medical anthropology in national and international contexts. The society has, since its founding, aimed to be inclusive and cosmopolitan both in its membership and its theoretical engagements. As the president reflected in the 1972 issue of *The Southern Anthropologist*, “From the first, it was the intention of the organizers of the society to avoid a parochial emphasis” (Banks 1972, 5).

For many years, from 1967 to 2006, a selection of papers from the conference was revised and peer-reviewed collections published by the University of Georgia Press and, from 2011-2020, by Newfound Press at the University of Tennessee. This journal – along with the 2022 conference proceedings edited by Marcos Mendoza and Kiley Molinary (2023) and

published through eGrove, an imprint of the University of Mississippi Libraries – picks up where that series left off.

Those early conference proceedings included *Essays in Medical Anthropology* edited by Thomas Weaver (1968); *Urban Anthropology* edited by Elizabeth Eddy (1969); *Concepts and Assumptions in Contemporary Anthropology* edited by Stephen A. Tyler (1969); and *Red, White, and Black*, edited by Charles Hudson (1971). Further volumes reflect four-field anthropology and collections that open up new perspectives in the disciplines, as well as a growing interest in applied, urban, and policy-related research: *Biocultural Adaptation in Prehistoric America*, edited by Robert L. Blakely (1976); *Holding on to the Land and the Lord: Kinship, Ritual, Land Tenure, and Social Policy in the Rural South*, edited by Robert L. Hall and Carol B. Stack (1980); *African Americans in the South: Issues of Race, Class and Gender*, edited by Hans Baer and Yvonne Jones (1990); *Practicing Anthropology in the US South*, edited by Tim Wallace (1995); *Latino Workers in the Contemporary South*, edited by Arthur D. Murphy, Colleen Blanchard, and Jennifer A. Hill (2001) and *Southern Indians and Anthropologists: Culture, Politics, and Identity*, edited by Lisa J. Lefler and Frederic W. Gleach (2002), to name a few. The 2016 meeting in Huntington, West Virginia resulted in an edited collection on *Reinventing and Reinvesting in the Local for the Common Good*, edited by Brian A. Hoey (2020).

This list gives an idea of the scope of the issues that received attention in SAS meetings over more than half a century. In a new edition reprinting the Society's early publications published by the University of Alabama Press, Miles Richardson provided an introduction in which he noted a persistent agenda having to do with justice. In these days of self-criticism in our discipline, the reflection continued with these words:

Anthropology's concern for the human species emerged early as a commitment to set the record straight. Setting straight a record that ideologues (if not demagogues) had twisted almost at will to suit the powers that be, required the application of anthropological research to the region's languages, cultures, archaeologies, and human compositions, which [the] SAS did from its very beginning. (Richardson 2005, viii)

Charles Hudson was more earthy in a publisher's review on the back cover of the same edition:

The first five volumes of the SAS Proceedings show that we had nerve, with essays on two new areas of anthropology, at that time, as well as a survey of current theoretical thought. We also had substance, with papers on many of the socio-cultural nooks and crannies of the South. Where else, for example, can you find intelligent instruction on how to escape through a swamp, throwing the sheriff and his hounds off your trail?

As anthropologists continue to discuss calls to decolonize the discipline (Bolles 2013; Burns et al 2020; Gupta and Stoolman 2022; Harrison 1991; Jobson 2020; Pels 2018; Tuck and Wang 2012), many scholars who live and work in the South face profound challenges in their institutions and communities. In this context, it is worth remembering that anthropologists were long discouraged from doing research close to home, and international research continues to hold a certain kind of prestige in the discipline. Thus, the South was somewhat neglected (like much of North America) as a site of sustained and in-depth anthropological scholarship. But the SAS helped to change that by providing a scholarly venue for innovative work in and about the region. There is special value in a publication venue rooted in a place with a long history of orientalism, distortion, and misrepresentation from the national media and drive-by scholarship. At the same time, scholars like former AAA president James Peacock (2010) have long advocated for a global, or transnational, perspective on the US South (see Bellows et al. 2022; Regis 2006). Another SAS founder, Miles Richardson, undertook comparative research on place and performance in the Southern US and Latin America (Richardson 2006). Faye V. Harrison, a major thinker on decolonizing anthropology (Harrison 1991, 1999, 2008) who has written extensively about gender, race, and political economy in the US and Jamaica, the history of anthropology and the global politics of anthropological knowledge, has also contributed to rethinking the South in Atlantic perspective. In her 2006 essay "From the Chesapeake Bay to the Caribbean Sea and Back: Remapping Routes, Unearthing Roots." Harrison revisits deep historical connections between Jamaica and coastal cities in the eastern US, from the architecture of Atlantic port cities to the performance of John Canoe (or Junkanoo) and

contemporary developments in the intensification of heritage tourism. Harrison is a recipient of the SAS Zora Neale Hurston Award. Her research agenda and her own career, as a professor at the University of Tennessee, the University of Florida and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and as former president of the International Union of Anthropological Sciences and the Association of Black Anthropologists, embody an aspiration in the society to pursue scholarship that is both locally and internationally engaged.

The Public South: A Brief Note about the Articles in this Special Issue

In their research article, Meg Langhorne and Allison Bell delve into the fascinating and disturbing archive of a college biology course, involving students in assessing the fitness of community members. The notes appear in term papers from the 1920s and 1930s, which they studied in University archives, and reveal students who are applying the knowledge learned in the classroom, generating assessments that potentially determine the futures of those being scrutinized. As Langhorne and Bell suggest, the young white men enrolled in these courses were encouraged to think of themselves as inherently (biologically) superior, and thus naturally suited to make decisions about others. They write: “Their education both reflected and reinforced inequalities of class, race, and gender, all imagined as biological and inevitable” (15). These eugenic logics have implications for issues of current public policy, including “who will have the right to decide whether or not someone will give birth” (30). Langhorne and Bell engage with the history of academic practice in a compelling micro-history that critically interrogates both pedagogy and practice.

Ann Kingsolver and co-authors Elena Sesma, Christian Keeve, Madeline Imler, Alexis Farmer, and Aimee Stamm consider how community-engaged anthropology can involve students in an effort to create more inclusive public histories. Through revisiting her own long-term research in the region, Kingsolver places her work in the critical cultural anthropology of North America in dialogue with community-engaged historical archaeology (Sesma) in a project that involves both faculty and students (Keeve, Imler, Farmer, and Stamm) in revisiting and repurposing archival, ethnographic, and archaeological data through new analytic lenses. Sesma underscores the pivotal role of Black feminist theory, and especially Whitney Battle-Baptiste’s *Black Feminist Archaeology*

(2011), to encourage new interpretations of existing archaeological materials. The article was written to highlight the distinctive voices of scholar-teachers, and students in various positions to reflect on the material and its importance for engaging publics through anthropological research and teaching. The site, a homestead of an African American family in Nineteenth century Nicholas Country provides a compelling case for thinking through issues of representation, erasure, and inclusion in scholarship. As Kinsolver writes, this article is “a step toward collaborative, intergenerational anti-racist pedagogy” (45). The authors demonstrate how centering student knowledge and community engagement can help anthropologists address specific publics.

Helen Regis draws on her experience teaching *Doing Oral History*, a course that involves students in community-engaged research as part of a long-term collaborative partnership with the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation. This research article simultaneously provides documentation on the origin of a citywide festival and considers how oral histories have the potential to diversify the narrative contained in any particular origin story. By providing insight into a particular course that engages students in oral history research in conversation with community members, Regis raises an important question: Can teaching and doing oral history be a form of public scholarship? Part of the answer is found in Regis’s acknowledgment that working with oral history in the context of parades and festivals results in the recognition that various groups with different positionalities are invested in how the history of such events is remembered and represented. When relationships are cultivated over time, the act of co-creating narratives allows community members to “make claims” on both the event and on city culture in the telling of their own stories. Drawing on the collaborative ethnography of Eric Luke Lassiter (2005), Regis also raises questions of how public anthropology (and pedagogy) can move beyond ideas of service learning to true community engagement with a range of different publics.

The research article contributed by Daniel Pizarro chronicles the innovative role of a zine he co-developed as a member of the Atlanta chapter of SONG (Southerners on New Ground). Writing as a scholar-activist, Pizarro takes a reflexive approach in arguing for the central role of political education in the conceptual and strategic aspects of community organizing around abolition of the prison-industrial complex (PIC). Drawing on the

growing field of carceral studies, abolitionist writings, radical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, and critical scholarship on the discipline of anthropology, Daniel's engaged scholarship resonates with the call from many sectors of the field for transforming how we engage with students, communities, and the university itself.

Jaymelee Kim's field report considers the challenges of research with survivors of human trafficking. Using the evocative notion of "finding the field," Kim shows the anthropologist at work, seeking to engage collaboratively with agencies who have limited knowledge of ethnographic methodologies, even as they themselves are actively figuring out how to implement recent legislation and policies. Non-profit agency staff work with distinctive codes of professional ethics and strategies for ensuring confidentiality for participants, even as anthropologists seek to inform the public about the nature of trafficking and the often-complicated relationships between victims and victimizers. This extends to the ways in which different agencies and institutions seek to address the personal trauma resulting from the experience of being trafficked.

In our inaugural feature on *Anthropology in Practice*, Amanda Reinke draws on her experience as a university-employed anthropologist who uses her training in private practice and *pro bono* work in conflict resolution. Drawing on expertise in legal anthropology, bureaucratic violence, and conflict mediation, and through specific examples from her mediation practice, Reinke considers how mediation services potentially disrupt, or mitigate existing patterns of inequality in access to dispute resolution services. A mediator who is trained in anthropology may be especially skilled in helping clients to navigate culturally dominant assumptions in legal spaces, from gender ideologies to the centering of culturally dominant holidays (like Christmas) over those most relevant to their clients. From the perspective of the academy, Reinke calls for an expanded understanding of diverse forms of research and scholarship rooted in practice. Such understanding admits the possibility of diverse forms of scholarship that might be reflected in "policy briefs, working papers, training materials, case studies, and other practitioner-oriented publications" (156), which are already recognized as research/scholarship in some academic departments. Reinke urges anthropology departments to create policy documents that recognize and foster greater flexibility for scholars who are already putting critique into practice, concluding:

“Provisioning for flexibility in promotion and tenure requirements, annual reviews, and other forms of evaluation will best support the practitioners in your department” (156). This approach resonates with the collaborative and shifting perspective on how anthropology (and anthropologists) engages with the power of institutions while seeking to balance personal life with professional objectives. This emphasis is not only on anthropology but also the shifting institutional structures in the contemporary academy.

The *Conversation* “Pedagogy in Times of Crisis,” by James Daria, Abigail “Abby” Wightman, Shelly Yankovskyy, and Amanda J. Reinke, invites readers to learn from experience of faculty in very different institutions – including small liberal arts colleges and public universities, historically white universities, and those that primary teach women and students of color – as they face challenges related to changing demographics, the exclusion of undocumented students, and their own roles as precarious, tenure-track, and tenured faculty. Wightman speaks of the generative possibilities of “making our institutions our fieldsites” and listening to students as “co-researchers and collaborators.” Whether talking about street names in a southern Georgia town, teaching about the social construction of race, finding language for implicit social hierarchies, or learning about how a university administration works, the conversation points toward how anthropologists integrate our work with the demands of a radically changing social and political landscape – and one that is in many ways even more fraught than when this conversation was held.

Two of the research articles involve collaborations and co-authorship between faculty and students and across subfields (Kingsolver et al). The co-authorship of these articles foregrounds and showcases shared intellectual labor and the generative potential of project-based learning that involves undergraduates as well as graduate students in research. They also feature two distinct strategies for co-writing. Meg Langhorne and Alison Bell integrate the authors’ perspectives and analysis in “Blood Will Tell,” while Ann Kingsolver, Elena Sesma, Christian Kieve, Madeline Imler, Alexis Farmer, and Aimee Stamm, co-authors of “Standing Together Against Silencing,” keep each author’s contributions distinct, allowing each of the contributors to maintain a distinctive authorial voice, and foregrounding the distinctive perspectives of students and faculty – which in itself underlines their attention to process, whether in the field, the lab, the archive, or the writing room. Another article was originally written

when the author, Daniel Pizarro, was enrolled in a master's program and reflects the perspective of a graduate student in the anthropology classroom as well as a scholar-activist creating pedagogical materials for abolitionist organizing. Together, the research articles, field report and conversation presented here demonstrate the exciting possibilities for work that transcends traditional categories of teaching, research and service through public scholarship that engages history, abolition, pedagogy, and practice.

This issue's inclusion of *Field Reports*, *Anthropology in Practice*, and *Conversations* are intended to expand the scope and reach of the journal and to encourage early-career scholars to contribute. We hope that these innovations strengthen the *Southern Anthropologist* as a forum for scholarship, reflection, and a site for emergent knowledge and discussions of anthropological practice originating in or focused on the South, scholarship with implications that extend to other regions of the US and beyond.

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