

Anthropology News

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The mission of the AAA is to advance anthropology as the science that studies humankind in all its aspects, through archaeological, biological, ethnological and linguistic research; and to foster the use of anthropological knowledge in addressing human problems. *Anthropology News (AN)* advances this mission by providing members with news of Association business; discussions of issues of vital importance to the discipline; and information on publications, professional job opportunities, research funding availability, meetings and other items of importance to members. *AN* promotes the discipline of anthropology and the interests of anthropologists across all subfields.

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DIALOGUE

The Correspondence column is primarily for the use of AAA members for the purpose of addressing issues that relate to the discipline and practice of anthropology. *AN* reserves the right to select and edit letters. All letters must be clearly marked for *Anthropology News* Correspondence, **not to exceed 400 words and consisting of a signed original plus an electronic copy** whenever possible. Letters published reflect the views of the correspondents; their publication does not signify endorsement by the American Anthropological Association.

Establishing a Sociological Charter

Of course Malinowski saw it clearly some 80 years ago in "Myth in Primitive Psychology": myths of origin are created to charter contemporary rules and their enforcers. So it is important to understand religious fundamentalists, comprising a powerful base for conservatives in the US.

The religious fundamentalist movement is traced in part to "The Five Fundamentals for American Protestants," a non-denominational tract series sponsored by two Presbyterian elders and adopted in 1910 by the Presbyterian General Assembly. The fundamentals

"Intelligent design" moves creationism closer to the core of Christian nationhood. There would be no US Constitution without founding fathers, no Supreme Court without a chief justice, no executive government without a president, no America from sea to shining sea without manifest destiny. Schools teach that science is the search for causes for effects, history a series of causes and their effects. My Blackfoot friends don't fall into this paradigm, they don't anthropomorphize Almighty Power; they understand that, as they tell me, "Things happen when they happen."

DEBATING INTELLIGENT DESIGN

are: the miracles performed by Christ; the virgin birth; Christ's bodily resurrection; his sacrifice on the cross atoning for humanity's sins; and the inerrancy of the Bible, the authority for the need and promise of salvation.

The Creation Research Society was founded in 1963 by ten scientists. Voting members, who must hold a master's degree or its equivalent in science, sign a statement accepting that the "Bible is the written Word of God," Genesis provides the factual presentation of origins and historical truths and that "salvation can only come through accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior." We as anthropologists know that fear of eternal tortures and earnest quest to save one's soul are not ingrained in human nature, nor universal in human belief systems.

Among fundamentalist Protestants, authority is masked by the tenet that everyone can communicate directly with God, a tenet linked, historically and philosophically, to democracy. William Jennings Bryan advocated, in 1924, "Commit your case to the people. Forget, if need be, the highbrows both in the political and college world, and carry this cause to the people. They are the final and efficiently corrective power." What it comes down to is camouflaging mundane exercise of power through sanctifying authority, attributing it to divine decree. Challenging established authorities becomes heresy.

Anthropologists are tilting at windmills if we think we have the might to bring "intelligent design" down. But we who live in a world that happened have a moral imperative to protect our world, to empower our fellow-citizens with empirical data and validated interpretations supporting our goal of universally shared rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

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Theology, Teleology and Evolution

Teaching evolution in schools has never been an issue in Croatia, a predominately Roman Catholic country, nor in most of Europe. Upon coming to the US for graduate studies in physical anthropology from Croatia, I found myself very much involved in issues related to the teaching of evolution raised by various religious groups. Like most graduate students, I taught undergraduates. When asked about the conflict between religion and evolution, I naively responded that there is no real issue at all. The Roman Catholic church has long dealt with this issue, culminating in two key statements. First, in his August 12, 1950, encyclical letter, *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII recognized the separate domains of science and theology and argued that biological evolution can be studied by scientific methods by sci-

tists while the church is concerned with morality and the existence of the soul.

Since then, over 50 years of scientific research has resulted in extensive data on evolution from disciplines ranging from genetics, paleontology, paleoanthropology and evolutionary theory. In light of this new evidence, Pius' successor, the late Pope John Paul II, pursued the issue further in his address to the Pontifical Academy of Science on October 22, 1996. His statement, "Truth Cannot Contradict Truth," while acknowledging the issues addressed by Pope Pius XII, went even further and saw this accumulated scientific data as demonstrating that evolution is scientifically valid, having withstood over a century of scientific testing.

All religions' primary concern is moral, and moral issues cannot be tested in a scientific way. All religions' doctrines are based on acceptance of a central dogma of the existence of a supreme deity (or deities) that created the world and its biological inhabitants. Such doctrines require faith. From a philosophical viewpoint the very attempt to test these doctrines would be regarded as a lack of faith.

Science's domain, however, is achieved through the testing and retesting of hypotheses backed by available data—the objective way of testing premises.

Whether a hypothesis proves to be "true" or "false" in light of scientific experiment defines the resulting finding as science.

"Scientific" creationism, as well as its new doctrine of "intelligent design," starts from a very different point—the existence of a supreme being or force leading evolutionary processes towards a certain goal. This is a teleological view of evolution, reminiscent of natural theology and other 18th century romantic views of nature's diversity as showing God's creations. Such teleological arguments may be raised in philosophy classes, but do not belong in science curricula. Proponents of "scientific" creationism, "intelligent design" and other non-scientific views base their strategy on creating artificial conflict between religion and evolution. But not believing in evolution is like not believing in gravity—it will leave you lying flat-faced in the dirt, no matter what you believe in.

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Rebranding Scientific Creationism

In any effort to understand why intelligent design has recently accrued cultural capital, we must consider the fact that

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Correspondence

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"design," as an activity, a product and a service, and "designers" as individual agents of creative and technical prowess, are among some of the most celebrated things and people in contemporary Westernized life. As relatively unquestioned symbols of innovation, inspiration, and both technological and organizational "progress," design and designers have shaken off the shackles of technocratic failure that preceded them, and risen to become the organizers of the vast majority of daily American life (and perhaps even globalization—see Bruce Mau's claim to "design the world" at massivechange.com).

In the last decade, design has increasingly taken on celebrity status ("starchitects," fashion designers in Kmart, or the iPod, for example) while quietly growing ever more ubiquitous. At the same time, many design pundits say that really good design is the stuff that we don't notice—the safer car, the better cellphone, the more efficient corporate workflow, to name but a few areas where design has had a profound behind-the-scenes impact.

As a result of both fame and ubiquity, design has populated our most intimate spaces, and garnered the attention of the popular press, filling entire issues of *Newsweek* and the *New York Times Magazine*. A recent emblematic example of design's cultural rise to power might be the late 2005 show "Safe: Design Takes on Risk" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. This show, dedicated to the marriage of beauty and security, celebrates the work of "all forms of design, from manufactured products to information architecture," including butterfly-shaped razor wire, personal emergency shelters, paper coffee cup sleeves and homeland security software.

This is all to say that while "design" as a cultural phenomena has grown immensely in the past decade, garnering significant laudatory attention, it has also largely escaped critical analysis as an organizing, disciplining force in society. Which is why any analysis of the successes of intelligent design must consider the systems of symbolic capital operative in the larger public context, like consumer capitalism and neoliberal initiatives in economic development, here in the US and around the world. It is within this context that the "design" in intelligent design should be recognized for the cache it lends to ID proponents in their bid for the commonsensical.

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Who Are the Rioters in France?

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Paris is burning and the American media has primarily reported events through the prism of the American inner-city ghetto, a fertile site onto which anxieties about a militant and racialized underclass can be projected following Sept 11. Thus, the French suburbs have been misrepresented as an amalgam of what the *Boston Globe* in November called "criminal gangs, Islamist radicalism, de facto apartheid and crucibles of alienation." We are told by the *Globe* that the two young men whose accidental deaths were the catalyst for the riots as well as the "rampaging gangs" wrecking havoc in the suburban projects are "Muslim immigrants."

Yet, the "immigrants" are second and, in some cases, third generation French children of non-European immigrants of Antillean, North and Sub-Saharan African and Turkish ancestry who are French citizens. They are not, for the most part, observant Muslims. The riots are not a response to perceived attacks on Islam or a reflection of their cultural distance from mainstream French society.

COMMENTARY

To assert that the rioters are culturally alienated and difficult to integrate is to isolate cultural difference as a cause for social unrest and to downplay the more significant factors of economic marginalization, spatial segregation and anti-immigrant racism. It reproduces a stigmatizing French discourse on integration that puts the onus on immigrants to adapt and to become France without examining the obstacles they face. To focus on gangs and their attachment to street subcultures is to forget that the two boys risked hiding in a high voltage transformer rather than face arrest and the likely ordeal of police custody. The social drama unfolding throughout France is about policing tactics, court sanctions and the reality of inflating police records of "immigrant" youth convicted of petty infrac-

tions that threaten the already fragile promise of waged citizenship and political enfranchisement.

Juvenile Delinquency

It is no accident that the French interior minister's first reaction was to describe the two victims as "delinquent scum." Juvenile delinquency has been a resonant public policy issue in France for 15 years. In the 1990s short-term spikes in rates of youth crime centered public attention on what was depicted as a new type of delinquency associated with the children of non-European Muslim immigrants. Although most of the transgressions involved non-violent property offenses, a shift in juvenile law and the court followed: away from prevention and rehabilitation toward individual accountability, restitution and retribution.

In the context of heightened public fear of juvenile predators fueled by sensationalist French media coverage of the suburbs, governments on the left and the right

adopted a territorialized approach to urban crime in state-classified "bad" zones and instituted a zero tolerance policy in the prosecution of petty offenses by minors. Legal reforms were enacted, including fast track adjudication procedures, stiffer probation controls, higher penalties for public order offenses—loitering, begging, loud noise, gathering in public housing stairwells and insulting or threatening public officials—by minorities and more sentences mandating incarceration.

These policies demanded a greater police presence, increased pressure for arrests and implicitly sanctioned coercive tactics. This produced more confrontations in the projects, dramatically increased arrests for assaults on public authority, and overloaded dockets at the Paris juvenile court where foreign and French minors from underprivileged families of Antillean, North and West African ancestry constitut-

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The Week Paris Was Burning

By Elżbieta M Goździak (Georgetown U)

As the news of the burning and riots in France broke out in early November, a flurry of emails hit the Society for Urban, National and Transnational/Global Anthropology listserv, where some were wondering "Who are these rioters?" Many are children and grandchildren of non-European immigrants. They were born in France, have French citizenship and French passports, but the French still call them "immigrants."

As French citizens, they share the same rights and protections accorded all French citizens, but that's on paper. In reality, many are as alienated from their parents and their ethnic roots as they are from mainstream French society, which objects to "positive discrimination," or affirmative action, and does not want to recognize the diversity existing in France.

The French are not alone. "Immigrants" in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and elsewhere in Europe are equally disenfranchised. The different models of immigrant integration tested in Europe, including the by now discredited "guest worker" approach followed for years by Germany and Austria, and the newer path to blended Europe taken by Britain and France, have failed.

But why did they fail? The simple and not necessarily simplistic answer is because they followed a top-down approach, which called for national integration policies without empowering immigrants and the second generation to make decisions at the local level and wage the challenge of integration from the bottom-up. Only in 2003 did the French government encourage the formation of an umbrella Islamic organization that could represent French Muslims in a dialogue with the state. But then again, this just affords representation at the state level. Only anger and matches were left at the local level. ☐



Firefighters battle a car fire set during riots November 4, 2005, in Le Blanc Mesnil outside Paris, France. Photo by Pascal Le Segretain/Getty Images

Commentary Policy

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