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A S S O C I A T I O N

American Anthropological Association  
Public Education Initiative on Migration and Displacement  
Committee Planning Retreat  
April 26-28, 2013

## Executive Summary Report

Supported by:  
The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research

Additional support provided by:  
The American Anthropological Association  
Northwestern University

## **Overview & Objectives**

The American Anthropological Association Public Education Initiative on Migration and Displacement Planning Meeting took place on April 26-28, 2013 at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. This meeting brought together experts across disciplines to generate ideas and objectives for a public education project on migration and displacement, a politically polarizing topic in the U.S. and globally. Accordingly, we sought to clarify and develop key themes, content, target audiences, specific formats and products, and partnership priorities that will help ensure the project's success in providing opportunities for members to share their expertise, educating the public, and achieving project sustainability.

### **AAA Committee Members**

Ana Aparicio, Co-Chair	Michael Blakey	Leo Chavez, Co-Chair
Matthew Durlington	Susan Hyatt	Antoinette Jackson
Joseph Jones	Lynn Stephen	Lorena Madrigal
Charles Orser	Jemima Pierre	Ermitte St Jacques
Alaka Wali	Erin Younger	Ana Celia Zentella

### **Additional Participants**

Ed Liebow (AAA Executive Director)  
Leith Mullings (AAA President)  
Monica Heller (AAA President-Elect)  
Damon Dozier (AAA Dir., Public Affairs)  
Jim Deutsch (Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage)

### **Northwestern University Participants**

Michael Diamond (Global Health)  
Alana Glaser (Anthropology, Graduate Student)  
Sylvester Johnson (Religious Studies, African American Studies)  
Faith Kares (Anthropology, Graduate Student)  
Jinah Kim (Asian American Studies)  
Almita Miranda (Anthropology, Graduate Student)  
Uzoamaka Emeka Nzelibe (NU Law)  
Gayla Ruffer (Political Science, Director of Center for Forced Migration Studies)  
Kimberly Seibel (Anthropology, Graduate Student)  
Rebecca Seligman (Anthropology)  
Jacqueline Stevens (Political Science, Director of Deportation Research Clinic)  
Michelle Wright (African American Studies)

### **Sponsors**

In addition to the primary sponsorship of The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and The American Anthropological Association, Northwestern University co-sponsors demonstrated support for the project through their institutional affiliations and welcome remarks, noting the critical and timely importance of the Public

Education Initiative on Migration and Displacement as well as anthropology's unique contributions to public discussions about the theme. The diversity of university co-sponsors and participants illustrate the relevance and importance of migration across academic fields, as well as the recognized significance of potential public sphere intervention given the current political climate.

## **Discussion**

Evident in the textured, full-group discussion that took place during the first half of the day on April 26, the Public Education Initiative on Migration and Displacement responds to critical and interdisciplinary concerns and questions that resonate with researchers' overlapping and distinct foci as well as with disquieting trends toward exclusion and anti-immigrant sentiment that we see in the U.S. and abroad. The Migration and Displacement Public Education Initiative builds on the success of the AAA Public Education Initiative on Human Diversity or the Race Project. Like migration, race, racial identity, and racism are contentious, polysemous concepts that, nonetheless, directly influence individuals' lived experiences and undergird much U.S. and international public sphere debate and discussion. Migrants across the globe face discrimination, legal exclusion, and xenophobia. At the same time, diverse migrant communities have energized social and labor movements, gender and family forms, as well as cultural, religious, and community groups. The project attempts to capture the richness and complexity of the present moment while also dissipating myths and correcting misconceptions that fuel conventional misunderstandings and exclusion.

In a series of breakout discussions, a smaller selection of participants grappled with specific features of migration processes for an hour, determining key themes, identifying case studies, examples, and other scholars relevant to the topic, and considering best strategies for public education. Section topics included Global Flows and Local Spaces; Race, Ethnicity and National Belonging & Forced/Involuntary Migration; Migration of Culture; War, Conflict, Deterritorialization; Transforming the Local, Creating Community; and Diasporas, Transnationalism, Circular Migration. The AAA committee then convened for two days to distil the main messages and key themes from the broader discussion and to identify next steps.

## **Results: Messaging**

### Science

- There has been constant change, in the physical and ecological environment, in gene pool, in population movement, language, and ways we understood this from a scientific perspective.
- Humans move and change. How do we know that?
- Humans move and change in all directions.
- I tell my story as I move. My story is affected by where I am placed and who controls that space.

## History

- Controlling migration and its impacts.
- The experience of immigration and migration is affected by many things that change through time.
- People have moved around and been displaced through the demands of labor, production of commodities.
- Throughout human history we have created ways to include and exclude one another through power and policies.
- Migrants are pushed and pulled by diverse economy, political, and cultural forces.

## Culture

- We live and make history.
- Who I am is not in my genes.
- Migrants are pushed and pulled by multiple political, economic and social forces and they also affect these forces.
- You may or may not be what you eat.
- Who I am is a little bit of who you are.
- Home is the place we make it.
- Behind our differences we are all human

## **Results: Audience**

The committee considered several possible audiences for the Public Education Initiative on Migration and Displacement and determined how best to tailor their message and target these populations. For news media, the project will reframe conventional narratives by offering new questions and anthropological interpretations of current events. For U.S. policy makers, the project will seek to influence legislative reform, encouraging culturally sensitive implementation of regulations. For U.S. classroom teachers and curriculum developers, the project will create materials and offer guidance on framing migration processes to meet grade-specific curriculum objectives. For students as well as within immigrant communities and advocacy/social justice organizations, the Public Education Initiative on Migration and Displacement aims to increase understanding of migration and displacement alongside their social determinants and impacts. The question regarding if and how to engage an international audience remains, with the possibility that working with small networks may allow targeted dissemination of the project's objectives.

## **Results: Products**

The committee discussed the benefits and drawbacks of a variety of products and outreach platforms. Main products include a project website, a traveling exhibit, conferences and symposia, brochures and posters, and a DVD or PBS programming special. Outreach options can be categorized under interactive media (website, gaming platforms, Twitter and Facebook, mixed reality platforms, and user-generated media content) communications (*Museum News*, *Anthropology News*, *AnthroNotes*, *MentorNet*, *Perspectives*, *Now Showing*, and other media channels), and educational materials (teachers guides, educator's guide, family guide).