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Hope

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The Editors' Note: Hope

[Sallie Han](#), Department of Anthropology, SUNY Oneonta

[Jason Antrosio](#), Department of Anthropology, Hartwick College

There are birds here,
so many birds here
is what I was trying to say
when they said those birds were metaphors
--From "[There Are Birds Here](#)" by [Jamaal May](#) (2016)

We have chosen “hope” as the theme of the July 2020 issue of *Open Anthropology* because collectively we are living in times that feel rather desperate—and yet, as poet Jamaal May tells us emphatically, here we are, “tattered and feathered.”

COVID-19 continues to spread across large swaths of the United States and other places around the world. Here, there, and everywhere, the burden of the disease and its economic consequences are not equally shared. The fact of these inequalities has not so much been exposed, but made undeniable by both the pandemic and the other events of the spring of 2020. The death of George Floyd at the hands of police sparked days and weeks of protest, bringing out people not only in Minneapolis, where Floyd died, but in scores of large and small cities and towns across America and from Lagos to Kolkata to Seoul. ([This map](#), created by [Alex Smith](#), a geographic information system analyst, shows the locations of 4,140 places where protests have been organized since May 25, 2020.)

Lives and livelihoods have been lost, damaged, and otherwise profoundly affected in such ways that there will be no simple recovery. They demand reckoning. Somehow, we need to find our way toward building, inventing, and growing anew.

Hope began to attract the particular interest of social theorists in the early 2000s. In their introduction to the 2016 special issue of the journal *History and Anthropology* on “[Hope over Time—Crisis, Immobility and Future-Making](#),” Nauja Kleist and Stef Jansen describe an explosion of writings on hope in the humanities and social sciences, including in sociocultural anthropology, and raise the question of why hope and why now (or then). “Is the renewed interest in hope a reflection of a world that is more hopeful or more hopeless than it used to be?” they ask, and then suggest “two overall dimensions of why hope has recently gained such resonance in academic debates: a widespread sense of crisis and a heightened sense of lack of political and ideological direction in this situation. These two dimensions do not constitute unified and unequivocal phenomena but rather interrelated and converging tendencies” (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 374).

Even without the staking and claiming of hope as a field of study, anthropologists in fact have a longer history of documenting the actions and thoughts of people who have resisted their own doubts and persisted even against reason. The “hope” of people has been variously cast as foolish, misplaced, and unrealistic. Yet, all of us also recognize our want or need for it. We depend on hope being stubborn and steadfast and springing eternal. Emily Dickinson wrote in her oft-quoted poem ([314](#)):

And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

So, when people talk about keeping our hopes alive, we must be talking about ourselves. To be honest, the two of us are not entirely persuaded about hope. What the crises of now in fact demand is informed action by competent and compassionate leadership. However, it is in the absence of remedy that we find ourselves thinking about hope. So, we do not offer this issue of *Open Anthropology* as experts on hope. Instead, at this moment, we ourselves are looking for those glimmers, and for better or worse, the anthropological literature is one place to which the two of us turn for insight. This collection includes twelve articles and two book reviews from the publications of the American Anthropological Association. In addition, we point to other sources on hope in anthropology.

[Vincent Crapanzano](#) (2003) begins his “[Reflections on Hope as a Category of Social and Psychological Analysis](#)” with the observation that although hope appears to have been and continues to be an important and meaningful category of human experience, it has had “only an incidental role in our ethnographic explorations and social and psychological understanding” (5), even in contrast to other related categories such as desire and dream. An aim of this piece is to bring hope as “a category of both experience and analysis” (4) into core critical discussions in anthropology and other social sciences. Historically, hope has been a principle that is fundamental to Christian theology. Here, Crapanzano quotes [Robert R. Marett](#), who identifies hope as “mother-feeling in religion’—more basic even than fear in its foundation” (5) in his 1932 book, *[Methods and Principles: Faith, Hope, and Charity in Primitive Religion](#)*. Marett’s

book is discussed by [F.W. Schmidt](#) in a 1933 *American Anthropologist* review. Crapanzano muses on the reasons that explain this neglect of hope. Might they include a secular turn away from notions of redemption and salvation—or, he wonders: “Has it rather to do with a pessimism, a resignation, inherent in the notion of hope itself? One that runs counter to today’s aggressive individualism or to a consumerism that cultivates an instant gratification that is at odds with the waiting time of hope? Or do we avoid it—transform it—simply because it finally calls forth our mortality?” (5)

Crapanzano further discusses his thoughts on hope and its place significance for anthropology in a [2015 interview](#) published in *Cultural Anthropology*. In the interview, he describes his experience at a conference raising a question about the role of hope in Melanesia cargo cults. “And when I brought it up, there was a surprise on the part of most of the participants—some of them, as I recall, immediately related hope to a kind of easy Christianity that they thought prevalent in Papua—but others said: ‘Oh no, the Papuans are too realistic, too down to earth [to have hope].’ And I thought to myself: ‘What is being projected here?’” Crapanzano takes issue with “the idea that somehow the New Guineans were far too pragmatic, emerged, far too down to earth, to hope,” which he suggests in turn reflects “a kind of machismo on the part of the anthropologists.”

The interview is published in a *Cultural Anthropology* collection on “[Reclaiming Hope](#),” which includes Crapanzano’s 2003 piece and two more *Cultural Anthropology* articles on faith and future in the contemporary Pacific (Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington’s “First Contact with God” [1993] and Webb Keane’s “Sincerity, ‘Modernity,’ and the Protestants” [2002]). In the foreword to the collection, Eben Kirksey and Tate LeFevre comment on one of the paradoxes of hope: “Shortly after Barack Obama was elected, many people who had dared to harbor dreams of political change experienced profound disappointment. Optimism can be cruel, according to Lauren Berlant (2011, 24), when you discover that the dreams you are attached to are either ‘impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic.’”

Or as Susana Narotzky and Niko Besnier put it in their [2014 introduction to “Crisis, Value, and Hope: Rethinking the Economy](#),” an open-access supplement to *Current Anthropology*, a consideration of hope must also include attention to “the tension between personal expectations, the capacity to design projects, and the actual ability to accomplish them in a given conjuncture” (S4).

The cruelty of optimism, the gap between anticipation and accomplishment, and the doggedness of hope are themes explored in “[Economy of Dreams: Hope in Global Capitalism and Its Critiques](#),” [Hirokazu Miyazaki](#)’s 2006 article in *Cultural Anthropology*. Drawing from his fieldwork with traders in a Japanese investment firm, Miyazaki tells the story of Tada, a former electronic engineer who became the head of a derivatives trading team. Larger changes in the landscape of finance in the late 1990s prompt Tada to rethink his professional and personal goals, and make decisions and take on risks that might have seemed surprising to Tada himself. Miyazaki sees parallels between Tada’s own unexamined hopes and social theorists’ critically

conceptualized notions of hope, quoting political theorist Chantal Mouffe in an interview in philosopher Mary Zournazi's (2003) book, [Hope: New Philosophies for Change](#): "One of the reasons why I think there is no hope today for future possibility is precisely because people feel there is no alternative to the capitalist system, and even more to the neoliberal form of capitalism, which is dominant today" (162). Miyazaki documents Tada's dreams, first of developing an automatic trading machine—a vision that the anthropologist describes as "fabulously utopian"—and then of writing a technical manual on trading, both in connection with the retirement he plans to take. Both projects represent Tada's want and need to continue his work and his hope to exit from it, which required his continuing participation and even his efforts to improve on his work.

Another paradox is the hopelessness of hope itself. To have hope is to endure it. In order to have a future, our hope must be unrelenting, but we suffer from its relentlessness. In "[Fighting for Justice, Dying for Hope on the Protest Line in Colombia](#)," [Lesley Gill](#) (2006) describes the activities of SINALTRAINAL, the National Food and Beverage Workers Union, which organizes workers "in a country that is the most dangerous place in the world to be a trade unionist, and that has witnessed the murders of over four thousand Colombia unionists in the last twenty years" (9). During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the union lost nearly half its membership to "violence, fear, and corporate restructuring" (9). Workers were attacked, threatened, and regularly harassed by the police and the (illegal) paramilitaries affiliated with them. The focus of the piece is on the preparations of one local of the union to organize a street theater protest against Coca-Cola. Afterward, Gill joins the members to celebrate their successful demonstration, "but soon learned that another murder had punctured the optimism that buoyed the unionists that evening" and reflects that the SINALTRAINAL members "understand that much more than a job is at stake, and they know that without a vigorous union and a sense of alternatives, there can be no hope. Yet keeping hope alive remains their biggest challenge" (13). Hope is understood to be a frame of thought and action for the future, but it might be more revealing of the present and past. So, it is worth understanding what anthropologists in particular have been saying and thinking about hope. In general, it appears to be rather grim. The hope right now is for a sterner hope. In contrast, Miyazaki published a 2008 commentary in *Anthropology News* on "[Barack Obama's Campaign of Hope: Unifying the General and the Personal](#)." In it, he analyzes the messages of "hope" in Barack Obama's speeches during the 2008 presidential campaign and his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. Even at the time, Obama had been criticized for his lack of specificity and substance. Which hopes, for whom, and how might they be met? However, Miyazaki suggests "it is precisely its lack of specificity that enabled Obama's hope to be replicated as others' personal hope" (5). When Obama claimed, "We are the hope of the future," Miyazaki points out that this general "we" invites a broad audience to take on hope, and "the power of hope resides in its capacity to replicate itself interactively from one person to another and from one moment to another" (8). He concludes: "It is the possibility of such replicative reorientation that has given Obama's campaign a hint of novelty, a hint of a new kind of relationality and solidarity across familiar social categories and boundaries" (8).

The significance of hope for the present, not only the future, the therapeutic value of hope, and the relationships between hope and care are discussed in the next three pieces by medical anthropologists.

They are the focus of [Cheryl Mattingly's *The Paradox of Hope: Journeys through a Clinical Borderland*](#), which [Jill Rowe](#) reviewed in [Ethos in 2012](#). The book draws from Mattingly's long-term (13-year) ethnographic study on the experiences of Black caregivers and children with severe and chronic health conditions, such as cancer, for which there are no cures. The particular focus is on the interactions between caregivers and children and their doctors and nurses. Mattingly compares the struggles of caregivers and clinicians to maintain hope in the context of uncertainties in the present and for the future. For the caregivers, Rowe writes, hope is "an existential problem that takes cultural and structural root as it is shaped by poverty, racism, and bodily suffering"; they view hope as a wish for "something that might never be." Meanwhile, clinicians "try to maintain their own hope and struggle with how to regulate the hope of their patients. Another significant issue that clinicians encounter is how best to deal with patient's denials. One of the key findings was that clinicians strive to help patients find new things to hope for in their future even without the possibility of any medical cure." Rowe notes that in discussing the obstacles for caregivers, Mattingly overlooks an importance source of hope—"the role of the Black Power Movement and other community centered organizations with a genesis in California. These early movements are central to the evolution of hope in the target population."

In "['Make Sure Somebody Will Survive from This': Transformative Practices of Hope among Danish Organ Donor Families](#)," [Anja M.B. Jensen](#) builds upon Mattingly's observation that "hope is on intimate terms with despair. It asks for more than life promises" (Mattingly 2010, 3 quoted in Jensen 2016, 380). The article draws from 20 months of hospital-based ethnographic research that Jensen conducted in the five Neurointensive Care Units (NICUs) from which most of the country's organ donations are made. It is worth noting the care and sensitivity that a study like this one requires. Jensen shadowed doctors and nurses at the NICUs, witnessed conversations with the next-of-kin of potential organ donors, and later interviewed family members who were willing to speak about their experiences. Hope is not the same for all of the people involved, and their hopes also change over time. "For the hospital staff, there was a certain crucial point of time in almost all the donation cases I observed during my fieldwork: When is it time to stop hoping for survival? When is it time to consider organ donation and turn medical efforts into a hope for organs?" (381-82). This pivot in hope is challenging for clinicians to maneuver, in part because they regard as important and necessary the family's hope for the patient's survival; at the same time, they feel an ethical and moral obligation not to offer false hope. The families themselves describe a shift from "the hope that doctors will save their loved one" to "the hope about the 'after death'" (384). As one family member tells Jensen: "Hope is present all the time. It is just moved around. If the doctors cannot do any more, it somehow turns into a hope [for] after death, in Paradise" (384). Family members express hopes that their loved ones will not suffer unnecessarily. Those who agree to organ donation hope both that the transplantations will help others to live healthy lives and that their own patient's heart remains

strong enough until the organs can be taken; in Denmark, organ donation is permitted for brain death only. As Jensen observes about one donor's family: "The wish of making his body usable and thus helping others caused them to hope that his heart will outlast the pressure so that Adam can become an organ donor" (386).

In "[The Meaning of the Present: Hope and Foreclosure in Narrations about People with Severe Brain Damage](#)," [Eleonor Antelius](#) (2007) observes that hope is frequently oriented toward both future and past times. In terms of disease and disability, the hope is for a cure in the future and for the recovery of the health and abilities that one enjoyed in the past. What, then, happens when the possibilities for cure and recovery have been largely foreclosed? During almost 12 months of fieldwork in Sweden at day centers for adults with severe disabilities, Antelius learns that for these individuals and especially for the staff who work with them, "new narratives are told that implement hope without referring to the future or to the past. Hope, then, is rooted in the present, where time horizons are close and neither past nor future takes priority" (334). The clients at these centers have physical and speech disabilities that resulted from brain injuries caused by sicknesses or accidents and that they understand they will have for the rest of their lives. Thus, they occasionally question what good is the exercise and training they are expected to do at the day center. When the clients asserts, "I am not ever going to walk again," Antelius observes: "This statement seems to aggravate the personnel tremendously. Later on they all stand in the kitchen and discuss this. They lower their voices so that none of the participants in the next room can hear them. They roll their eyes and get more and more frustrated. Clearly, this is not an acceptable point of view" (332). It becomes clear that the nurses and therapists, too, acknowledge a fixed future for their clients. Their aim is not necessarily for clients to rehabilitate physical abilities, but to preserve the ones they still have. While not oriented to future or past, Antelius suggests: "Hope in this line of reasoning, though, should still be seen as temporal and referring to action. It is with the possibility of action that hope can be created because, although action taken today might not bring about any positive change in the future, it will allow for no negative change" (334).

The role of hope and of action in the present in the context of a fixed or fated future is considered, though in a rather different context, in [Alice Elliot's](#) (2016) "[The Makeup of Destiny: Predestination and the Labor of Hope in a Moroccan Emigrant Town](#)." The destiny to which the title refers is the marriage that is hoped for and anticipated by each of the young Moroccan women in this account. On the one hand, their Muslim faith orients them to think about the future as predetermined. On the other hand, they also see the importance of their own actions in meeting their destinies—or more particularly, the men who will become their husbands. "Here, young women's preoccupation with a written but unknown fate, far from hindering mundane action, propels it in hopeful directions" (491). Elliot describes the young women's investment of effort and care into applying their makeup in order to enhance their beauty and attract the attentions of the men who might be predestined to become their husband. "During an evening stroll in Zafiah's medina, a man may see a young woman, notice her beauty, her demure posture and style, and approach her. A conversation may start, a romantic relationship may begin, and, 'ila maktab' (if it is written), the man may one day be knocking at

the girl's family door asking for her hand" (491). Elliot takes the women's explanations seriously rather than dismissing them as "simply a religious discourse employed to legitimize irreverent practices or explain undesirable turns of events" (489). The piece prompts readers to consider the various forms that hope might take and, especially, to reconsider the claims of Western social theorists who have ascribed fatalism, even hopelessness, to Islam.

The perception of fatalism and hopelessness as problems of Islam is examined by [Mayssoun Sukarieh](#) (2012) in "[The Hope Crusades: Culturalism and Reform in the Arab World](#)." Not only in the West, but also among transnational Arab elites, it came to be understood "there is something fundamentally wrong with 'Arab culture,' a fatal flaw that is holding the region back. Arab culture, therefore, has to be 'fixed' if the region is to move forward and join the global community of advanced and developed nations" (121). In the 2000s, the governments of Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt each launched public relations campaigns and reforming projects aimed at "moving the Arab world from death to life, pessimism to optimism, and despair to hope" (116). Sukarieh notes: "Conveniently, these cultural reforms facilitate and legitimate a simultaneous set of neoliberal economic, political and legal reforms and serve as marketing devices to solicit popular participation in the neoliberal restructuring of the Arab world" (116). The article offers a critique of this culturalist approach, which was adopted among Arab leaders, including Prince Khaled el Faisal, who claimed in a televised 2009 speech that "the culture of pessimism among Arab people leads to despair and hopelessness that hinders them from achieving anything in life. If we don't try to overcome this culture of despair and spread a 'Culture of Hope,' public life will die, and people will stop achieving, and this is how a nation is destroyed" (117). Although the notion of a "culture of hope" is attributed to Jordan's Queen Rania—who referred to a "gap of hope" among young people that leads them into terrorist activities—in fact, Sukarieh notes it can be traced to agencies affiliated with the United States, including USAID and Save the Children USA. Coming at a time of political transition (not long after King Abdullah ascended the throne) and policies of economic liberalization contributed to job losses in the public sector, the programs directly connected to the "Culture of Hope" campaigns "were all geared to train young Jordanians to be committed and disciplined neoliberal subjects by offering courses on financial literacy, free market economics, entrepreneurship, leadership, life skills, and work ethics" (121). Sukarieh concludes the article with a consideration of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish's articulation of other cultures of hope in the Arab world: "The hope he describes is of the resistance, not pacification, that can 'sow and cultivate' while opposing occupation and injustice and while working toward liberation of their lands" (129). Darwish calls it an "incurable hope" and likens it to a disease (which admittedly feels uncomfortable in this current pandemic moment). Sukarieh also comments briefly on the hopes of the Arab Spring, which were still unclear.

Questions about the various forms that hope might take and about time are addressed by [Rodney Harrison](#) (2017) in "[Freezing Seeds and Making Futures: Endangerment, Hope, Security, and Time in Agrobiodiversity Conservation Practices](#)." The paper offers a critical perspective on efforts at preserving agrobiodiversity, in particular the Svalbard Global Seed Vault (SGSV), which is currently the world's largest seed storage facility. Established jointly by Norway's

Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Global Crop Diversity Trust, and the Nordic Genetic Resource Centre, the SGSV holds accessions (deposited samples) of seeds from 850,000 living crops, which are stored at a constant temperature of -18 degrees C in a facility that is “equal parts bunker and frozen ‘ark’” (83) and located in the permafrost of the Svalbard archipelago. Harrison notes: “The SGSV is not a conventional seed bank, but was conceived of as part of a global system to facilitate the secure storage of a duplicate ‘backup’ of seed accessions held in national and regional repositories” (84). The need for such a costly undertaking is explained in terms of the perceived loss of crop genetic diversity globally. Yet, the seeds that become “banked” in the facility themselves represent “a series of biological-historical accounts (genes) of multispecies biosocial relations” (86). These come to be understood as the “final” versions of the biodiversity that ought to be maintained. “It is perhaps no coincidence that the conservation target of such activity is the seed. It acts here both as physical container for genetic material and as poignant symbol of latent potential and hope in securing uncertain futures” (87). The next two pieces in this collection offer cautions about hope.

In "[Clinging to Hope through Education: The Consequences of Hope for Rural Laborers in Telangana, India](#)," [Tanya Jakimow](#) notes increasing attention has been given to the importance and meaning of hope in the context of increasing precarity—and that hope itself can be rather precarious. Drawing from her fieldwork in rural India, Jakimow considers “the particularities of hope in rural localities among populations whose proximity to the promises of progress has always been tenuous” (11). Education has been held up as the means by which poor people can “get ahead,” and holds out the hope and promise that the next generation might have a “better life.” Yet, employment figures and other evidence suggest more education is no longer translating into more and better livelihood options in India—in fact, unemployment rates actually rise with educational levels. Jakimow suggests the hope of education is as much about “a way to survive present-day uncertainties” (12) for the parents as it is about desired future outcomes for their children. “How does the almost, but not quite, exclusion from imagined futures transform the nature of their hopes and their consequences? These questions require a change of focus from the ‘youth’ to parents, and from viewing education not simply as human capital, but as a container for hope” (14) Parents who otherwise have nothing else to give their children can at least provide them with hope in the form of education. “In saying that they expect their children will escape hardship through education, they are also expressing their strategy is to achieve it and thereby their ability to do something about it. To not have hope is to admit to a lack of agency in regards to the future” (20). By educating their children, these parents themselves are included in the promises of development. At the same time, however, Jakimow observes: “Education is a convenient and noncontroversial investment for the state and families alike, a resource that does not need to be redistributed nor threatens the status quo.... It is the commitment to education without imagining alternative routes to the ‘good life’ that makes hope in Telangana a force for political and social conservatism” (26).

[Ayşe Parla](#) (2017) makes a similar point that some forms of hope might hinder, not help. Her essay, "[The Complicity of Hope](#)," appeared in an April 2017 series of pieces published by the Association for Political and Legal Anthropology and the *Political and Legal Anthropology*

Review in response to the constitutional referendum initiated by Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Erdoğan had gained sweeping executive powers, raising alarms about the infringements on democratic processes and violations of human rights in Turkey. The “Yes” campaign dominated the government-controlled media. “What may have escaped the outside gaze, however, is the extent to which the landscape of dissent was steeped in hope in the months leading up to the referendum, despite the fact that all the odds were stacked against a ‘No’ outcome.” Given the questionable legitimacy of the referendum—most notoriously, the criteria for ballot validity were changed even as the votes were being counted—Parla ponders whether the cause of democracy might have been better served not by holding on to hope, but letting it go. “As courageous as it was, the effervescence of a campaign that persevered in its hope of a ‘No’ outcome foreclosed adequate consideration of other political possibilities that a refusal of hope might have made possible—whether in the form of boycott, or short of that, a sustained confrontation with unlawful politics, present and past.” Yet, Parla is not calling here for an end to hope, but for a toughening of it. “Rather than waxing optimistic about Turkey’s future potential for democracy, a hope that orients itself squarely towards reckoning with history seems particularly apt for a political geography that continues to eschew confrontation with its catastrophic past.”

The final two pieces in this collection resonate with us as anthropologists, particularly as teachers and scholars concerned with presenting and representing hope to students and broader audiences.

In “[Mobilizing Hope: Beyond the Shame-Based Model in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict](#),” filmmaker [Ronit Avni](#) (2006) argues for a mobilization of hope in order to counter what she calls a “shame-based model” of campaigning that human rights organizations have followed. That is, campaigns have been effective at documenting violations and then exposing them to the public, which they do in order to put pressure on the perpetrators, which might include private corporations or governmental agencies. To this end, non-governmental organizations like WITNESS, where Avni worked from 2000 to 2003, have deployed photographic images, film, and video to make the problems visible and cause public outcry to end the human rights violations and hold the perpetrators accountable. However, Avni describes that over the course of working with Israeli and Palestinian peace activists, she eventually came to understand that the endless hours of footage featuring rumbling tanks, bombed out buses, home demolitions, wailing parents, masked militants, shooting soldiers, and cries for revenge—those signature images broadcast regularly from the region—convey an overwhelming message to viewing audiences that the conflict is intractable, the populations militant and irreconcilable, and the situation beyond hope or help and even outside the realm of moral concern. (209)

Avni describes leaving her position at WITNESS and founding a new organization, Just Vision, with the aim of shifting the focus: “The paradigm was not one of victimizer versus victimized; instead it focused on those agents of change seeking to promote ethical behavior. Like human rights advocates, the film’s producers’ operating assumption is that media, however imperfect

and unpredictable, matters—that images have the power to effect change. Yet they sought to mobilize hope rather than shame” (209)

In “[Generative Hope in the Postapocalyptic Present](#),” [William Lempert](#) (2018) begins with the observation: “We live in an era increasingly defined by apocalyptic rhetoric, from the seeming inevitability of climate change to conflict in the Middle East, from the specter of deregulation-induced global financial collapse to populism fueled by unprecedented First World income inequality and political distrust” (202). Lempert suggests “it is essential that we pay thoughtful attention to those who have already lived through an apocalypse and are articulating generative hope in its aftermath” (203). Indigenous Australian video projects are the focus of this piece. In them, Lempert sees what he calls generative hope or “hope with grit, hope that neither avoids the history of colonial dispossession nor had been rendered misanthropic by it” (204). Asserting the importance and necessity of countering the narratives and images of deficit and despair that dominate Australian media, he notes: “The seeming paradox of joy and hardship in Aboriginal communities remains difficult for most Australians to imagine, let alone see” (209). The same might be said of anthropologists and of anthropology? The generative hope that Lempert finds in the vision and work of Indigenous Australian communities seems especially relevant for all of us in the present moment of the pandemic and the continuing struggles for the civil rights of peoples globally.

We end this note with a few more thoughts on anthropological hope.

The October 2015 *Open Anthropology* issue on “[Race, Racism, and Protesting Anthropology](#)” featured [Heath Pearson](#)’s “The Prickly Skin of White Supremacy: Race in the ‘Real America.’” (This piece and the others in the collection have been made available again for free access until August 2020.) The article is based on two years of research in Huntington, Indiana, the childhood home of former Vice President Dan Quayle and a place known historically as a “sundown town,” with a population that is almost exclusively (97.6%) white. The aim of Pearson’s study is not about what race “is” in Huntington, but “to explore how race happens—by way of (often) subtle, lingering White supremacy—in everyday life” (56). Yet, Pearson also claims that his study is a reminder “of John Jackson’s claim that hope is one of anthropology’s most insightful and powerful rubrics ‘for reimagining possibility’ (2010:280). Not blind hope. Hope as that which binds together ‘social change, progress, and even revolution’ (280)” (56; see Jackson’s 2010 *Current Anthropology* article, “[On Ethnographic Sincerity](#)”). In a post on the Living Anthropologically blog—titled “[Hope: The first anthropological emotion](#)”—Jason Antrosio quotes two of his heroes and inspirations of anthropology on the significance of hope. First, he finds insight in Tim Ingold’s appreciation of two ploddingly hopeful species:

All true scholars are donkeys: obdurate, capricious, dogged, curious, petulant, at once captivated and astonished by the world in which they find themselves. They will not be hurried but go at their own pace. They live in hope, not under the illusion of certainty. Their paths may go this

way or that, unpredictably. They find the grain of things and follow it, and in so doing find themselves. (*Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* 2013, 141)
Next, he draws on wisdom from Michel-Rolph Trouillot:

We need to fall back on the moral optimism that has been anthropology's greatest—yet underscored—appeal. But we need to separate that optimism from the naïveté that has been liberalism's most convenient shield. We need to assume it as a choice—whether we call it moral, philosophical, or aesthetic in the best sense. We need to hang on to it not because we are historically, socially, or politically naïve—indeed, as social scientists we cannot afford such naïveté—but because this is the side of humanity that we choose to prefer. (*Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* 2003, 139)

We hope everyone is keeping healthy and well. Please wear your mask and take good care.

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