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ANTHROPOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Anthropology Conference Spurs Media Blitz: A round-up of news coverage of the AAA's 2007 Annual Meeting in DC

The American Anthropological Association's (AAA) recent annual meeting in Washington DC sparked widespread media coverage on the news and research of the anthropology community. Over 25 journalists and media professionals attended the meeting—and subsequent articles have appeared in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the USA Today, The Nation, Wired News, The Chronicle of Higher Education and Inside Higher Ed. The following is a round-up of related coverage from the past week:

Washington Post op-ed columnist Eugene Robinson devoted his Tuesday [article](#) to a session at the annual meeting titled, "The Insecure American." At the session, panelists spoke about a culture of American insecurity evident through research on gated communities, risk-driven health care strategies, terrorism, the global economy, the "military-industrial complex" and the international trade of transplant organs. Robinson writes, "Last week, I heard some of the nation's leading cultural anthropologists try to explain these and other phenomena. I came away convinced that we, as a nation, definitely should seek professional help."

A recent [article](#) in **The Nation** spotlighted research by AAA's newly inaugurated president, Setha Low. The article discusses Low's research findings on gated communities which show that closed communities are not safer from crime—or fears of crime—than open ones. The article also connects Low's research—which was presented on Thursday at the annual meeting—to the U.S. mortgage crisis.

New York Times science columnist John Tierney wrote a [blog article](#) about a panel held at the annual meeting in which scholars challenged western taboos against and media coverage of female genital surgeries. Panel participants included Richard Shweder (U Chicago) and two African women scholars—Wairimu Njambi (Florida Atlantic U) and Fuambai Ahmadu (U Chicago)—both of whom have been circumcised as part of cultural traditions in their home countries of Kenya and Sierra Leone, respectively. Tierney's article elicited strong emotions, and received over 200 comments (viewable online) in the first four days following its publication. A follow-up [post](#) was published on December 5 featuring a lengthy defense by Shweder.

Inside Higher Ed reported on a session titled, "New Media Anthropology" which was held on Friday at the annual meeting. The [article](#) highlights anthropological research on digital archiving, a web-based "repatriation" project, and a new digital resource for ethnomusicological recordings, as well as the issues with intellectual property rights and cultural sensitivity that arise with the use of digital technology. Reporter Andy Guess writes, "While new media can foster participatory ethnography and enhance access, the panel seemed to suggest, it can also provide innovative means of investigating subcultures—and rich source material in and of itself."

Executive producer of Lifted Veils Productions and former NPR senior editor Phillip Martin attended several AAA sessions related to race and racism, color, genetics, DNA, immigration and hierarchy. Martin is currently developing content for "**The Color Initiative**," a Boston-based journalism project sponsored by WGBH Radio, Public Radio International and the BBC. The project seeks to create an international editorial beat to examine "human perceptions and experiences related to color." Once complete, the series will broadcast on "The World," on WGBH 89.7, Mon-Fri 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Inside Higher Ed published an [article](#) on the AAA business meeting which was held on Thursday afternoon at the annual meeting. The article addresses a resolution to reinstate language from the AAA's 1971 Code of Ethics. It also mentions three other resolutions—on Iran, US Census language classifications, and a task force to study rising global food prices. The resolution opposing US military action against Iran was passed at the meeting and will be submitted for membership vote. The resolutions on the AAA Code of Ethics, the US Census, and global food prices will be submitted to the AAA executive board as advisory, as per AAA bylaws.



Many journalists attending the AAA 2007 Annual Meeting were interested in the ongoing debate on anthropologists working with the US Military's Human Terrain System (HTS) project in Iraq and Afghanistan. A press conference was held at the AAA press room on Wednesday, November 28 to announce the release of the AAA Ad Hoc Commission Report on the Engagement of Anthropology with US Military and Intelligence Communities. Reporters from The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, the BBC, The Boston Globe, Verizon FiOS1, Cambridge Community TV, and Wendoh Media Company attended the event.

Reporters from The New Yorker, Wired News, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, In These Times, and the Development Executive Group also attended other annual meeting events related to the anthropology and military debate. Requests for the Ad Hoc Commission report have been received from TIME Magazine and Elle Magazine.

The following is a list of some recent articles on the HTS project and related issues:

Dec. 5

Former Human Terrain System Participant Describes Program in Disarray, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: <http://chronicle.com/daily/2007/12/891n.htm>

Dec. 3

Secrecy and Anthropology, *Inside Higher Ed*:
<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/12/13/anthro>

Nov. 30

The Culture Warriors, *U.S. News and World Report*:
<http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/iraq/2007/11/30/the-pentagon-deploys-social-scientists-to-help-understand-iraqs-human-terrain.html>

Anthropologists on the Front Lines, *In These Times*:
http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/3433/anthropologists_on_the_front_lines/

Anthropologists in a War Zone: Scholars Debate Their Role, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*:
<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i14/14a00101.htm>

Enabling the Kill Chain, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*:
<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i14/14b00901.htm>

The Contribution of Scholars, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*
<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i14/14b01002.htm>

Research to Reduce Blood Shed, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*:
<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i14/14b01001.htm>

Questions, Anger and Dissent on Ethics Study, *Inside Higher Ed*
<http://www.insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2007/11/30/anthro>

Nov. 29

Army Social Scientists Calm Afghanistan, Make Enemies at Home, *Wired News*:
http://www.wired.com/politics/security/news/2007/11/human_terrain

Nov. 27

Anthropologists Battle Over Ethics of Embeds, *USA Today*:
http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2007-11-27-anthropologists-embeds_N.htm

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