

# Practicing Anthropology and the Politics of Engagement: 2010 Year in Review

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**ABSTRACT** In 2010, a rapidly growing body of public scholars continued to conduct engaged research that involved various forms of collaboration, advocacy, and activism. Practicing anthropologists are among the most powerful champions of engaged scholarship and are increasingly focused on tracing the concrete dimensions of public engagement. Practicing anthropologists in 2010 made a concerted effort to critically assess precisely what constitutes *collaboration, engagement, activism, advocacy*, and a host of similarly politicized but ambiguous terms. This self-reflection has probed the philosophical, political, and methodological dimensions of engagement and painted a rich and complex picture of practicing anthropology. In this article, I review those 2010 studies that are focused on critically defining an *engaged anthropology* and expanding it to rigorously four-field public scholarship with conscious and reflective politics. [*practicing anthropology, public anthropology, 2010 trends, engaged*]

## PRACTICING ANTHROPOLOGY IN 2010

Nearly every scholar has become politicized in the past decade or so, and it is now commonplace to find researchers in almost any discipline and beyond the university walls invoking their commitment to applied scholarship, civic engagement, and a variety of other overtly politicized positions. A vast breadth of interdisciplinary researchers have embraced the notion of an “engaged scholarship” that consciously or unwittingly borrows from threads of public-anthropological discourses that reach back into the 1960s, if not a century or more. The question of whether or not engaged scholarship has won over anthropology has apparently been settled, with every corner of the discipline concretely confronting the politics of anthropological insight.

The concrete issues facing a broadly defined practicing anthropology in 2010 are not especially unique or distinct from those that have been at the heart of public anthropology for the last decade: for instance, anthropological voices continue to confront the complexities of cultural diversity, social justice, and the color line at the dawn of the 21st century; anthropologists stand at the heart of rich interdisciplinary discourses on the environment, culture, and climate change; and anthropological archaeology and museum scholarship continue to rigorously probe how visions of heritage and the past shape contemporary life. What may distinguish contemporary practicing anthropologies in 2010 is less a topical transformation than an increasingly focused

interrogation of the ways in which engagement and public scholarship are being invoked. Much of the most thoughtful recent work presses for clarity in the politics of collaborative relationships and the ways public discourse is informed by anthropological insight. The goal of such scholarship is not to craft a unified politics for engaged research but instead to advocate for clarity in public scholarship at a moment when *civic engagement* is taken to mean a whole host of things, some quite creative and others hazarding a descent into the reactionary. The specific contours of an engaged politics will likely always remain somewhat ambiguous because there are myriad contexts in which engaged scholarship is conducted, but thoughtful and creative scholars are critically assessing the ways in which activism, engagement, advocacy, collaboration, and community politics are being defined.

In this article, I focus on several key anthropological contributions that confront the politics of an engaged scholarship we can call “practicing,” which in my usage here is research that consciously positions itself within public dialogue (Brondo 2010; Checker 2009; Johnston 2008). Specifically, this research examines the politics of collaboration across and along various lines of power; it dissects the components of a community constituency; and it pushes beyond simply dubbing itself “engaged,” instead pressing onward to trace the concrete contours of engagement and stress the scholarly and applied insights such engagement provides.

The number of anthropological contributions across such realms in 2010 alone is truly immense, cross-cutting every possible anthropological niche and reaching from conventional academic literature into public discourses. I focus here on several key areas in anthropology in which scholars are creatively and reflectively taking into account the politics of engagement, and I take my lead from two primary sources.

The first source is the practicing anthropology “Year in Review” article by Keri Vacanti Brondo (2010), which identified several key areas of expansion in public anthropology in 2009. In particular, she pointed to the expansion of public archaeology, the growth of community programs in museums, and the creative ways in which anthropologists continue to reach new constituencies. Indeed, as Brondo indicated in her review, a practicing anthropology has very firmly taken hold in a breadth of archaeological and museum scholarship and spilled out into a complex range of public media that collectively wrestle with the politics of anthropological insight and engagement. Some of the most significant growth and self-reflection has taken place in scholarship that identifies itself as archaeology- or museum-based scholarship, but this research on cultural heritage is thoroughly interdisciplinary and borrows liberally from reflective ethnographic insights and methods as well as conventional archaeological and museum methodology. These broadly based public projects that are consciously engaged in four-field anthropology may indeed be one of the discipline’s most interesting directions of growth.

The second source is a 2008 Wenner-Gren workshop on engaged anthropology published in 2010 as an issue of *Current Anthropology* edited by Setha M. Low and Sally Engle Merry. Anthropologists’ movement toward a reflective notion of “engagement” certainly has gathered significant momentum in the last decade, and the Low and Merry volume collects those discussions into a critical examination that demonstrates the breadth of engaged cultural anthropology as well as the persistent dilemmas in an engaged anthropology. The Low and Merry volume is simply the most prominent example of the growth of a self-critical, engaged anthropology that has pushed beyond simply advocating collaboration and is now reflectively probing the social and political dimensions of engagement. For example, the 2010 *Collaborative Anthropologies*, edited by Luke Eric Lassiter and Samuel R. Cook, wrestles with similar issues, exploring collaborative anthropology’s “wide range of complicated connections and involvements that require deep attention to issues of power, ethics, knowledge production, representation, application, and a host of other things” (2010:vii). Collectively, Brondo’s article, the Low and Merry volume, and many other publications reflect how numerous practicing anthropologists are thoughtfully confronting the politics of anthropological scholarship, even as we carefully assess the challenges facing such engaged research.

## DEFINING ENGAGEMENT

One central challenge in practicing scholarship is simply establishing what constitutes “engagement” at all. Low and Merry outline an exceptionally broad framework for what might reasonably constitute *engagement*, variously including everyday personal support, public education, social critique, collaborative research, advocacy, and activism. Defined so broadly, virtually all anthropology can claim some measure of practicing engagement somewhere along a continuum of political possibilities, and in fact Low and Merry see an engaged thread in a vast range of anthropological research across a century. This illuminates how contrived the division is between insulated academic scholarship and “real-world” politics of community constituencies and context. Indeed, Low and Merry’s analysis may raise the more complicated question of precisely what constitutes an unengaged or disengaged anthropology—that is, how are we to assess degrees of engagement?

One answer to that question seems to revolve around the distinctive ways in which practicing anthropologies impact public policy, normally through some conscious and strategic activism and advocacy. For instance, Ida Susser uses her research on HIV/AIDS in South Africa to argue that “it is practically impossible to study a place where people are becoming infected from a preventable disease without advocating for preventive resources” (2010:S232). Her position frames engaged work in terms of social justice, stressing that “ethnography in such situations [must] include intervention as an integral and legitimate aspect of research” (Susser 2010:S232).

Increasingly, more practicing anthropologists are insisting that a truly engaged scholarship is distinguished by intentional political impacts. Stuart Kirsch, for example, proposes that anthropologies variously termed *activist*, *applied*, *advocate*, and *collaborative* (among other labels) share “a commitment to mobilizing anthropology for constructive interventions into politics” (2010:69). Kirsch reflects on how such political scholarship has been framed within an interdisciplinary graduate-student workshop on ethnography as activism that has met at the University of Michigan since 2007 (Ethnography as Activism Workgroup n.d.). The collective sees itself as united by a shared interest in “ethnographically informed activist practices that will enhance or lead to social justice” (Kirsch 2010:75). For Kirsch, such work has not necessarily produced new research questions, but he sees the critical distinction of emergent work to be that scholars are now “asking questions about how to integrate ethnography and activism, or new forms of political engagement, within their initial fieldwork projects” (Kirsch 2010:72).

Kirsch posits that concerns for social justice have unseated conventional commitments to “objectivity,” and he believes that a comparable interest in the sociopolitical implications of research has permeated every possible discipline and erased facile distinctions between research and

application. The theory that such engagement hazards a sacrifice of objectivity is rejected by Barbara Rose Johnston (2010), who instead suggests that problem-focused, collaborative research is an exceptionally powerful mechanism for securing meaningful informed consent that dissects research methods and questions, articulates anticipated research outcomes, and outlines both researcher and community rights and obligations. Johnston stresses that one form of such problem-focused scholarship considers its “field” as “literally in your backyard” because “the close distance between engagement and outcome allows a stronger sense of responsibility and understanding of the social impact of doing anthropology” (2010:S238). This situation of engagement in a familiar community context echoes Susser’s concern that, in South Africa, she found it “extremely difficult to think through the role of anthropologist as social critic in a country where one is not living or is not a citizen” (2010:S228).

Johnston presses for a reshaping of scholarly products that mirrors partners’ own needs and interests. Using examples drawn from her work in environmental health, Johnston explains how such backyard participatory research is based on scope-of-work contracts that craft specific power relationships and responsibilities tailored to the case. She stresses that such agreements articulate professional codes of ethics, the conditions in which all parties can renegotiate the scope of work, the responsibilities of all collaborators, and the products of the project, which can vary for different partners. She advocates a fluid and flexible vision of what constitutes “success” in an engaged project, offering that it may have less to do with a traditional scholarly product (typically a report, paper, or article) and more with the process of communicating between project partners.

Much of the reflection on practicing anthropology revolves around what defines *activism* and what, in turn, constitutes an opposing, “unengaged” scholarship. For instance, Mark Schuller (2010) celebrates anthropology’s heritage of engagement in real-world problems but also presses contemporary scholars to understand the complicated roles of activist and anthropologist and the virtues of each position. Schuller considers his research in Haiti, where he realized that, in some cases, his appropriate role was to be an anthropologist, whose work was to document and observe social and political conditions but not to spearhead public activism. Such activism posed a danger to Schuller himself as well as his community partners, and the distance of that scholarly role allowed Schuller to secure positions in two NGOs that saw him as a scholar and thus connected him with collaborators he would otherwise not have been able to access. Yet Schuller is circumspect about these positions; assuming the role of a scholar-academic, he suggests, takes the risk of erasing the vitality of public collaboration or invoking imperial power and privilege. Elana Resnick (2010) counters that there may not be any anthropology that cannot be construed as activist, but she also probes precisely what constitutes “activism” in an ethnographic context. Examining her own experiences of conducting ethnography in Bulgaria, she won-

ders if a self-styled activism brings with it “certain moral assumptions about what ‘taking action’ means” (Resnick 2010:108). Resnick believes that engagement is amplified by a conscious focus on the balance between our conceptions of activism and constituencies’ own senses of appropriate actions, requiring a constant tacking between activists’ intentions and the unintended consequences of ethnographic research.

Kamari M. Clarke (2010) explores the politics of activism by interrogating the role of anthropologist as “social critic,” unraveling issues of power, positionality, imperialism, and collaboration in the exceptionally complex examples of his work with the U.S. Army in Africa. Clarke rejects simplistic distinctions between powerful and powerless peoples and complicates the ways anthropologists often distinguish between local voices and various other parties. In a similar vein to Resnick, Clarke questions the paradoxes of action and inaction, arguing that he agreed to work with the military to share his ethnographic skills and insights as well as his political critique in contexts that defy easy distinctions between victims and perpetrators. In this respect, Clarke advocates anthropological knowledge making and sharing that is always highly circumscribed, acutely reflective of how knowledge is shared, able to probe terms for such sharing of anthropological insight, and ready to confront the purposes of engaged research. Clarke levels pointed criticism at a universal codes of ethics, claiming that practicing anthropology must frame engagement that “goes beyond public social criticism” and concluding that a code of ethics focused on easy distinctions between local and external parties risks reproducing the “problematic roots of anthropology in which its role as executor for colonialism represents the elite or the local underclass of a given group or society” (2010:S308). He is especially critical of scholars who champion “nonengagement with military forces as the basis for praxis” (2010:S310). Clarke believes that anthropology’s traditional position of defending marginalized peoples demands a radical retooling of ethnographers’ perception of the publics with which we partner and collaborate.

The politics of engaged anthropology largely focuses on training students to become practicing anthropologists, utilizing a rich literature that increasingly focuses on the concrete politics of collaboration and on pedagogies for engaged fieldwork. For instance, Luke Eric Lassiter and Elizabeth Campbell (2010) champion collaborative undergraduate training that moves beyond simply sending students into unfamiliar contexts, which reproduces the conventional anthropological relationship in which the anthropologist is among some “Other.” Sounding a familiar conclusion among practicing anthropologists, Lassiter and Campbell conclude that the contemporary fieldwork context can no longer be conceptualized as a place clear and distinct from scholars’ everyday lives. Instead, Lassiter and Campbell advocate collaborative projects between students, community constituencies, and faculty that encourage local collective activism (cf. Campbell and Lassiter 2010).

Many such projects now populate the scholarly literature and various other forms of public scholarship. For example, Susan Hyatt's project in the Community Heights neighborhood of Indianapolis, Indiana, is an example of such a project that began with an undergraduate course and over 18 months in 2009–10 grew to include a series of student projects conducted with the neighborhood organization. Students conducted a "scan-a-thon," scanning residents' pictures of the neighborhood into a public database, documenting the social importance of local consumer spaces, and assessing the shifting demography in a community that has been home to Irish and German Americans as well as Latinos. The students then published a book that included essays on community history, environmental conditions, and labor conditions and held a community event at which the book was distributed to community members (Hyatt et al. 2009). Kimbra Smith (2010) uses her experience teaching anthropological fieldwork in Ecuador to argue that the sustainability and success of such projects hinge on high levels of community participation and a focus on community-chosen research goals. She champions a cyclical process in which students and community members identify issues, create research plans and work toward them, and constantly assess both successes and failures as the methods, goals, and questions are refined. Smith stresses that such overseas collaborative research conducted with students brings a host of challenges, including familiar culture-shock issues as well as students' surprise that a collaborative research course can be somewhat less clearly structured and predictable than a classroom-based course.

A central thread of Smith's conceptualization of an engaged, public anthropology is her interest in pushing beyond conventional "service-learning" models, and this circum-spect assessment of the politics of service learning is common to an increasing number of scholars. For example, Dorothy Holland and colleagues discuss their interdisciplinary, engaged research program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. They underscore their attempt to expand on traditional service learning in which "the impetus tends to be unidirectional—from campus to communities—and thus such work does not qualify as engaged scholarship" (Holland et al. 2010:3). They see outdated academic conventions as barriers to engaged scholarship: for example, the academy privileges publication, and community-based knowledge and the role of community members as peer researchers tends to be less valued. Holland and colleagues accept the widely acknowledged hazards of collaborative research, which remains a relationship with power inequalities; they recognize that engaged scholarship can produce tensions with a community when such research produces unpredictable results; and they accept that the specific definition of a *community* is fluid and positional. Holland and colleagues also are wary of how the notion of "engagement" is deployed by universities, pointing to a well-funded program in social entrepreneurship at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, that aspires to community sustainability using a variety of business mod-

els that are not especially comfortable fits with the critical perspective of much engaged scholarship.

### THE COLLABORATIVE POLITICS OF MUSEUM AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP

In the last decade, engaged museum and archaeological scholarship has very thoughtfully blurred the boundary between it and ethnographic research, and thus a vast range of museum scholars and archaeologists now incorporate intensive and reflective ethnographic research in their methodologies from the outset (e.g., Castañeda and Matthews 2008; Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos 2009; Hollowell and Nicholas 2009; Ray 2009). Consequently, it is increasingly difficult to ascertain clear boundaries between practicing archaeologists, museum scholars, and ethnographers, all of whom often work alongside each other on the same projects and borrow methods and insights from various subdisciplines. Museum anthropologists have painted a complex and reflective picture of a vast range of social groups that have not been conventional foci of museum interpretation, and much of that scholarship has involved long-standing research collaborations.

Much of this museum scholarship and associated archaeology builds on the continuing impact of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which was enacted in 1990. Stephen Nash and Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh call it "undoubtedly the single-most important piece of legislation affecting museum-based anthropology that has appeared over the last century" (2010:100), and NAGPRA has indeed transformed much of museum practice. Yet 20 years after NAGPRA decreed the return of Native American cultural items to lineal descendants and affiliated tribes, only 27 percent of the human remains in collections have been affiliated. Addressing unaffiliated remains, hastening stalled reparations, and establishing long-term collaborations between museums and Native peoples is now a central project for museums, archaeologists, and Native American communities. From their positions in the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Nash and Colwell-Chanthaphonh (2010:99) spearheaded a proactive campaign to consult tribes and address delayed reparations, seeing that an absence of such assertive outreach by museums and archaeological collection curators has undercut NAGPRA's revolutionary implications. They lay much of the blame for NAGPRA's problems at the feet of scholars who have failed to establish productive social and scholarly relationships with Native Americans and have devoted surprisingly little scholarship to NAGPRA since 1990. NAGPRA was initially greeted by a host of voices that defensively retrenched and awkwardly dodged the complications of indigenous collaboration, but Nash and Colwell-Chanthaphonh suggest that much less scholarship has stressed how profoundly NAGPRA has transformed engaged scholarship in once-insulated museums and archaeological circles.

Nevertheless, increasingly more interesting case studies modeling museum–Native collaborations are appearing.

Martha Graham and Nell Murphy (2010), for instance, take up the gauntlet to more assertively confront how tribal communities frame NAGPRA issues, and they examine the ways in which the American Museum of Natural History's (AMNH) increased interactions with Native Americans transformed the museum's practices. The AMNH has communicated in some form with every federally recognized Indian tribe and has focused on how their massive collections could be reorganized in ways that accommodate indigenous peoples' interests and provide new insights into their holdings. As an example of such collaborations, Graham and Murphy detail the experience of a Tlingit representative who, while touring the museum's collections, identified a canoe-prow ornament that had not been specified as a potentially repatriable Tlingit object. The Tlingit representatives were able to identify the prow as an ornament on the only canoe to survive an 1882 U.S. Navy bombardment of the community of Angoon. The canoe was carefully maintained by the Tlingit until it was no longer seaworthy, and it was then cremated, sans the canoe-prow piece. Somehow the beaver-shaped prow was acquired in 1911 and came to the American Museum of Natural History, but after the Tlingit visit to the museum, the prow was repatriated to Angoon on the 117th anniversary of the village's naval bombardment. The prow piece now is again being used in village ceremonies.

George Nicholas and colleagues press repatriation still further, taking a close look at the politics of "intangible" cultural heritage, which they define as "the preferences, knowledge and know-how that give material property its meanings" (Nicholas et al. 2010:11). Rather than see repatriation simply as the ownership of and access to material things, they more ambitiously tackle who "should control, have access to, or benefit from cultural heritage, past and present" (Nicholas et al. 2010:11). Nicholas and colleagues cite their Intellectual Property in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project, a Canadian research collaboration that aspires to "facilitate fair and ethical exchanges of knowledge relating to cultural heritage" (Nicholas et al. 2010:11). They argue that most indigenous communities do not make clear distinctions between the tangible and intangible dimensions of cultural heritage, but most repatriation discourses have been driven by conflicts over the control of tangible objects and not by conflicts in how the knowledge of such heritage is interpreted. As an example, they look at a northwestern Canadian case in which the Champagne-Aishihik First Nations, the British Columbia Archaeology Branch, and the Royal British Columbia Museum collaborated on a project involving a 550-year-old body preserved in a glacial context. The indigenous representatives were partners in the design and implementation of the project from its inception, and they controlled every conceivable form of knowledge that could be released in any scholarly or otherwise public forms (e.g., genetic data from DNA studies). The IPinCH project is sponsoring about 15 worldwide studies each year, developing case studies in collaboration with local

communities and reviewing all results before their scholarly release.

Because it is so often literally conducted in public space, archaeology provides some exceptionally creative examples of practicing scholarship, and increasingly more archaeologists now assume that collaboration with local constituencies and descendant communities is essential research methodology. Since 2002, for instance, the New Philadelphia archaeological project has examined the material remains of the Illinois town of New Philadelphia, which was established in 1836 and had disappeared by the early 20th century (Shackel 2010). New Philadelphia presents some interesting hurdles to an engaged archaeology: its African American community has since disappeared, and its site is now a remote field in a region of rural western Illinois with a somewhat typical but undistinguished racist heritage. Yet, both local and descendant communities place some claim on the heritage of New Philadelphia, and the archaeological project was consciously framed from the outset as, in Anna Agbe-Davies's words, "an accountable archaeology" determined to "build trust and credibility among stakeholders" (2010c:2). Agbe-Davies demonstrates that the archaeological use of the term *stakeholders* to refer to community partners is a consciously politicized effort to recognize "the risk, the investment, the claim—that such individuals and groups do indeed hold in the research and its outcomes" (2010c:2). One interesting dimension of this archaeological project concerning an African American 19th-century community was a series of 18 oral histories with contemporary community members, only one of whom was African American (Christman 2010:102). This oral-history project pushes beyond the narrowest notions of descendant stakeholder status and embraces the ways a very wide range of parties may lay claim to a particular heritage. Agbe-Davies (2010c:4) shows that oral histories help archaeologists illuminate "interesting and productive tensions" in divergent views of collective heritage as well as in the meanings of archaeological material culture.

In the last two decades, probably the most important engaged archaeological project in the United States has been the African Burial Ground Project in New York, a project that has borne enormous cautionary tales for some archaeologists but has more importantly outlined concrete, reflective mechanisms for community collaboration that rigorously assess research methods, goals, and community relationships. The project's scientific director, Michael Blakey (2010), argues that at the African burial ground site, diasporan descendants had no legal foothold akin to NAGPRA on which they could advocate for the disposition of the burial ground's remains. The African American community seized control of the project when it initially involved no consequential community role, and when Blakey's research team began work, they designated that community as their "ethical client." Blakey sees this status as quite different from the conventional notion of a "stakeholder": the burial-ground research team was a technical adviser to that ethical client, and it was that ethical client that had ultimate decision making on the

development of research design and project goals. Blakey indicates that the burial-ground research team intentionally avoided inserting itself into the descendant community's own internal disagreements and discussions about its goals, instead circumspectly seeing its members as advisors who "follow the informed research and memorialization decisions of the descendant community so long as these were not inconsistent with the defining principles of scholarship (an honest search for truth) and science (dependence on systematic material evidence)" (2010:63). The descendant community felt alienated by the initial archaeological work that had conducted racialized skeletal analyses and included no substantial memorialization, and initially they were not receptive to any research at all before reburial. Blakey indicates that his team "accepted, fully, their right to do so while we assumed the professional responsibility to consult with them on the potential value of anthropological study of the remains" (2010:63). The African Burial Ground Project has had an enormous impact on practicing anthropology because it delivers a powerful case study for collaboration that pushes beyond ambiguous partnerships and instead consciously and aggressively turns over decision making in all phases of the research to a community.

African American archaeology includes many examples of comparable projects that partner with descendant communities—albeit in a wide range of different relationships—and archaeological field excavation itself is often only a modest dimension of such projects. Agbe-Davies details a community-history project in Chicago's South Side that revolves around archaeological excavation but conceives of archaeology as simply one element in a much-more-ambitious project in which "archaeology points official attention to silenced stories" (2010a:173). Agbe-Davies draws on her archaeological work at the Phyllis Wheatley Home for Girls, a short-term residence for African American women who came to Chicago during the Great Migration. Certainly some of this fieldwork provides the typical archaeological illumination of prosaic, albeit consequential, material-consumption patterns, and items such as canning-jar lids reflect the educational training such homes aspired to provide migrants, who would most likely enter domestic labor. However, Agbe-Davies posits that the "very act of performing archaeological research contributes to ongoing efforts by community members and leaders to enhance the quality of life for themselves and their neighbors" (2010a:181). She frames excavation fieldwork and ethnographic research in such communities as catalysts for a variety of transformations that invoke heritage and archaeological materiality in a vast range of forms.

Many projects aspire toward reconciliation between descendants and broader communities and institutions. Samuel R. Cook and Thomas Klatka's (2010) project on a southwestern Virginia plantation now owned by Virginia Tech is an excellent example of such reconciliatory scholarship. In 1988, Virginia Tech acquired Kentland Farm, a former plantation where 300 diasporan captives were held until

1860 and where numerous captives and their descendants remain buried today. That African American cemetery's location was well-known to community elders, but markers had been removed before the university purchased the property. An interdisciplinary team of scholars and community members that the project dubs "co-intellectuals" met to formulate a management plan, and Cook and Klatka underscore that including these community "co-intellectuals was a vital step in rekindling positive ties with neighboring communities because their inclusion implied (although university representatives made it explicit that they also believed this) that community-based knowledge was as legitimate as any ideas produced from within the academy" (2010:36). Such university and community collaborations normally involve some negotiations over the institution's desires to flourish, if not grow, and in the case of Kentland Farm, the university wanted to insure that the farm remained a working agricultural space for students, even as the community pressed for stewardship and access to the cemetery. The parties reached an agreement to use archaeology to identify the specific location of the burials without removing human remains and subsequently to grant public access to the undisturbed cemetery space. Here, the research thoughtfully borrows from rigorous ethnographic methods as well as material-culture analysis and broader social-scientific methods and insights. One of the most prosaic but interesting management decisions was made after a university official expressed concern that some weeds were growing on the newly identified cemetery. That vegetation included pokeweed, but the community asked that the pokeweed be left on the site because historically it was often consumed and thus is viewed as "part of our culture" (Cook and Klatka 2010:39).

The 2010 collection *Beneath the Ivory Tower: The Archaeology of Academia* (Skowronek and Lewis 2010) points to U.S. historical archaeologists' increasing attention to the politics of public archaeology on university campuses and the potential for collaborative work on campuses and in surrounding communities. The volume, edited by Russell Skowronek and Kenneth Lewis, details a series of archaeological studies conducted on U.S. campuses that examines contexts ranging from the 17th through 20th centuries. The volume reflects the thoughtful ways some universities have embraced stewardship of their heritage with reflective resource-management strategies, and it reveals how archaeology can provide powerful public displays of teaching, interpretation, and scholarship on a university campus. The collection underscores how archaeology makes campus communities rethink their own preconceptions about spaces they have never contemplated, histories they had never recognized, and the ways institutional heritage is constructed. For instance, R. P. Stephen Davis and colleagues' (2010) assessment of the University of North Carolina campus cleverly interprets a university landscape that has maintained many of its earliest 19th-century buildings and plays off certain visions of its heritage despite having changed quite dramatically and continually since the late 18th century.

They advocate seeing such landscapes as historical products impressed with a wide range of ideological designs.

Many universities and surrounding communities endure “town–gown” tensions over heritage that practicing anthropologists are tackling in thoughtful ways. For instance, Indiana University–Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI), marked its 40th anniversary with the commissioning of an oral-history project based on a decade of archaeological excavation conducted on the campus. Rather than produce a dry documentary history of the university, the administration supported the undertaking of an oral-history project about the African American heritage of the space now occupied by the university. The campus displaced a predominantly African American community beginning in the late 1950s, and archaeological excavations alongside documentary research and oral-historical testimony have been used to document 150 years of community heritage as well as the university’s own complicity in racially based displacement. An African American community member, Glenn Stanton White, and I (Mullins and Stanton White 2010) conducted 30 oral histories with elders who had lived in the neighborhood, focusing testimony on life in this community since the 1920s, the legacy of urban renewal, and the relationship between the university and African American community constituencies. During its anniversary-year celebrations, the university hosted public events to discuss that legacy as well as honor the memoirists who participated in the project.

Much of this broadly based, community-collaborative work has wrestled with the dual questions of precisely what constitutes a “community” and how relationships are forged between various community members and engaged scholars. The Wenner-Gren workshop “Dynamics of Inclusion in Public Archaeology,” held in September of 2010, gathered 12 archaeologists studying such collaborative community projects throughout the world (Matthews and McDavid n.d.). That workshop aspired to focus on the actual dynamics of inclusion that build communities rather than the inherited, constructed, and imagined community labels that archaeologists routinely study. The workshop proposed that all archaeology is inevitably community-based scholarship and cannot avoid being engaged. The workshop was held at the African Burial Ground National Monument in New York, confronting the politics of engaged archaeology at the scene of perhaps the most powerful example of a community archaeological project.

The composition of community is largely vested in state policies that legally compel scholars to produce a public scholarship rooted in some discrete community, so just as NAGPRA radically impacted archaeological scholarship, similar codes hold the potential for significant engaged interventions. For instance, Brendan Griebel’s (2010) work among the Inuit in the Canadian territory of Nunavut centers on a territorial mandate to develop scholarly projects that address Inuit issues. In his research, Griebel asks how a broadly defined archaeology can make such a contribution to Inuit cultural heritage. Territorial law introduced

in 1999 mandated that community outreach was required for all archaeological projects, a law that was intended to ensure “that researchers engage local communities through employment and education” and to require archaeologists to “convince Inuit community councils of their explicit effort to involve and benefit local populations” (Griebel 2010:76). This move forced archaeologists to understand “the relationship between archaeologists and Inuit communities in more ethnographic terms,” an increasingly commonplace methodological, social, and ethical sentiment among contemporary archaeologists. Griebel was demoralized to find that Inuit residents showed little interest in field excavation, yet Inuit elders emphasized that it was not fieldwork itself that was important; instead, they were interested in discussions that could be focused on archaeological material remains, landscapes, and their connections to community memory. The resulting projects did involve some archaeological fieldwork, but like many practicing archaeology projects, the research uses materiality primarily as a departure point for community-based heritage projects.

Heritage projects involving archaeological research now routinely invoke the notion of “community” in concert with an implied, if not professed, commitment to engagement. Agbe-Davies (2010b) argues that much of how community is considered by archaeologists turns on how scholars view their obligations, in both an ethical and intellectual sense; that is, she argues, archaeologists once saw their only obligation to be to scientific objectivity, but practicing archaeologists now consider their primary obligation to be to public constituencies. Agbe-Davies explores the broad range of “communities” in African diasporan archaeologies, in which archaeologists have long partnered in various ways with literal descendant communities as well as the broader African American community that lays some claim to that diasporan heritage. Agbe-Davies argues that archaeologists and other practicing scholars who wish to work with fluidly constituted and internally complex communities must “fit into existing networks” and approach “community” as a process rather than a thing or place” (2010b:385).

## DEFINING ACTIVISM

A circle of public scholars concerned with heritage issues has embraced their work as “activism,” a term that has been invoked in anthropological circles since the 1960s but remains somewhat broadly defined. Larry Zimmerman and colleagues outline an interesting amplification of such activist scholarship in a broadly structured material study of homelessness, presenting their research project as consciously activist in its intention to “make a difference in people’s lives” (2010:445). Their activism pivots on their disquiet with archaeologists’ apparent unwillingness to see archaeological research as “even remotely political in its actions and implications” (Zimmerman et al. 2010:443). They propose a definition of *activism* revolving around ethical obligations beyond scholarly circles, lamenting that archaeologists are without “a real sense of obligation or understanding that

their work might actually be valuable beyond just the human interest to be derived from providing perspective on cultural adaptations over time” (Zimmerman et al. 2010:443–444). They advocate a translational scholarship that works “with others to transform their knowledge into practical applications to benefit communities” and champion an activism that seeks to solve real-life problems identified during collaborative research (Zimmerman et al. 2010:444). Much of their fine-grained material analysis of the spaces in which homeless people live has clear policy implications on how shelters and community agencies serve the homeless. For example, they found that homeless “camps” were covered with unopened bottles of shampoo, conditioner, and deodorant, reflecting that the absence of running water made such goods relatively useless; likewise, unopened (or heat-ruptured) canned foods were present in significant quantities at the sites, but the homeless rarely had can openers. Consequently, many of these goods provided by well-meaning agencies were not especially useful to the homeless. The researchers found that a vast number of homeless people maintained blogs, often migrating to public libraries during the day and composing blogs with practical advice on life on the streets as well as philosophical and political ruminations on being homeless. The project paints a broad and complicated picture of homelessness that borrows from highly focused archaeological insights and broader ethnographic methods while producing concrete policy implications, some of which are modest interventions and others more consequential.

The 2010 volume *Archaeologists as Activists: Can Archaeologists Change the World?* ambitiously looks beyond the intellectual products of research (e.g., site reports, books) and their assumed benefits shaping our collective heritage. Instead, the volume points to the many unintended consequences of the social practice of conducting archaeology in and with communities, and it champions archaeology projects that “advocate for or consciously affect contemporary communities” (Stottman 2010:3). Volume editor M. Jay Stottman identifies a continuum of practice from public presentation to activism, seeing the former as a foundation for activism but arguing that activism is “more about intentionality and advocacy, which should be a focus for projects, not an aside” (2010:8). Stottman lays out complex ethnographic expectations for activism, arguing that scholars “must reconceptualize and broaden their view of archaeology. . . . Archaeologists as activists can intentionally use their skills and research to advocate for the communities in which they conduct research” (2010:8–9). This vision of activism is based on community collaborations and an expectation that archaeological practice and knowledge is appropriately seen as an agent for change.

Sonya Atalay (2010) proposes an activism that is “action-based” and examines how community-based participatory research programs can engage communities in heritage management and produce socially and intellectually relevant scholarship. For example, at the 9,000-year-old site of Çatalhöyük, Turkey, Atalay found that local constituen-

cies were leery to collaborate because they needed a deeper understanding of archaeology itself. Local residents have worked at the site since it was first excavated in 1958 but had little understanding of the research process or the products that emerged from fieldwork. Atalay describes an internship program and a theater project that were designed to increase knowledge about heritage-management issues and archaeological knowledge before any genuine participatory or collaborative research could be conducted.

### INTERPRETING PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

The recently instituted public anthropology section of *American Anthropologist* charts the vast range of forms practicing anthropology is taking. Editors Melissa Checker, David Vine, and Alaka Wali (2010) introduced the initial section in the March 2010 issue, stating that anthropologists are increasingly engaged in a vast range of communities and reaching numerous constituencies outside captive students and narrow academic scholarly circles. They frame the section as a forum to “explore innovative and effective mechanisms for communicating anthropological research and knowledge outside academia,” focusing on Internet discourse as well as a range of unpublished literature, policy papers, technical briefs, journalism, and public educational materials. Checker, Vine, and Wali underscored that reviews and essays would apply rigorous scholarly standards to blogs, web pages, and similar media, a move that resists the devaluation academics have often attached to public scholarship. In fact, a good number of the practicing anthropology projects detailed in this article have supporting web pages; many include peer-reviewed scholarship, raw data, public-education documents, and a vast range of research material; virtually all of them include products beyond peer-reviewed texts alone.

The *AA* public anthropology reviews section highlights this vast breadth of anthropological products. In 2010, the single year the section’s been running, it contained reviews of a blog on “microgardening,” articles in popular magazines, papers at conferences, technical reports, and web-based multimedia sites as well as “dialogic” reviews with two commentators. For instance, David Price (2010) reviews three anthropology blogs, comparing the ways that multi-authored, single-authored, and organizational blogs present anthropological insight in distinctive ways. Price acknowledges that such blogs provide opportunities to test ideas provisionally and complicate facile distinctions between academics and “the public,” but he laments that blogs are simply one prominent example of a public scholarship that remains “undervalued or unrecognized by formal academic assessments” (2010:141). This is a modest but significant thread in the anthropological scholarship on engagement that deserves more attention: that is, community service and scholarship such as blogs are routinely undervalued in academic promotion and review, yet it is very labor intensive to develop and sustain community projects or maintain an active and thoughtful blog.



The column has also tackled a range of policy papers that are routinely ignored. Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz examines a set of U.S.–Mexico Border and Immigration Task Force policy papers that support “reduced militarization of the border region and enhanced oversight of border enforcement agencies and activities” (2010:143). Gomberg-Muñoz underscores the papers’ strengths in framing problems in “everyday interactions and matter-of-fact language” (2010:144) while pointing toward the ways anthropologists might more assertively contribute to such policy research.

The now year-old section in *AA* reflects the rich ways practicing anthropologists are reaching beyond narrow academic communities and traditional scholarship and reveals how new discursive forms are coming to influence the way people view a range of social issues.

### REFLECTING ON ENGAGED ANTHROPOLOGIES

In her review of practicing anthropology in 2009, Brondo emphasized that public anthropology had entered “a new phase of advanced engagement at local, national, and international levels” (2010:208)—from contracted public-policy research to advocacy-oriented scholarship. Indeed, the question is no longer whether anthropologists have a powerful and consequential voice in public affairs or if public engagement is rigorous scholarship. Instead, the growth of public scholarship is now being assessed by a host of voices pressing to systematically and reflectively define exactly what constitutes *engagement*. The thematic areas that Brondo identified for 2009—and those identified by Melissa Checker in her review of 2008—remained familiar themes in practicing anthropology in 2010: war and peace, environmental change, race and racism, and health inequalities. What is increasingly clear is that community-based, collaborative, problem-solving research has been embraced by anthropologists in every subfield, and Barbara Rose Johnston’s (2008:172) claim that such practicing scholarship is the “common dimension of all anthropological work” seems truer than ever before. An increasing range of public scholars in nearly every discipline have at least begun to conduct such engaged research, so anthropology now vigorously and critically explores the most fundamental dimensions of public anthropology, dissecting the politics of collaboration, activism, advocacy, collaboration, and community in ways that reflectively assess engagement.

In the previous two “Year in Review” articles on practicing anthropology, Checker and Brondo pointed to the gradual emergence of an anthropological scholarship in heritage, one that is focused on archaeology and museum anthropology. The growth of public heritage projects firmly grounded in material-culture analysis, public historical and cultural interpretation, and rigorous ethnography is perhaps a “sea change” (see Checker et al. 2010) in archaeology that has been building over the past decade. However, perhaps it is less a sea change and more a symptom of practicing anthropology’s growth: practicing anthropology is an

area of study not easily reduced to simply extending the methods or insights of one of the four subfields because these projects are utterly interdisciplinary. Museum interpretations of cultural-heritage and public-archaeological projects converse with community constituencies on goals and methods, a collaborative politics that is common to a vast breadth of practicing anthropology. Increasingly, practicing anthropologists are carefully assessing the concrete realities of such partnerships, buoyed by a rapidly growing body of practicing scholarship that provides critical guidance on the possibilities and challenges of engaged scholarship.

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