

## PREFACE

In this book I examine how the Cold War shaped the development of American anthropology. I use archival documents, correspondence, oral histories, published sources, and over thirty thousand pages of FBI and other government documents released under the Freedom of Information Act to document how the repressive postwar McCarthy era shaped and dulled what might have been a significant and vital anthropological critique of race, class, and the inadequacies of global capitalism.

While the primary subjects of this book are anthropologists, the basic description of the methods used to repress social activism reaches beyond the academically pigeonholed field of anthropology and beyond the time frame under consideration. The congressmen and senators who badgered witnesses at loyalty hearings and the college and university administrators who scrutinized their faculty for signs of thought crimes or activist inclinations did not care about anthropology per se but rather about begirding, discrediting, and disarming agitating social activists. Much the same story could be (or has been) told about American social workers, artists, playwrights, writers, historians, sociologists, longshoremen, essayists, cartoonists, physicists, actors, labor activists, educators, and psychologists. Anthropology's paradigmatic commitment to equality and relativism did make some of its practitioners easily visible targets, but the ac-

counts of these attacks are relevant to all who are interested in the form and function of repression in stifling a needed movement for social justice.

It might seem that anthropology naturally attracts an inherently subversive element insofar as its notions of cultural relativism and enculturation critically undermine the principles and practices of nationalism or patriotism. But this is not the case. Many prominent anthropologists have supported conservative mainstream academic and governmental policies and programs, and some were comfortable being FBI informers. The repressive atmosphere of the post–World War II period redefined anthropologists’ notions of public anthropology and provided positive reinforcements for anthropologists willing to think and act in “acceptable” ways (see Nader 1997a; Price 2002d).

A number of American anthropologists were Communist and Socialist activists.<sup>1</sup> That the discipline of American anthropology has deep connections to Communist and Socialist organizations should not be surprising to anyone who knows much about anthropology, Socialism, or Communism—but we are now in an era where people increasingly know little about anthropology and Marxism. False notions that Communists or Socialists were antidemocratic, inherently un-American or unpatriotic, cloud our understanding of the past. But as Lester Rodney—a journalist who campaigned for baseball’s integration in the 1930s—recently noted, most Communist Party members were law-abiding patriots. Rodney questions the ability of present analysts to comprehend the motivations and beliefs of mid-century Communists without the smug historical baggage of the post–Cold War era by asking:

are there any historians out there to say straight out that American Communists, despite their sins, were patriots who advocated something more humane than corporate capitalism for this land of ours and fought hard and effectively for social justice in the meanwhile?

Yes, they were starry-eyed over the emergence of the world’s first nation to proclaim itself socialist and place people above profits, and yes, they were lamentably slow to accept the reality that Stalinism had butchered the socialist dream. But when “liberal anticommunists” were doing diddly about the shame of raw racial discrimination, it was Communists who exposed the Scottsboro rape frameup, who put their bodies where their mouths were, going South to work for black rights, who with the black newspapers launched the campaign that ended the apartheid ban in our national pastime, who did the indispensable on-the-ground organizing in the creation of industrial unionism. (Rodney 2001:24)

Most American Communists and Socialists working as activists for social justice during the 1940s and 1950s *were* patriots advocating for something

more humane than what capitalism had provided. In this book I examine the extent to which anthropologist activists *regardless* of their party affiliations became enemies of the state *because* they effectively challenged the economic and social order.

Writing about the Communist Party is still difficult. After publishing her fine book, *Many Are the Crimes*, Cold War historian Ellen Schrecker was pummeled from both the left and right for her analysis of political repression during the McCarthy period. She was criticized by those on the right (e.g., Weisberg 1999) who complained that she hadn't grasped that the Soviets' influence on the American Communist Party had discredited all that its members were striving to accomplish, while some on the left felt her stance on party links to the Soviet Union slighted party members and their efforts.

McCarthyism limited anthropologists' free academic inquiry by targeting, stigmatizing, and penalizing those working for racial, gender, ethnic, or economic equality. As red-baiting witch-hunts spread, a generation of social scientists learned to not overtly think under the rubrics of Marxist critique, while many in the discipline learned to ignore anthropology's natural, and ethically required, activist roles. In part, this book chronicles how McCarthyism helped mid-century American anthropology lose its way from a path charted by activist anthropologists who strove to establish a more threatening anthropology than survives today.

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A few brief words on the book's organization are in order here. After opening with a brief overview of themes vital to an understanding of the Cold War and the political economy of mid-century American anthropology, in each of the chapters that follow I discuss some aspect of the public and private interactions between American anthropologists, McCarthyism, and J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, and I follow both chronological and thematic elements of this dark history. The first chapters use FBI documents and archival materials to examine how Melville Jacobs, Richard Morgan, and Morris Swadesh came to be attacked by localized loyalty boards and how the American Anthropological Association failed to offer meaningful assistance to these members whose rights to academic freedom were under attack.

In the following chapters I examine the congressional hearings subpoenaing Gene Weltfish, Bernhard Stern, Jack Harris, and Mary Shepardson, as well as the FBI background materials relating to these cases. While each of these episodes have key differences, those under attack shared common bonds of isolation because all were left to fend for themselves with no support from professional organizations or peers. The American Anthropological Association's abandonment of these scholars helped support a prevailing

environment of isolation and fear that spread through academic and activist communities.

In chapter 9 I examine the methods used by the FBI throughout the Cold War to investigate anthropologists and others they deemed subversive. The FBI records of several anthropologists establish the methods and mindset of the FBI as it undertook extensive and expensive investigations of those they believed to be radical activists working for racial equality. The FBI investigations of anthropologists with apparent ties to Socialist or Communist organizations or parties are examined, with special consideration given to the numerous instances where such individuals were identified but never called before local or national loyalty or security boards.

The FBI's intrusive surveillance of liberal or moderate anthropologists such as Oscar Lewis, Margaret Mead, Philleo Nash, Ashley Montagu, Vilhjalmar Stefansson, Cora Du Bois and others establishes the extent to which America's secret police meddled in the academic and private lives of intellectuals who promoted racial equality and internationalist perspectives. I conclude the book with a brief consideration of but a few instances from the 1960s that indicate that these FBI suppressive tactics did not end in the 1950s.

My decision to conclude the book with a consideration of the early 1960s is largely one of logistical convenience and does not imply a significant break from what came next.<sup>2</sup> In fact, what we know about the FBI's intrusion in the lives of American activists for issues of racial and social justice indicates that the organization has continued to persecute, harass, frame-up, and attempt to murder<sup>3</sup> numerous loyal Americans devoted to resisting the inherent inequalities of American life. We can only expect an increase in these violations of law and civil liberties as the American presidency and Congress press further onward with their ill-defined war on terrorism—thus linking the activists of our age to those from this hidden past. To defend ourselves in the present we must build oases of knowledgeable hope in what Sigmund Diamond (1992: 285) called the “desert of organized forgetting,” and learn from these past well-funded and well-organized attacks on activists fighting for a better world.

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