

November 13, 2006

Dear Colleagues:

The Anthropology Department strongly supports our students and colleagues in the Black Student Initiative who aspire to ensure that diverse voices are represented prominently in the institution, classroom, and research. Members of the University community and city who have experienced mistreatment by the University deserve our thoughtful attention and a genuine commitment to address real inequities. Toward this end our department pledges to work to ensure that students, colleagues, and neighbors will find our classrooms and campus welcoming venues.

Anthropology has a long-term commitment to recognizing the importance of human diversity in the classroom and community. Many anthropologists understand that our discipline's broad perspective on culture and our attention to people's cultural, biological, and material lives provides a powerful and distinctive disciplinary insight into the experiences of marginalization and inequality. The discipline has spent well over a century examining cultural and social distinctions throughout the world and across time, and many anthropologists remain committed to using anthropological knowledge to improve peoples' lives. In our own department this is reflected in our teaching and scholarship that focus on social justice and community advocacy and use anthropological insight to address inequalities in our local community as well as international settings.

Our faculty and students have long worked alongside communities throughout the city and world. For example, IUPUI anthropology faculty have worked since 1999 with the Ransom Place Neighborhood Association to examine life along the color line in the city's near-Westside. Many students and city residents have conducted archaeological and historical research examining the impression of racism on the neighborhood our University now occupies. Susan Hyatt's community work involves a partnership with a neighborhood-based organization on the near Eastside, ONE (Organization for a New Eastside). In Summer 2007, Hyatt, in collaboration with Professor G. Roger Jarjoura of the Criminal Justice program in SPEA, will jointly teach a course in the Plainfield Correctional Facility that will bring together IUPUI students with incarcerated students to examine issues of social justice. In addition, Anthropology and Museum Studies faculty member Larry Zimmerman has worked with American Indian communities since the 1970's, taught and written extensively on the politics of indigenous histories, and has been a key contributor to IUPUI's growing course offerings in Native American studies. Finally, McNair Scholars directed by Anthropology faculty have examined racism in Indianapolis' Central State Asylum as well the impact of globalization on African-American steelworkers in Gary, Indiana.

The Anthropology Department offers a number of courses that deal with multiple aspects of human diversity over time and around the globe. Dr. Gina Sanchez Gibau, for example, offers classes in the African Diaspora, Ethnic Identity, and Women of Color in US as well as offering an Introduction to Cultural Anthropology course that is part of a Thematic Learning Community on Multiculturalism; Dr. Richard Ward offers courses in Human Variation, and the Anthropology of Human Nature. Susan Hyatt offers a course on Urban Anthropology, in which students examine poverty, inequality and racism in cities in the U.S. In addition, she also teaches a course on Fieldwork in Urban

Ethnography in which students work with community members, most of them from disadvantaged background, in collaborative research ventures. These courses can be combined to fulfill a minor in “Cultural Diversity.”

We are fully committed to building a faculty that provides more courses in areas such as racial and ethnic categorization, the relationship between biology and culture, the scholarship on diversity and multiculturalism, and comparative anthropological insight. We hope that through programs such as the Support for Recruiting Underrepresented Faculty (SRUF) we will be able to add faculty who will contribute to an increasingly diverse University, School, and Department.

The Anthropology Department is committed to serving all of our students, including students of color, with coursework, research experiences, and fieldwork that include diversity as a prominent focus. The Anthropology Department actively champions interdisciplinary partnerships with programs such as the African-American and African Diaspora Studies program and the emerging Native American Studies program. Our ethnographic and historical research in Indianapolis among African Americans and other Hoosiers of color can provide an especially rich contribution to such programs while scholars and students in those programs expand our own scholarship and teaching.

Most importantly, we hope to actively contribute to creating a campus climate that respects difference, a value that has always been at the heart of Anthropology. We will continue to offer students courses and research opportunities that may challenge and perhaps upset some of our preconceptions of ourselves and others. We join the students, faculty, and staff who have called on the University to embrace as its fundamental goal a campus where students, faculty and staff respect diversity, acknowledge the complex issues that surround difference, and understand that the difficult dialogue surrounding difference is an ongoing process.

Sincerely,
Department of Anthropology Faculty