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Instructor Wallace

WHERE DO YOU HANG YOUR HAT? A CASE FOR PARTICIPATORY ACTION ANTHROPOLOGY

By Jane W. Gibson

When asked if anthropologists should intervene as he was doing in Vicos, Holmberg customarily responded that it was the failure to place our knowledge at the service of humanity which was unethical.

Doughty 1987

Homelessness in the U.S.

Homelessness, an issue regarded as a national emergency in the early 1980's, seems to have disappeared from both popular and political discussions. Attacks on the poor, beginning with Reagan Administration policies, promoted liberal advocacy for "the homeless" to the national agenda. In 1987, Senator Al Gore, among others, led Congress to pass the McKinney Act, the only federal law to assist homeless Americans, authorizing millions of dollars in funding for housing and hunger relief. Yet poverty and homelessness grew, even as the American economy boomed at the end of the 20th century. Advocates explained this failure as the product of the mean-spirited political right, determined to gut social services and programs funded by the federal government under the guise of "welfare reform."

The 1999 report by the U.S. Conference of Mayors showed that the number of homeless people increased by over 500% between 1985 and 1998, coinciding with unprecedented national economic expansion and the largest jump in the Gini coefficient of inequality since the late 1960s. Their study of 30 U.S. cities also found that 26% of all requests for emergency shelter in 1998 went unmet due to lack of resources. In spite of these devastating findings, Romesh Ratnesar noted in a *Time* magazine article (December 1999) that in Clinton's seventh State of the Union

address, delivered ten years after the senior Bush's inaugural commitment to solving the problem of homelessness, the President never even brought up the issue. Since the economy began to sputter in June 2000, the rate of homelessness has increased dramatically.

Estimates of the homeless population in the U.S. vary wildly and depend fundamentally on the methods used to count them. Point-in-time counts rely on those present in shelters, soup kitchens, and on the street for a period of time. High rates of turnover and the duration of counts—one night vs. one week, for example—complicate the problems of counting a mobile and often hidden population. One widely cited estimate is the approximately 500,000-600,000 people counted over a period of a week in 1998. The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty updates this number assuming a 5% increase per year. They estimated for 1999 that there were over 700,000 homeless people on any given night, and up to 2 million people during one year. The Clinton administration used data gathered from a telephone survey that found that 7% of respondents said they had been literally homeless at some point in their lives. With corrections to include children, they estimated that between 4.95 million and 9.32 million people experienced homelessness in the latter half of the 1980s. Today, recession, rising unemployment, and increases in the number of shelter beds suggest that homelessness continues to grow.

Even the most conservative estimates demand a meaningful public response. Yet Clinton's successor, the junior George Bush, proposed in his recent State of the Union address to spend almost \$2 trillion, but to tackle the problems of poverty and homelessness by rewarding charitable donations to "faith-based organizations and commu-



Jane W. Gibson

nity groups that offer help and love one person at a time." This Bush administration plans to refine welfare reform, begun under Clinton in 1996, by asking states to operate their programs on exactly the same allocation they received six years ago, but with \$100 million earmarked for experiments designed to encourage low-income people to marry and remain so.

In the context of such indifferent and misguided American leadership, "Phil" stepped off the elevator into the University of Kansas' Department of Anthropology to initiate a Participatory Action Project on behalf of the homeless members of Lawrence, our shared community. For twelve years, Phil lived under a bridge not far from my home before finally moving into government subsidized housing. He had a theory about why homeless people felt dissatisfied with the assistance of service providers: service providers and homeless people, he explained, operate

from different worldviews. In short, providers did not understand the experience of homelessness, and Phil wanted to communicate that experience to improve services. After some discussion, I suggested that videography might be the most effective tool because a video would show as well as tell about that experience, and homeless people could speak for themselves. They could do so in a medium that subverts the fear and loathing many Americans feel towards this pariah group, humanizing them and making it possible for audiences to identify with them. We hoped our effort might constitute a step in turning the monologue surrounding programs and policies into a dialogue involving program beneficiaries. *Where Do You Hang Your Hat?* names the video we produced and distributed in this Participatory Action Project.

Homelessness in Lawrence

According to a 1999 edition of "Change of Heart," the streetpaper of Lawrence's homeless community, the number of homeless people in Lawrence ranges from 150-300. The town is considered by participants in our video project to be one of the safer towns for street life and it offers a range of needed services. Like other cities and towns in the U.S., Lawrence has some Section 8 housing with a long waiting list, and Social Rehabilitative Services where means-tested applicants can qualify for food stamps, medicaid, AFDC, and other poverty programs.

In the private sector, the Salvation Army, conveniently located downtown, provides shelter in the coldest months of the year when it is open from 9pm to 8am. Guests can shower, do laundry, and eat an evening meal. In December, 1999, the organization's newsletter, *The Herald*, reported that 25-35 people/night slept at the Salvation Army. Men sleep in the gym; women in a small classroom. Married couples and families sleep in the dining room, and all sleep on mats. Admittance requires a social security number, a signature, and passing a breathalyzer test. In addition

to these requirements, perceived by some as demeaning, homeless guests worry about the lack of security and experience a loss of dignity in the lack of privacy.

The Drop-In Center is a daytime rest-stop that offers warmth, showers, toiletries, coffee and snacks, companionship, some counseling, referral, and information services. Its main limitations identified by beneficiaries and service providers during the video project were that it was remote from the center of town where most needed it to be, especially for those on foot; its space was very small; and it was about to lose access to even this unsatisfactory location.

Two soup kitchens hold complementary schedules so that homeless people can eat one hot meal every day. These two are remarkable for the respect they accord their guests. LINK, the Lawrence Interdenominational Nutritional Kitchen does not means-test or ask for names or identification. Volunteer servers are trained to respect guests' needs for time after the meal to socialize, and under no circumstances will they allow the population to be exploited by photographers, the press, or visual anthropologists. The Jubilee Cafe, run by an Episcopal priest in his church, applies many of the same policies, but instead of the cafeteria style service provided by LINK volunteers, the Cafe seats guests who order from menus, and volunteer wait staff, mostly students from the University of Kansas, provide full service throughout the meal.

Health Care Access, Inc. refers those in need of medical or dental assistance to doctors willing to donate their services. Of special concern to participants in our project is the difficulty of accessing dental care. In order to be seen, an applicant fills out lengthy paperwork and must declare that he or she is in "constant pain." Dentists agree to treat only one tooth per visit, and the only treatment, we were told by former patients, is to pull the offending tooth. The Bert Nash Community Mental Health Facility is a non-profit organization that serves mentally ill homeless

people with mental health services and residence in a recently opened house.

While this list is not inclusive of all available services, it shows that many in Lawrence care about poverty and homelessness and try to do something about it. Many of those service providers and volunteers, however well-meaning, nevertheless understand homelessness as evidence of personal deficiency requiring moral or mental rehabilitation. The problem of "homelessness" has also been defined as the condition of lacking permanent shelter and the resources necessary to acquire it. Thus we found solutions consistent with these interpretations: emergency shelter, food, materials and facilities to promote personal hygiene, healthcare, and clothes often mentioned by providers as important for successful job interviews. Without question, these services meet indispensable basic needs for many homeless people in Lawrence. Yet it is in this worldview that Phil finds frustration when he says the community's service providers do not understand homelessness and homeless people.

The Participatory Action Project

I recruited a graduate student to the project, introduced her to Phil, and the three of us agreed to meet weekly to discuss and plan the project. In particular, we needed time to learn from Phil and other experts on homelessness before venturing out with a camera.

Unfortunately, Phil left the project under unpleasant circumstances, but when I tried to quit as well for what I assumed would be lack of interest and support among others, two homeless men insisted that the project was important, that they wanted to continue, and they persuaded me to stay the course. After further discussion, we agreed to invite students in my advanced Visual Anthropology class to join the team. The students enthusiastically embraced the project as an effective way to learn what they wanted from the class through participation in a potentially useful and meaningful project. We all saw it as a way to grow

professionally and personally, and to put our skills and resources as visual anthropologists to work for our community.

At the first full meeting of the class after my initial presentation of the project, Paul, Jerry, and Keith, all members of the Coalition for Homeless Concerns in Lawrence, joined us, bringing our numbers to thirteen. I divided the class into three teams, each to include one of the homeless experts who proceeded to teach, guide, show, and introduce us to the world of homelessness. The idea was that each of these men would offer himself as a "case study" whose experiences and ideas student team members would videotape. Their daily lives brought students into contact with services and service providers as well as with other homeless people. Each team met and worked as they deemed appropriate during the week, and we all met at the regularly scheduled class time to share information, raw footage, and ideas. Each of these sessions also afforded our homeless team members opportunities to talk to the larger group about their feelings, experiences, and needs. It was in this context that we collectively came to understand homelessness more fully, and so to develop the project.

Stereotypes of homeless people blend distanced observation with popular views that explain the conditions of these "others" as the result of persistent failures and bad choices. In the participatory video project, we began with good hearts and sympathy for this little understood population. As the project progressed and our interactions intensified, our "imagined homeless person" took on flesh, real faces, social lives, and complexity. We made friends with homeless people, and so learned how similar we are in fundamental ways. We also began to deconstruct our own stereotypes as we met homeless people with and without jobs; those with a ready smile, a joke, and laughter as well as those in despair; those whose addictions continued to plague them, and those whose religious views forbade alcohol and illegal drugs; those with personal pride as well as

those who seemed to have given up; and those with advanced education and training as well as those with few skills. Homeless people come in families; they are single men and women; and they are run-away and thrown-away kids. They are of all racial and ethnic groups and of all ages from infancy to senior citizens. And they come to the street by as many different paths as there are people to arrive there.

at first, with homeless people who would speak for themselves about their own lives, their experiences, and "our" collective needs for a community "home" where all of us can feel safe and supported by caring people. What the team discovered was that it isn't "they" who are homeless, but rather some of "us" who are, and some of "us" whose broader needs are not being met. These, we learned, include the respect

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Models of immorality and mental illness simply cannot describe or explain the complexity of causes that lead to the condition of homelessness, nor do they describe its multifaceted experience, nor do they implicate adequate solutions. What these models can do, as noted earlier, is meet some important basic needs, but they do so through the ascription of selected meanings to a subaltern category. These meanings necessitate and justify the paternalism of those whom homeless people ask for assistance. As Keith explained, people who ask for help are automatically treated as a different kind of people, as though they cannot think for themselves, do not know their own minds, are in need of rehabilitation, and so are not entitled to either privacy or the measure of respect accorded others.

Teams began to conceptualize a project oriented to community enlightenment and community building through respectful dialogue. The tape would engage the community and bring audiences face-to-face, albeit on screen

that is shown through eye contact and basic courtesy; conversation, physical touch, and the sense of security that comes with believing those around us will be there to catch us when we fall. And we learned from the Ph.D in psychology, whom we met at the Salvation Army, that anyone can fall.

With production completed, the team met to develop a script around the messages we thought were most important to convey. We wanted to unseat simple stereotypes; to help audiences understand the experience of homelessness and to identify with homeless speakers; to show the complexity of conditions that give rise to homelessness; to show that homeless people understand these conditions and could profitably be consulted in policy-making or program development; to build on the strengths of existing programs and to encourage others to get involved in community-building.

With much discussion in the editing suite, a rough cut was finally completed in April of 1999. All who contributed to

production of the tape were invited to two rough cut showings after which input was sought through discussion. One of these showings, attended by a large number of homeless participants, was videotaped, and the decision was made to include some of this footage in the final edit. Keith hand-delivered about sixty copies of *Where Do You Hang Your Hat?* throughout the Lawrence community to City and County Commissioners, the police, social service providers, clergy, educators, libraries, and to our locally-owned alternative video rental store. Public and private showings were also organized almost immediately, first by the team, but then by many interested others, with subsequent discussions moderated by homeless people and those advocating for the group. These showings continued long after the project was completed.

Assessing the Project

Stephen and Jean Schensul (1978) wrote that Participatory Action Anthropology emerges at the grass-roots level, and subsequently involves the skills of the anthropologist as facilitator of the

sources of data, and ultimately have ownership over the information and how it is to be used" (Ervin 2000: 200). Related to these ideas are those of Peter Park (1997) in which he makes the case that Participatory Action Anthropology promotes the development of community and so democracy through generation of three kinds of knowledge: Representational, Reflective, and Relational. I use this framework to answer the big assessment questions: Did the project enlighten the larger Lawrence community about homelessness, move the community to respond to needs articulated by homeless people, and empower homeless people as participants in a dialogue about their own lives?

- *Representational Knowledge* is what scientists produce. We try to detach ourselves from what we observe, to attain what Robert Lawless referred to as "disciplined subjectivity," to reduce ethnocentrism and increase reliability. It is also knowledge produced by and for us, though many now regard the sharing of this kind of knowledge with those from whom we glean it as obligatory.

We began with archival research. Students went to the library to learn about other studies of homelessness and returned with statistics, scholarly case material, and popular magazine and newspaper reports. Keith, Paul, and Jerry provided additional resources such as service agency documents and newsletters published by Lawrence's homeless coalition. These resources sometimes included historical information and statistics as well as mission statements and lists of services. Keith, Paul, and Jerry also helped us understand the structure of social services in Lawrence, laying out who offered what, under what conditions, to whom, where, when, and under whose direction. They shared with us their thorough understanding of the system within which they operated to meet basic needs, and we included selected parts of this representational knowledge in the tape.

The first instance of successful communication of the meaning and experience of homelessness occurred between students and experts. As the meaning of homelessness in students' minds changed from cardboard cutouts to one among many experiences of whole, complex people, the project evolved. Exploring and showing the diversity of the homeless population and the multiple conditions that give rise to homelessness became a priority early on. Yet one homeless participant in the project expressed his doubt that anyone can ever really understand "the life" until she or he has actually lived it. He may be right about that in some ways, but significant, if imperfect, understanding is possible as evidenced by the generation of Reflective Knowledge.

- *Reflective Knowledge* "pertains to the realm of human values in which questions of right and wrong, good and bad, are raised. It speaks to how things ought to be, not how they are. It is normative, not necessarily in the sense of conformity but of righteousness of action and is informed by thoughtful reflections carried out in social contexts.... Principled actions aimed at social change express and

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representation and participation of people in the societal plans and programs which affect them. Twenty-two years later, in the year 2000, Alexander Ervin added "... that participants should determine the actual questions for research, choose the methods and the

When applied to the video project, representational knowledge includes descriptive information about homelessness as well as information presented by homeless people that helps reveal the meaning and experience of homelessness to the wider Lawrence audience.

generate reflective knowledge.”
(Park 1997: 9)

To assess the generation of reflective knowledge in our project, we should ask if we were able to close the gap between available social services and felt needs. We should also consider the issue of empowerment here. Did homeless participants in our project engage in a dialogue that then effected “principled actions aimed at social change?”

Jubilee Cafe’s Episcopal priest uses the tape to train volunteers who want to work in the Cafe. He believes his volunteers will be more sensitive and respectful as well as knowledgeable about the lives of Cafe guests. Service providers have also received new volunteers and donations (one for \$1000) after showing the tape. Discussions that follow have allowed the airing of many points of view, some of them negative or even hostile, thereby providing a forum in which such views can be aired and, one hopes, reconsidered. For example, in my presentation of the tape to the Kiwanis Club, one man asked, “If rents are too high for them in Lawrence, why don’t they just leave?” I engaged this man in a discussion of what would be required to relocate and why one might choose to stay in Lawrence in spite of the high rents. These examples support the possibility of a narrowing of the gap between what service providers believe about homelessness and how homeless people experience it.

Did the project facilitate community participation of homeless people? Do services and programs show in any way that they heard and understood what homeless people need? I note some small and mixed successes in the promotion and reception of programs for which homeless project participants expressed a need. Our questions, our cameras, and our presence for several months on the streets and in the social service agencies of Lawrence kept people’s attention focused on the issues of homelessness. Discussion, as evidenced by newspaper reports, took on new momentum. An old Salvation Army proposal to open a year-round

shelter was given new life and plans are being developed to achieve this goal. Public input was sought and the Coalition for Homeless Concerns participated in the forum and later submitted a set of written recommendations. To date, none of the modifications in current services has been addressed in Salvation Army reports, however, and the winter of 2000-2001 saw continuation of the cold-weather only policy. The proposal for a year-round shelter may indeed come to fruition in a new facility, but this will mean relocation from its current central location to one removed from the downtown business district.

The Community Drop-In Center proposal for a larger and more centrally located facility was awarded federal funding. Then the funding was rescinded by the committee that originally awarded it, and then reinstated when the County Commission, after numerous passionate pleas from homeless and formerly homeless people and their advocates, overrode the rescission. Eventually, the Drop-In facility reopened its doors across the street from an interdenominational meal site. The local newspaper ran an article about the location showing the need for more community work in the generation of reflective knowledge.

Not everyone was pleased with the idea of having the Drop-In Center move into the building on Kentucky. Dr. Lawrence Mayer, a dentist whose office is in the same building, objected to the idea, saying he feared some of his patients would not want to walk through a lobby or common hallway full of people who are homeless. Planning commissioners tried to address that concern by requiring the center to have a separate entrance and to be sealed off from the other common areas of the building... (*Lawrence Journal World*, November 18, 1999:5B).

As to the issue of empowerment among homeless participants, the project was initiated by homeless people who educated and directed video

ethnographers to produce a tape designed to insert homeless people into the community discourse on homelessness. Paul, Jerry, and Keith worked collaboratively with each of their teams to develop research questions, and they conducted some, but not all of the interviews. They actively contributed to all discussions of the data and fundamentally to our analyses, and they played central roles in post-production decision-making.

Did they take ownership of the project? At the first rough-cut showing, we made a list of all those whom participants wanted to receive the tape. To this list, others were added as Keith walked and biked tapes around Lawrence. In the beginning, two public showings were organized out of my office, one held in the Department of Anthropology which I moderated, and one held at the Lawrence Public Library where the director of the Coalition for Homeless Concerns moderated.

Since October of 1999, I’ve had no involvement in how the tapes are used, where they are shown, who will moderate discussions, and who will copy, and distribute them further. If I’m informed at all, it is only after the fact. I recently learned that someone had re-edited it, reducing it from 40 to 10 minutes. The tape surely does not belong to my students or to me, but it doesn’t belong to the homeless participants in the project either. It seems instead to belong to the Lawrence community.

Nor was empowerment of homeless team members without complication. As much as we wanted to work as equals, student team members controlled the cameras and the editing suite. On two occasions, conflict arose as a result of disagreements over editing. For example, one consultant felt a great deal of anger over his situation and wanted to include a clip that some on the team felt would inflame and “turn off” the audience. In the end, students supported the gentler approach and the consultant felt frustrated over his inability to change their minds. Twice in my presence, that frustration returned in public discussions when he took the

opportunity to diminish the project. Also, our desire to sample more widely among the population of social service beneficiaries was frustrated by one of our homeless participants who may have needed his team's personal and videographic focus. One student described these behaviors as an impediment to the project, but we might also interpret them as the consultant's attempt to balance the unequal distribution of power in other areas.

Loneliness, a sense of disempowerment, and identification of the project as an opportunity to be heard help explain the need to be centered in videography and discussions. It also contributed significantly to our understanding of what it can mean to be homeless. We experienced a strong concern for privacy, a right participants felt had been violated routinely as they navigated the social services bureaucracy. Ironically, while this experience undoubtedly affected our ability to explore homelessness, it also taught us more: some of our raw footage shows calculated non-responsiveness. Ultimately, this meant that those being taped quite properly controlled much of the decision-making about what could be recorded, leaving the team to select from what was being offered.

• *Relational knowledge* "is the understanding we have of others as human beings and partners in relationships. It is the experience of being familiar with someone—felt directly and emotively. It comes from shared moments of life.... To be in a relationship is to know someone; relationship is a kind of knowing in and of itself." (Park 1997:9)

Our project started out with interests in generating representational and reflective knowledge, that is, in educating comfortable Lawrence and in doing social justice work on behalf of a disenfranchised population. As the project developed, and we and homeless people got to know each other better, we learned that it is actually relational knowledge that constitutes the gap

between social service providers and homeless people. More importantly, we learned that relational knowledge describes what homeless people say they miss most in their community, and that included us. Thus while we can point to reasonably good results in the generation of representational knowledge, and rather mixed results in reflective knowledge, I believe the generation of relational knowledge is what our project did best and what will be remembered the longest from our experience.

Integral to the process at every level was face-to-face communication and interaction. Homeless people talked to each other about the issues of homelessness, to my students and me, and to social service providers. Through the tape, they continue to tell their stories in ways that lead advocates and interested others to share their ideas and concerns about the issues. We on the team learned immeasurably about our own community and about our obligations to each other within it. We made friends with homeless people and with social service providers. And we all got certain needs met through these interactions. Homeless team members were less lonely hanging out with students who were being trained to be attentive listeners and astute observers; they were empowered as our teachers; they took pleasure in being the focus of attention. Those homeless participants who initiated the project, took control of its many facets, taught my students and me, and mediated discussions of issues raised by the video in university classrooms and public forums. I believe they gained self-knowledge and discovered some of their own strengths in the process.

Student team members and I were also changed, for the better in my estimation, by working closely with homeless people in production of "Hat." I offer words written toward the end of the project by Joyce:

When the temperature fell to the teens later that month, I found myself wondering how my new friend was faring. It was an odd sensation to think of someone *you*

knew sleeping outside on such a blistering night. The homeless were no longer just a societal problem, the homeless now had a face.

I find myself being an advocate and a defender of the homeless. When people call them lazy, I talk of the ones I know who have jobs. When people call them crazy, I talk of the ones I've had stimulating conversations with.

As I head to my well-stocked kitchen for a snack, I now think of them worrying about where their next meal will come from. As I sleep in a climate-controlled, quiet and dark room every night, I now think of them sleeping in noisy gymnasiums or cramped cars. I will never look at my life or their lives the same way again.

Relational knowledge need not always translate into friendships of course, and the enormous needs and sometimes obnoxious adaptive strategies of homeless participants took their tolls. Sometimes these issues necessitated my giving additional support to homeless team members; sometimes I had to help student team members balance personal feelings and needs in practical ways against professional responsibilities. But even in these cases, or perhaps especially in them, we learned and understood each other better. The students' offers of a place to stay, a cup of coffee, or a meal were offers of friendship. These were reciprocated by offers to share feelings and experiences, provide introductions, and teach us what we comfortably "homed" team members could not otherwise know.

Conclusions

Functioning democracy requires active involvement of citizens in the public sphere. That participation occurs in a social matrix that we can call "community," defined by Park as "a network of people who share common interests and are connected to one

another through continual interaction." Participatory action anthropology can play a role in community-building by opening the door to disenfranchised people who can engage in solving the problems that affect them and their larger community. Production of representational and reflective knowledges are how we open the door. Development of relational knowledge is how we keep it open and so strengthen the communities in which we live and work.

While work at the local level, as our project demonstrated, can indeed move a community in positive ways, the generation of knowledge will need to be widespread if democracy is to effect change at state and national levels. Causes of homelessness identified in our project and by other studies include the high cost of housing, physical and mental disability, substance abuse, a minimum wage that falls below a living wage, domestic violence, unexpected health care expenses, divorce and separation, "aging out" of youth systems such as foster care, and release from incarceration. All are related to the primary cause of homelessness: poverty. And this problem will not go away until Americans are ready to confront the injustice of a system that rewards 5% of the population with over 20% of the wealth while leaving its poorest 20% to share less than 4%.

The population of homeless people about whom "Hat" was produced is one whose circumstances have kept them mostly silent and invisible, denigrated in and excluded from official discourses of homelessness. Lawrence, Kansas, like the rest of America's mainstream shoppers, will likely always maintain some schizophrenia in its generous sympathy and fearful loathing of the poor. Yet working together to produce the kinds of knowledge that contributed to the video was the real work of building community. This very simple process of connecting, of coming to know one another, of shaking hands and sharing coffee and conversation counters the hyper-individuated narcissism that drives us apart.

As the Schensuls pointed out in 1978, most scientific and professional

practice has served the interests of sociopolitically dominant groups. Material evidence suggests they have done quite well for themselves. To work as a Participatory Action Anthropologist on behalf of those less well-served by

duced by the twelve other members of the videographic team, and to the Carroll D. Clark Fund of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Kansas. The author can be reached at jwgc@kuhub.cc.ukans.edu.

“...our project taught us that the differences between those who sleep in their own warm beds at night and homeless people...are matters of degree rather than kind. The Participatory Action Anthropology that can shine a light on these shared experiences through the promotion of relational knowledge subverts both the status quo of class inequality as well as the ideologies that maintain it.”

the American social arrangement seems a necessary counterbalance to the status quo. Having said that, however, our project taught us that the differences between those who sleep in their own warm beds at night and homeless people, in feelings of loneliness, alienation, fear, and insecurity, are matters of degree rather than kind. The Participatory Action Anthropology that can shine a light on these shared experiences through the promotion of relational knowledge subverts both the status quo of class inequality as well as the ideologies that maintain it.

Jane Gibson is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Kansas. Her work in the U.S. and Central America explores human-ecosystem relations as these illuminate problems of, and suggest alternatives to environmental and human degradation. Much of this work, as in the paper presented here, has been undertaken in the field of applied visual anthropology. This paper updates a presentation to the March, 2000 meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology. That presentation and this paper owe a substantial debt to knowledge and insights pro-

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