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World on the Move: Migration Stories

Preface: Signing Off and Introducing Open Anthropology's New Editors

Alisse Waterston

I am honored to have served as the founding editor of *Open Anthropology*, the public journal of the American Anthropological Association. My commitment to this pilot project began the moment the idea surfaced in a brainstorming session with AAA past president [Leith Mullings](#), CFPEP chair [Deb Nichols](#), the [CFPEP](#) team, and [Oona Schmid](#), AAA's magnificent Director of Publishing. It was clear from the start that in an ever changing technological, cultural, political, and market environment for scholarly publishing, *Open Anthropology* would stand as a win-win for all, one among other AAA innovations.

It has been my great pleasure to bring *Open Anthropology* from a germ of an idea to a full-fledged online publication that draws readers from all over the world. It has also been an eye-opening experience. For example, sifting through the electronic stacks that comprise the AAA portfolio of journal articles in anthropology, I have learned that many of today's concerns were also yesterday's worries, and that certain ideas may seem "new" but have been thought of earlier. Now, I can better recognize specious claims to "new" theory. I have also come to prefer arguments that build on *cumulative* knowledge while acknowledging flaws, gaps, and weaknesses in those that came before.

New Editors: Introducing Sallie Han and Jason Antrosio

It is now my pleasure to introduce Sallie Han and Jason Antrosio who will serve as co-editors of *Open Anthropology* beginning with the March 2015 issue. [Sallie](#) is Associate Professor of Anthropology at [SUNY Oneonta](#) and chair of the [Council on Anthropology and Reproduction](#), an interest group of the [Society for Medical Anthropology](#) (see her tweets under the handle [@AnthroRepro](#)). [Jason](#) is Associate Professor of Anthropology at [Hartwick College](#), and writes two widely read, awesome blogs: [Living Anthropologically](#) and [Anthropology Report](#). Their interests include medical anthropology, reproduction and the US (Sallie) and economic anthropology, globalization and the Andes (Jason).

Jason and Sallie are fully prepared to take the publication to the next level. Among their innovations, they will expand use of links to blog posts, podcasts, and YouTube clips, especially those featuring authors of articles appearing in *Open Anthropology*. With its 15 articles and the Editor's Note, *Open Anthropology* is

structured to fit seamlessly as a one-semester course packet. Sallie and Jason plan to build on this infrastructure, linking to materials on the AAA's Teaching Materials Exchange that include special activities and student assignments. Also, they will more fully incorporate social media to raise awareness about OA and engage readers interactively using crowdsourcing for topic ideas and tweetups with featured authors.

Welcome Sallie and Jason! This is an exciting moment for *Open Anthropology*.

Editor's Note

Alisse Waterston

"In order to understand history it is necessary to know not only how things are, but how they have come to be." Franz Boas, "The Methods of Ethnology," 1920

The phrase, "World on the Move" captures a characteristic of "how things are" today, a point in time nearly half way through the second decade of the 21st century, and almost 100 years since anthropologist Franz Boas published the remark that serves as the epigraph to this editorial. In a very broad sense, world on the move suggests change, a process of transformation. In its speediness, the pace of change today is almost incomprehensible, though the fact of it is thrown in stark relief with each new and faster, smaller digital tool that people everywhere seem to be adopting.

World on the Move is also about activity—the movement and circulation of people, ideas, languages, and things, including food, cloth, oil, wood, weapons, money, and these days, investment capital. Sometimes and in some places, the movement is free flowing, crossing borders; in other times and places, movement is held up or stopped altogether.

This edition of *Open Anthropology* focuses on migration, a form of human movement that archaeologist [David W. Anthony](#) suggests is best understood as both [behavior and process](#).

I have chosen the topic of migration for two key reasons. First, the [humanitarian crises](#) and [legislative debates](#) related to migration continue to be [front-page news](#) in [US](#) and [international media](#); thus, the topic fits with Open Anthropology's mission to bring anthropology into the public conversation about critical social issues and contemporary policy debates. Second, migration is the topic of the forthcoming **Public Education Initiative (PEI) of the American Anthropological Association**. For this edition of *Open Anthropology*, I have borrowed the first half of the PEI's working title, "World on the Move – 100,000 Years of Human Migration."

Indeed, human migration has an enormously long history, and is a huge topic. I discovered as much in the course of producing my own recent research and writing project. [My book](#) centers my father as subject of an anthropological work, tracing his life history across the long and violent 20th century—a personal story that is also social history. As he shares his earliest childhood memories with me, my father offered hints of a troubled history that *preceded* his birth. To make sense of those hints, I needed to go back in time to understand how they clued into a larger and longer set of circumstances that ultimately shaped my father's life course. Though the personal remnants of that part of my family's past are gone, I was able to reconstruct the relevant, larger and longer history from archives and books. I learned that in my family's case, the relevant history started one thousand years ago when the world was in great motion, when human collectivities defined by culture, language, religion, occupation, networks and power met and

moved across lands and settled in new places. I also learned that global migration is not a uniquely contemporary phenomenon; for example, the migrations of medieval times were also of the “global” type, transposing across seven civilizations.

I also came to recognize the long history of human migration and the vastness of the topic as I faced the task of landing upon 15 articles out of hundreds of choices from the [AAA journal archive](#) for this edition of *Open Anthropology*. There is a massive amount of anthropological material on migration across [the subfields](#) and specialty areas represented in the multiple journals produced by the association as well as in books and journals produced by publishers all over the world. This is good news for the exhibits, websites, and other interactive media that will be developed for the Public Education Initiative, all of which will be informed by rich anthropological data and insight.

That we have such a rich body of anthropological data is also good news for the larger public that must contend with a constant flow of misinformation and disinformation. Sometimes it is hard to know who or what to believe! For a public yearning to understand the multiple crises that surround humankind, anthropology offers information and analysis. The discipline does not claim to have the final word on the subjects it studies; instead, it offers rigorously produced information and argumentation, a cumulative body of knowledge to ensure an informed public.

The problem of readily available misinformation and disinformation was recently brought home with the publication of a new book by [Nicholas Wade on race](#), which anthropologist [Jonathan Marks](#) calls “[a slightly new spin on a set of old prejudices, but hardly science](#).” The book became a bestseller even as anthropologists and [geneticists](#) disproved its key position that there are “[definable and genetically identifiable groups we can label as biological races in humans today](#)” and that “[recent human evolution has led to racial differences in economic and social behavior](#).”

Migration figures into the argument. In refuting the book’s “speculative genetic explanations for social phenomena,” Marks invokes [immigration studies](#), which “show that people can fully adopt any different way of life in a generation or two. Names change, accents disappear and economic advancement over time seems to make the newcomers look just a bit less alien and threatening.” My father’s migration story—and his name changes—brings this point to life. Across one century, my father *Mendeleh* from Jedwabne, Poland became *Miguelito* in Manguito, Cuba, *Miguel* in Havana, *Michael* in New York, and don Miguel in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The matter of accent also comes into the story in a humorous way: Hearing my father’s funny Yiddishy-Spanish accent, a gal he met during World War II asked him where he was from. “I’m from Texas,” my father told the British beauty, “this is how we talk in Texas!” My father’s immigration story is not unique, a fact captured in the working vision statement for the new AAA Public Education Initiative: “Today, every one of us has an immigrant story in our own lives or in our family histories.” Each of these stories is situated in history, and each migration trajectory has been shaped by a complex set of forces.

Migration Stories: Reports from Anthropology

This collection of thirteen articles and two book reviews offers a taste of what anthropologists have written across time and subspecialties about migration. Taken as a whole, this collection gives substance to what anthropologist Roger Sanjek calls the “wider canvas...of all humanity at all periods and all places.” In “[Rethinking Migration, Ancient to Future](#),” Sanjek writes,

Upon this wider canvas, human migration may be disassembled into a set of seven processes – *expansion, refuge-seeking, colonization, enforced transportation, trade diaspora, labour diaspora and emigration*... We live... in a world formed (and still being formed) by all these processes and their compounded results (318-319; emphasis added).

Our collection begins with [Franz Boas](#) (1858-1942) who deeply understood that the world was formed by a complex set of forces. Boas was instrumental in establishing anthropology in the United States. His [wisdom on social issues and key topics in anthropology has stood the test of time](#). Published in 1920, Boas's short article on "The Methods of Ethnology," appears in [American Anthropologist](#), currently edited by [Michael Chibnik](#).

In "Methods," Boas identifies two approaches to the study of humankind based on different assumptions about the forces shaping human experience. Boas called one approach the "uniform evolutionary view," and the other the "migration/diffusion view." He exposed the premises behind each perspective: The evolutionary approach assumes the existence of predetermined, natural "definite laws" that shape culture and the course of humankind, leading to a belief in predictable "stages," from primitive to civilized, in the unfolding of civilization. The migration/diffusion perspective assumes that the presence of common cultural traits, even in very disparate parts of the world, results from contact (migration) and borrowing (diffusion).

Boas takes issue with both approaches. Of the uniform evolutionary view, Boas asked: where's the evidence (312)? He then noted, "As soon as we admit that the hypothesis of a uniform evolution has to be proved before it can be accepted, the whole structure loses its foundation." As students of anthropology know, the hypothesis has since been discredited and the theory exposed as ethnocentric and Eurocentric, the latter point noted by Boas in this essay. Of the migration/diffusion approach, Boas identifies its key flaw: the fact that similar cultural attributes were found in very different parts of the world, the theory requires that explanation be the result of contact across impossibly large land areas and it denies the possibility that the attributes were home grown.

The anthropologist then offers an alternative approach, one not so extreme in its pronouncements or premature in its conclusions. Boas called it the "American" approach (he had been working hard to establish anthropology in the US and is often referred to as the father of American anthropology). In no rush to come to ultimate answers to ultimate questions, Boas asks anthropologists to be open-minded observers of "the dynamic phenomena of culture change... dependent partly upon the peculiar inner development of the social group, and partly upon the foreign influences to which it has been subjected" (314; 317). Today we might call that "contingent history."

Of course, Boas's perspective had its own contingent history, one that very much relates to the immigration debates in the US during the first quarter of the 20th century, a topic we will return to later in this essay (see Baker and Patterson, this edition).

The second article in our collection, published nearly 70 years after the publication of "Methods in Ethnology," takes up aspects of Boas's discussion on migration and diffusion, comparing remnants from two ancient sites. The article, "Mode and Tempo of the Initial Human Colonisation of Empty Landmasses: Sahul and the Americas Compared," authored by archaeologists [R. Esmée Webb](#) and [David J. Rindos](#), appears in the 1997 volume of the [Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association](#), the journal of the [Archaeology Division](#), currently edited by [Lynne Goldstein](#).

I chose the article because it offers perspective on three important aspects of our knowledge base: 1) the long history of human migration; 2) the value of keeping an open mind (constantly asking new questions) as new evidence gets unearthed; and 3) the importance of recognizing the limitations of archaeological evidence which can answer some, but not all questions.

In terms of perspective on the long history of human migration, the fact of the initial human colonization of [Sahul](#) (Pleistocene Australia-New Guinea) about 40,000 years ago, and of the [Americas](#) about 12,000 years ago, gives one pause. For me, the long view reveals that contemporary claims to land, nations, and borders rest on shaky beliefs about “first in time, first in place.”

Sanjek, quoted earlier, offers an even broader perspective, situating colonization of Sahul and the Americas amidst a longer and wider pattern of human migration: “... ‘anatomically modern human’ foragers between about 150,000 and 10,000 BP filled up six continents following their appearance in Africa and spread outward to Palestine (by 90,000 BP), South Asia (70,000 BP), Australia-New Guinea (60,000–40,000 BP), Europe (40,000 BP), Japan (32,000 BP), Central Asia (20,000 BP), North China-Siberia (15,000 BP), and the New World (12,000 BP)...[and] into the Alaskan-Canadian Arctic beginning around 4500 BP...” ([2003: 319](#)).

In a more recent article, archaeologist [Catherine M. Cameron](#), writing in *American Anthropologist* (2013), assesses contemporary approaches to the archaeological study of migration. Her article, titled “How People Moved among Ancient Societies: Broadening the View,” incorporates multiple methodologies and provides three case studies to suggest ways anthropologists might analyze *processes* in the migrations of the past. Cameron shifts focus from long-distance migration to what she calls “intermediate-scale movements” (219), offering hypothesis about various types of human movement in prehistory, and the social dynamics involved in the process, including relationships between “host groups” and the newcomers in their midst.

There may be lessons for the present in these ancient migration stories, though that is not Cameron’s point. Even so, the finding that “social group membership is *fluid* within regions of considerable size” (219) has significance for thinking about contemporary concerns with migration, citizenship, belonging, identity as well as policies and practices that serve to include or exclude particular groups.

The fourth article in our collection is centered on “labour diaspora,” one of the seven processes of migration identified by Sanjek. Covering a one hundred year period, “Foreign Labor and German Industrial Capitalism 1871–1978: The Evolution of a Migratory System,” is written anthropologist [Robert E. Rhoades](#), and published in the 1978 edition of *American Ethnologist*, the journal of the [American Ethnological Society](#) (AES), currently edited by [Angelique Haugerud](#).

Rhoades offers a concise, powerful, and multifaceted history that illuminates the unequal playing field on which this migration story unfolds. He uncovers the hidden reality behind official pronouncements, revealing who benefits most and who is likely to be left vulnerable by particular migration policies. In the German case, the official word was that “everyone would benefit” from late 20th century, “planned” migration policies moving millions of temporary workers from the rural peripheries to the industrial core. This is the so-called “equilibrium model of regional interaction,” which the anthropologist takes to task in this article.

Rhoades demonstrates that in context of European industrial capitalism, there are predictable effects of labor migration in reproducing regional disparities and other inequities. Not surprisingly, for laborers and their sending communities, “few of the promised benefits materialized” (566), suggesting that the model may make certain proposed policies palatable to the general public, but does not stand up to scrutiny. “On the Run: The Narrative of an Asylum Seeker,” shifts focus from migration stories of groups to that of an individual. The 2004 article is written by anthropologist [Solrun Williksen](#) and is published in [Anthropology and Humanism](#), the publication of the [Society for Humanistic Anthropology](#), currently edited by [George Mentore](#).

In this one essay, Williksen tells multiple stories. We are introduced to Ada, a teenage girl looking for safe refuge away from the place that was once home but which became utterly unlivable. We follow Ada’s journey, which is hard to describe in words. Ada herself struggles to remember all the parts of it; the essay tells the story of Ada’s attempt to reconstruct and resocialize the narrative that is her life history.

There is also the story of the two women, the ethnographer and the asylum seeker, the bond between them and what each has taught the other about love and trust, fear and flight, doubt and anxiety, resilience and consciousness. Williksen explains her purpose, “I have found [Ada’s] story important to tell in order to cast light on similar life histories” (120).

“On the Run” is a call for empathy. The reader can’t help but comply. For those who take for granted the meaning of words (refugee, for example) or things (identification papers, for example), Ada’s words and her story shake us from complacency, allowing us to see the world through a different lens. What would it be like to have never seen an ID card or a passport like Ada who, before entering European territory, had never known one? “[She] had no idea that one needed these documents to get into a country,” Williksen explains, “She did not know about the importance of borders” (125).

The sixth article in our collection takes up the role of documents and return travel to one’s “origins” in “knowing” who we are, where and with whom we belong, and in producing and dismantling identity. Co-authored by anthropologists [Barbara Yngvesson](#) and [Susan Bibler Coutin](#), “Backed by Papers: Undoing Persons, Histories, and Return,” was published in the 2006 edition of *American Ethnologist*.

“Backed by Papers” provides an interesting juxtaposition of two ethnographic cases—one of transnational adoptees who voluntarily take roots trips back to their so-called “natural” origins (Yngvesson), and the other of US residents deported to El Salvador, their “natural” place of belonging (Coutin). The authors pose a series of questions to the cases that highlight assumptions about what constitutes family, belonging, membership, diaspora, and identity as human reality is defined by the state and the documents (birth and adoption records; citizenship records) it issues. The cases also reveal the ways race is interwoven into citizenship and immigration categories and how racialization plays into the experiences of transnational adoptees and deportees.

Papers are important markers of belonging and citizenship. Papers also fail to recognize that real people in real relationships and circumstances do not necessarily fit into available legal categories and constructs, a point made vividly clear by what actually happens to people on journeys back (roots trips by transnational adoptees; involuntary deportees to the place of one’s purported citizenship).

Even so, papers have great power to “... document prior moments and movements [and] to redefine persons, compel movement, alter moments, and make ties ambiguous. Instead of only trailing into the

past, papers jut out into the future, requiring the selves who are authenticated by these documents to chart new and sometimes unanticipated courses” (184; also, see [Devi Mays](#), a scholar who uncovered the remarkable story of [Mauricio Fresco](#), a prominent diplomat whose knack for forging documents changed the course of lives).

The next article focuses on the language used to talk about immigrants in the US, practices and patterns that are produced and circulated in legislation and in political and public discourse. “Making Immigrants Illegal in Small-Town USA” is written by anthropologist [Hilary Parsons Dick](#) and published (2011) in [Journal of Linguistic Anthropology](#), the publication of the [Society for Linguistic Anthropology](#), currently co-edited by [Alexandra Jaffe](#) and [Paul B. Garrett](#).

As context for her case study of language and law in a small town, Parsons Dick traces the history of US immigration law as it relates to the racialization and criminalization of Mexican immigrants. This history has some parallels with the labor migration process analyzed by Rhoades: when they are needed, workers are actively recruited to enter the country, even as their legal, social, political and economic standing tend to remain precarious.

Words matter. Parsons Dick makes this point very clear in demonstrating that what we talk about when we talk about (certain) immigrants has real consequences for human lives. For example, in the US today, the conflation of “Mexican immigrant” with the words “illegal” and “alien” has a criminalizing effect on Mexican and other immigrants from Latin America.

The anthropologist’s deconstruction of the making of the 2006 “Illegal Immigration Relief Act” in small town Hazelton, Pennsylvania shows how “language-in-use” participates in defining a category of racialized and criminalized persons, easing the way to demonizing and dehumanizing the individuals who purportedly fit it. This is an old practice that relies on tried and true tactics, which Parsons Dick explains as follows:

...a politics of national belonging delineates who is allowed to become a legitimate member of the 'we of the nation' and who is not. Throughout U.S. history, such debates have always differentiated among immigrant groups; some are constructed as desirable, as enhancing 'who we are,' and others are constructed as undesirable, as a threat to U.S. sovereignty and national identity...[T]his process of differentiation has consistently relied on the racialization of the 'undesirable,' as national belonging aligns with racial hierarchies that construct whiteness as neutral and prototypically 'American' and nonwhiteness as fundamentally Other and unassimilable. Thus, the construction of immigrant illegality is about more than the delineation of 'foreignness'; it is also a racial code (E36).

“Race, Racism, and the History of U.S. Anthropology” is an introductory essay to a collection of articles that appear in the 1994 issue [Transforming Anthropology](#), the journal of the [Association of Black Anthropologists](#), currently edited by [Michael Ralph](#). I have chosen to include it in our collection because it references the relationship between immigration law and the construction of race in the US, and the role of anthropologists and other social scientists in standing up to racism in their midst.

[Lee D. Baker](#) and [Thomas C. Patterson](#) edited the collection and are authors of the introduction, which provides solid historical context for how the idea of race and racist attitudes developed in the US context. They make the important point, noted also by Parsons Dick and Yngvesson and Coutin, that “discussions

of race in the United States have often been closely linked with the issues of forced resettlement and migration” (2).

The authors are mostly concerned with the role of anthropology in furthering or contesting the idea of race and/or racism in the relatively recent course (late 19th-20th century) of US immigration history. Boas is an important figure in this regard. Baker and Patterson describe his activities, including antiracism work with W.E.B. Du Bois, and his efforts to challenge the prevailing discourse (scientific racism; eugenics) and racialized and racist federal immigration laws being enacted in his lifetime.

Boas contested the nativists and the racists in [academic journal articles](#), [government reports](#), and even letters to the [NY Times](#). He was up against some powerful voices, including politicians and presidents of influential institutions, including founders of the [American Eugenics Society](#), and the [Immigrant Restriction League](#). Though Boas’s arguments and evidence have stood the test of time, the racist logic of *his* time prevailed and found its way into federal immigration legislation of the 1920s.

Shifting place and period, the ninth article in our collection takes us to a contemporary scene in the anthropology of immigration. The location is France, and the issues we have been discussing—migration processes, policies that enable or restrict mobility, rationalizations discharged to justify those policies, labels invoked to categorize immigrants, and human lives that get affected—figure in this piece by anthropologist [Didier Fassin](#).

The article is titled “Compassion and Repression: The Moral Economy of Immigration Policies in France,” published in the 2006 issue of [Cultural Anthropology](#), the journal of the [Society for Cultural Anthropology](#), currently edited by [Charles Piot](#) and [Anne Allison](#).

Fassin takes us to the [Sangatte Center](#) in [Calais](#) where, beginning in the late 1990s, an immigration “situation” began to unfold as newcomers arrived from parts of Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe, fleeing conditions presumably more unlivable than the streets of Sangatte. These are immigrants like Ada who arrived without papers; thereafter, they were variously labeled refugees, short stay immigrants, illegals (*clandestins*), and “false refugees/economic migrants,” and subject to contradictory social control and humanitarian policies.

Fassin’s concern is biopolitics, “the politics that deals with the lives of human beings,” which he considers “particularly crucial when it governs the lives of undesired and suffering others [whose lives hang in the balance]...oscillating between sentiments of sympathy on the one hand and concern for order on the other hand, between a politics of pity and policies of control” (366). This tension (between repression and compassion) comprises Fassin’s subject: the moral economy or hierarchy of values behind how “transnational human flows” are handled.

Fassin’s analysis complements those offered by Parsons Dick and Yngvesson and Coutin; together these analyses illuminate the backstories behind official pronouncements and policies. These analyses also reveal that seemingly “common sense” responses to “transnational human flows” are, in fact, constructs shaped by the interplay of politics, economics, social dynamics, and cultural values and meanings. The drama of Calais continues to unfold in the present as indicated by this news report from August 2014: [“French police break up violent clashes at African migrant camp in Calais.”](#) The anthropological view enables a closer reading of such news, exposing the narrative’s fictions and illusions.

The tenth article in our collection examines the intersection of immigration processes, immigration policies, health, and health care from a medical anthropology perspective. “How Can Medical Anthropologists Contribute to Contemporary Conversations on “Illegal” Im/migration and Health?” is co-authored by [Sarah S. Willen](#), [Jessica Mulligan](#) and [Heide Castañeda](#). The article appears in the 2011 issue of [Medical Anthropology Quarterly](#), the journal of the [Society for Medical Anthropology](#), currently edited by [Clarence C. Gravlee](#).

Willen, Mulligan and Castañeda begin their article with a startling statistic: “An estimated 214 million people—3.1 percent of the world’s population—have left their homes in poorer countries for richer ones” (331). From there, the authors argue for better policy through better theory (a research agenda) and for bringing anthropological knowledge more deeply into the public conversation on health-related immigration practices (a policy agenda). Towards that goal, the authors refer readers to [Access Denied](#), a blog that provides information and a forum for discussing contemporary global health challenges, especially those related to immigration and immigrant health care.

At this point, readers of this collection may be familiar with the four key theoretical issues outlined by the authors: “illegality” as social construction; “illegality” and the global political economy”; illegality and vulnerability; and debates about rights, ethics, and “deservingness,” themes that are covered across the articles here.

Still, more work needs to be done to answer their question: What drives unauthorized im/migration, and who benefits? To answer it requires ongoing research into the history of each transnational flow and the specific contexts within which people at different social locations are situated with respect to the migration process. This is a challenging but doable research agenda. Indeed, anthropologists and other social scientists have been accomplishing it for a long time, as I note at the start of this essay.

The story told by anthropologists [Duncan Earle](#) and [Jeanne Simonelli](#) in “No Pasa Nada: Zapatismo and Visions from the Jungle,” is a case in point. The article is published (2005) in [North American Dialogue](#), the journal of the [Society for the Anthropology of North America](#), currently edited by [Susan Falls](#). In a few short pages, “No Pasa Nada” captures the outlines of a complicated story, the specifics of which are detailed in the book by the same authors, [Uprising of Hope](#).

The setting is the [Lacandona Forest in Chiapas, Mexico](#), a relatively remote area of Mexico populated by indigenous communities that have in recent decades suffered from changes brought by outsiders. Earle and Simonelli explain that the combination of foreign speculative investment (transnational flow of capital is relatively easy), and national (Mexican) government projects that encourage privatization of collective lands, have resulted in displacements of people and their livelihoods in a region that has long supported sustainable agriculture on collective farms. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA; 1994) and other international trade agreements have also had harmful consequences as farmers struggle to compete with cheap, subsidized US-produced products that flood the Mexican market. These are the kinds of complex of forces that destroy livelihoods and drive “illegal” ([informally authorized](#)) immigration.

Just this year (2014) *American Anthropologist* published a collection of short essays by twelve anthropologists titled “On Latin@s and the Immigration Debate.” Edited by [Arlene Davila](#), the AA collection features [Leith Mullings](#), past president of the American Anthropological Association who discusses the forthcoming AAA Public Education Initiative on migration; [Renato Rosaldo](#) on

cultural analyses of immigration; Luis F. B. Plascencia on citizenship and belonging; [Leo R. Chavez](#) on “anchor babies”; [Rocío Magaña](#) on border policing; [Gilberto Rosas](#) on boundaries and securitized borders; [Ana Aparicio](#) on new immigrant gateways; [Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera](#) on indigenous migration; [Patricia Zavella](#) on multiracial immigrant organizing in the US; [Alyshia Gálvez](#) on undocumented youth activists and their parents; and [Jonathan D. Rosa](#) on language practices, stereotypes, and immigrants.

“Becoming Luis: A Photo Essay on Growing up in Bolivia” is the final research article, rounding out our collection. Written and photographed by anthropologist [Jerome Crowder](#), the 2013 article appears in [Visual Anthropology Review](#), the journal of the [Society for Visual Anthropology](#), currently edited by [Mark Westmoreland](#) and [Brent Luvaas](#).

The photographs capture the life history and migration trajectory of Luis, an Aymara boy who the ethnographer has known since his birth. Luis moves between [rural](#) and [urban](#) areas of Bolivia, from the “periphery to the center...within the context of globalization, a determining facet of contemporary human experience” (107).

Crowder offers a glimpse into the intimate world of Luis and his mother, their lifeway, decisions, interdependencies, worries, and joys, a lovely and heartening portrait of contemporary humankind. His ethnography also points to a larger pattern of population movement in the world today: the unprecedented formation of edge cities and megacities due to rural-urban migration in Africa, China, India, Latin America and North America, formations that are predicted to expand in the coming decades.

This collection on “World on the Move: Migration Stories” concludes with two book reviews. One is a beautiful and informative review of [Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880–1930](#) ([Gilbert G. González](#)) by anthropologist [Nicholas De Genova](#), a major scholar on immigration today. The review was published in the [Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology](#), the journal of the [Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology](#), currently edited by [Andrew Canessa](#).

The second is [Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home](#) ([Nina Glick Schiller](#) and [Georges Eugene Fouron](#)) by [Laura A. Lewis](#) that was published (2002) in [American Ethnologist](#). Glick Schiller's corpus of theoretical and ethnographic work over three decades has enormously advanced understanding of the interrelationship between migration and [transnationalism](#), [urbanization](#), and [development](#).

I close this essay with words from my first editorial in [Open Anthropology](#): Anthropology is open-minded and it opens minds. This is why I love the discipline. It compels me to step outside myself to examine my own assumptions—what I always believed to be “just true.” Anthropology taught me how to “problematize,” a process by which social and cultural phenomena are not taken as “givens,” but are questioned: just because something seems normal and natural, doesn't mean it is.

In the midst of contentious debates about immigrants and immigration law, anthropology provides an important framework for understanding. It resists the narrow view, asks the tough questions, contextualizes phenomena, gathers the evidence, studies and analyzes it, develops reasoned argument, and only then comes to judgment.

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The AAA Public Education Initiative will explore:

- The forms of movement that concern us now are not new; people have been moving around for as long as we have traces of humans on the planet. Today, every one of us has such a story in our own lives or in our family histories.
- Moving is connected to staying put. We need to ask: who is allowed or forced to move and who is not, and who is allowed or forced to stay?
- There are many interconnected reasons why migration can become important. This initiative will focus on: climate change, changes in economic activities, and competition for political power.
- Mobility (for whatever reasons) always brings changes in how we live, whether we are among those who move or those who stay: what we eat, how we dress, what we speak, where we live, what we believe. It triggers many feelings, from hope to fear, as much linked to individual lives as to public debates, to individual and family or community strategies or to institutional and state policies and regulations.