



## FROM THE EDITORS

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### HONORING OUR ELDERS

*Transforming Anthropology* Editorial Team

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As editors of *Transforming Anthropology* (TA), it is our pleasure to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA) by recognizing the writings and teachings of Black anthropologists who have contributed to the journal over the years. In addition to the regular research articles and book reviews included in this issue, the TA editorial team has organized a special tribute to honor our elders. We begin with an address by the new ABA President, Riché Barnes, and then honor the recent passing of one of ABA's founding members, anthropologist Ira E. Harrison (1933–2020), with two tribute essays. Following these essays, we include a special commentary section in celebration of ABA's fiftieth anniversary that curates five groundbreaking essays previously published in TA by our ABA elders. To show our gratitude for and impact of these important works, a number of Black anthropologists discuss how each article matters to them. Although we are unable to re-publish the original articles in this issue, we ask that you download, read, and re-read the original essays (links included below). The five elders whose work we highlight here have made it possible for TA and the ABA to exist.

We honor the previous generations of Black anthropologists who have transformed the discipline and led us toward a more just anthropological practice.

We recognize how crucial this scholarship and theory are for today's context.

We acknowledge that we stand on the shoulders of previous scholars, activists, artists, and alchemists, and we must remember to read, re-read, and teach these crucial contributions.

As we recognize the contribution and continued relevance of these transformative works, we hope they inspire you during these troubling times.

The first essay, “Further Reflections on Anthropology and the Black Experience” by St. Clair Drake and Willie L. Baber, published in TA's second issue in 1990, is a reengagement with St. Clair Drake's 1978 article, “Reflections on Anthropology and the Black Experience,” published in *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*. The impact of these important essays is discussed with commentaries by Jafari Allen, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Miami and author of *¡Venceremos?: The Erotics of Black Self-Making in Cuba* (2011), and Aimee Cox, Associate Professor of Anthropology and African American Studies at Yale University and author of *Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship* (2015).

The late elder, St. Clair Drake, venerated African American social scientist, was born January 2, 1911 in Suffolk, Virginia. After graduating from the Hampton Institute with a BS in Biology in 1931, Drake assumed a post as an instructor at Dillard University in New Orleans from 1935 to 1937. At Dillard, he joined a research team under the supervision of anthropologist Allison Davis. Drake conducted fieldwork in Natchez, Mississippi, and the collaborative research resulted in the publication of *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class* (Davis, Gardner, and Gardner 1941). Drake subsequently enrolled in the doctoral program in anthropology at the University of Chicago and began research in the South Side neighborhood of Bronzeville. In 1945, Drake completed the monograph *Black Metropolis* with Horace R. Cayton, Jr., a text that remains a classic in urban anthropology and a defining study of race in a Great Migration city. Subsequently, Drake embarked on fieldwork in the multiracial port city of Cardiff, Wales, for his doctoral dissertation. Drake completed his doctorate in 1954, but elected not to publish his dissertation to protect the confidentiality of African seamen and other colonial subjects who contributed to his study. As his student, Faye Harrison—another one of our elders—observes, this decision “led him away from the centers of anthropological discourse and right smack into the anticolonialist and antiracist praxis in which many Pan-Africanist intellectuals were

engaged” (Harrison 2008, 287). As a scholar-activist, Drake advised members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and participated in the All-African Peoples’ Conference in Accra in 1958, serving as an informal adviser to anticolonial leaders on the African continent. These commitments inspired Drake to accept teaching positions at the University of Liberia and University of Ghana and develop the program in African Studies at Roosevelt University in Chicago. In 1969, he joined the faculty at Stanford University and headed the program in Black Studies until his retirement in 1976. At Stanford, he supervised several doctoral students in anthropology, including Faye Harrison, whom we discuss next, Ted Gordon (below), William Baber, and Glenn Jordan. His later writings include the sweeping two-volume study *Black Folk Here and There: An Essay in History and Anthropology* (1987) and countless unpublished manuscripts archived at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem.

The next article we commemorate is Faye V. Harrison’s “‘Three Women, One Struggle’: Anthropology, Performance, and Pedagogy” (1990) published in *TA*’s inaugural issue. Student of St. Clair Drake, Black feminist elder, activist, and transformative scholar and anthropologist, Dr. Faye Venetia Harrison served as President of the ABA from 1989 to 1991 and was one of the founders of our journal. Dr. Harrison earned her MA and PhD in Anthropology from Stanford University. Among her many awards, she has received the 2010 Legacy Award from the Association of Black Anthropologists as well as the 2018 Presidential Award from the American Anthropological Association. Currently Professor of African American Studies and Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, she previously held a faculty position at the University of Florida. Before going to Florida, Dr. Harrison held positions at the University of Tennessee–Knoxville, the University of South Carolina–Columbia, and the University of Louisville. Dr. Harrison is one of the preeminent Black feminist anthropologists who edited the seminal work, *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further toward a Liberating Anthropology* (1991), which continues to be taught as a foundational methodology for transforming the discipline. Her research covers the United States and the Caribbean, as well as South Africa and the United Kingdom. Dr. Harrison has advocated for a global approach to critical race theory in anthropology. From 1993 to 2009, she chaired the global

Commission on the Anthropology of Women, and in 2013 was elected to a five-year term as President of the International Union of Anthropological & Ethnological Sciences (IUAES). Her work on the African Diaspora has focused on issues of human rights, anti-racism, and social inequality from an intersectional and transnational approach. Her groundbreaking critical race feminist methodology for global research has provided insights into globalization and neoliberalism in Jamaica, Cuba, and the United States, as well as the gendered division of labor in Jamaica’s informal urban economy. As Jafari Allen and Ryan Jobson demonstrate, Faye Harrison led the movement of the “decolonizing generation” in anthropology where she has “memorably denounced postmodernism” to instead challenge the universality of Western and androcentric hegemony through a commitment to radical transformation (2016, 139). After making the decolonizing anthropology intervention in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Dr. Harrison has bridged minoritized discourses within US anthropology to issues in the world anthropologies movement that she describes as “south to south” or “margin to margin.” This important work includes books published in India and China, normally outside of US-centered anthropology as a way to dismantle domestic and global hierarchies of knowledge, center African and African diasporic voices, and combat the empire of Eurocentrism.

The impact of Dr. Faye V. Harrison’s important *TA* essay, “‘Three Women, One Struggle’: Anthropology, Performance, and Pedagogy,” is discussed by our Associate Editor, Christen Smith, Associate Professor of African and African Diaspora Studies and Anthropology at University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) and author of *Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil* (2016), and Camee Maddox-Wingfield, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Public Health at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC).

In 1991, *TA* published the groundbreaking article, “The Virtues of Positive Ethnocentrism: Some Reflections of an Afrocentric Anthropologist,” by Sheila S. Walker. Dr. Walker is a cultural anthropologist and filmmaker. She is Executive Director of Afrodiaspora, Inc., a non-profit organization that develops documentaries and education materials about the global African Diaspora. She has done extensive fieldwork, lectured, consulted, and participated in cultural events in much of Africa and the African Diaspora. Her works include the documentary film, *Slave Routes: A*

*Global Vision*, for the UNESCO Slave Route Project (Walker and Collinet 2010) and an edited volume, *Conocimiento desde adentro: Los Afroamericanos hablan de sus pueblos y su historia* [Afro-South Americans Speak of Their Peoples and Their History] (2010). She also edited *African Roots/American Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas* (2001), produced the documentary *Scattered Africa: Faces and Voices of the African Diaspora* (2001), and has numerous other scholarly and popular publications. Dr. Walker was Director of the Center for African and African American Studies, the Annabel Irion Worsham Centennial Professor in the College of Liberal Arts, and Professor of Anthropology at the UT Austin, and she was the William and Camille Cosby Professor in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Professor of Anthropology, and Director of the African Diaspora and the World Program at Spelman College. Indeed, Dr. Walker's legacy can be seen in her push to centralize Africa not as remnant of a past but as an important interlocutor of contemporary global politics.

The important article is discussed by Jemima Pierre, Associate Professor of African American Studies and Anthropology at UCLA and author of *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race* (2012), and anthropologist Krystal Strong, Assistant Professor of Education, Literacy, Culture and International Education at the University of Pennsylvania. While at UT, Dr. Walker strove to ensure that a generation of scholars would not disarticulate Africa from the diaspora through her work as the Director of the Center for African and African American Studies.

Indeed, UT Austin has served as a hub of transformative anthropology, particularly for African anthropology. The next essay, "Cultural Politics of Black Masculinity," published in *TA* in 1997, was written by Dr. Edmund T. Gordon, known as "Ted" among his colleagues and students. Ted Gordon is an anthropologist whose work centers on power and social transformation in the Black Diaspora. Dr. Gordon is Associate Professor of African and African Diaspora Studies and Vice Provost for Diversity at UT Austin. Dr. Gordon received his Doctorate in Social Anthropology and his Master of Arts in Anthropology from Stanford University under the mentorship of St. Clair Drake and a master's degree in Marine Sciences from the University of Miami. His decade-long stay in the town of Bluefields, Nicaragua, resulted in the book *Disparate Diasporas: Identity and Politics in an African-Nicaraguan*

*Community* (1998), a testament to long-term ethnographic engagement and social struggle. Among his publications are the 1997 article "Cultural Politics of Black Masculinity," which appeared in *TA*, and the 1991 book chapter "Anthropology and Liberation" in *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further toward an Anthropology for Liberation*, edited by Faye Harrison.

Throughout his academic career, Dr. Gordon has contributed to a scholarly model of activist research and foregrounded the need for institutional change by building spaces when none was available. In 2007, this was documented in two journal articles titled "Introduction: The Austin School of African Diaspora Activist Research and Pedagogy" and "The Austin School Manifesto: An Approach to the Black or African Diaspora," in which Dr. Gordon described the blueprint for what has been accomplished at UT Austin. With the intent to create spaces and possibilities for fostering study committed to radical scholarship through faculty recruitment and development, and especially through graduate study and training, the Austin School has transformed the presence of Black anthropologists in the academy and anthropology as a discipline in general. Dr. Gordon has supervised over thirty doctoral students and has served on numerous dissertation committees. Dr. Gordon's leadership was instrumental to the founding of the Department of African Diaspora Studies in 2010. He is the former Director of the Warfield Center for African and African American Studies at UT Austin. Dr. Gordon also served as the former Associate Vice President of Thematic Initiatives and Community Engagement of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. He continues his service work through the creation of a Racial Geography Tour of UT Austin that describes how race and gender are constructed through the monuments and architecture of the campus. In 2014, Dr. Gordon received UT's highest honors, a Presidential Citation, and in 2016 the Pro Bene Meritis award from the College of Liberal Arts. From 2015 to 2018 he was an elected member of the Austin Independent School District's Board of Trustees. Dr. Gordon is also a past president of ABA.

His *TA* article "Cultural Politics of Black Masculinity" is discussed here by Jonathan Gayles, Professor and Chair of African American Studies at Georgia State University and producer of the award-winning documentary *White Scripts and Black Supermen: Black Masculinities in Comic*

*Books* (2012), and anthropologist Keisha-Khan Perry, Associate Professor of Africana Studies and author of *Black Women against the Land Grab: The Fight for Racial Justice in Brazil* (2013).

The most recently published article we commemorate is “Telling the Story Straight: Black Feminist Intellectual Thought in Anthropology,” published by Dr. A. Lynn Bolles in Spring 2013. This article, like the others, brings us to many of the core issues facing society today. Dr. Lynn Bolles is a Black feminist anthropologist and professor emerita of the Department of Women’s Studies at the University of Maryland. She completed her PhD at Rutgers University in 1981 and her AB at Syracuse University in 1971. Dr. Bolles has been both an institution and discipline builder through her dedication to the creation of interdisciplinary courses that brought Black women into her core curriculum early on in her career. She was one of the founders of the Gender and Women’s Studies Program at Bowdoin College and the Institute of Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies and has served in multiple administrative and institution-building roles over the years. She served as President and Vice-President of four organizations (Association for Feminist Anthropologists, Caribbean Studies Association, Association of Black Anthropologists, and Society for Anthropology of North America), while also serving on the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association. Bolles’s research looks at women, organized labor, and global gender relations in the African Diaspora; particularly the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States. She has published several books on Caribbean women, including *Sister Jamaica: A Study of Women, Work and Households in Kingston* (1996a); *We Paid Our Dues: Women Trade Union Leaders in the Caribbean* (1996b); and *In the Shadows of the Sun: Caribbean Development Alternatives and U.S. Policy* (1990) co-authored with Deere et al. Dr. Bolles has been called by anthropology since childhood, which led her to pursue degrees in the field, critique the gendered racial politics of anthropology, and eventually engage with feminism. She has fostered lasting scholarly networks between Black women and women of color in order to diversify the scholarship of the academy generally and her institutions specifically. The impact of Dr. Bolles’s insight has been profound, particularly for Black feminist anthropologists. One of her most important contributions has been her critique of Black women’s citational erasure in anthropology and beyond.

Commentaries for her article “Telling the Story Straight: Black Feminist Intellectual Thought in Anthropology” are written by Erica Williams, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Spelman College and author of *Sex Tourism in Bahia: Ambiguous Entanglements* (2013), and Bianca Williams, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the Graduate Center, CUNY, and author of *The Pursuit of Happiness: Black Women, Diasporic Dreams, and the Politics of Emotional Transnationalism* (2018).

Last, but not least, we honor Dr. Ira E. Harrison, who recently passed on April 27, 2020. Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Dr. Harrison was an activist, advocate, and poet who guided many generations of scholars. He was one of the founding members of the ABA. After serving in the US Army as a medical aid, Dr. Harrison earned his doctorate in Anthropology, Sociology, and Metropolitan Area Studies from Syracuse University in 1967. His research covered religion, race, public health, and migrant farm workers in the United States and Africa. His works include “The Storefront as a Revitalization Movement” (1966), *Traditional Medicine* (1976) coauthored with Sheila Cosminsky, “The Agricultural Migratory Farm Labor System as an Adaptive Mechanism for Afro-Americans” (1978), “Ethnicity and the Health Belief Systems” (1994) coauthored with L. Jack and Collins Airhihenbuwa, and “Traditional Medicine in Africa” (1993) coauthored with Collins Airhihenbuwa. In addition, he co-edited two important anthologies, *African American Pioneers in Anthropology* with Faye V. Harrison (1998) and *The Second Generation of African American Pioneers in Anthropology* with Deborah Johnson-Simon and Erica Williams (2018). Our cover image is an homage to Dr. Harrison’s life and legacy as a leader in Black anthropology. Dr. Ira Harrison’s friends and colleagues, Professors Faye V. Harrison and Tony Whitehead, commemorate his life and legacy in their tributes in this issue. May he rest in power!

The editorial team of *Transforming Anthropology* would like to thank St. Clair Drake, Faye V. Harrison, Edmund T. Gordon, Sheila S. Walker, A. Lynn Bolles, and Ira E. Harrison for their contributions to the journal and the legacy of Black anthropology. We celebrate and recognize these Black anthropologist elders, and many others who are not named, whose life’s work has made it possible for subsequent generations of Black

anthropologists to pursue publishing, activism, and research and has continued to take us in innovative turns. We also give thanks to the commentators, another generation of excellent scholars who are continuing the social justice work of anthropology. We encourage *our* readers to read, teach, and cite these articles as well as the books and scholarship of the new generation of Black anthropologists who continue to make waves in the wake. We see this as part of the transformative work of Black anthropology and *Transforming Anthropology*, the journal of the Association of Black Anthropologists.

Congratulations ABA on fifty years!

#### ARTICLES SELECTED FOR THE ABA 50TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL COMMENTARIES

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