



# The American Ethnic Geographer

A Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers

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## A.E.G.S.G. Distinguished Scholar Award: Michael P. Conzen

*Susan Hardwick  
Southwest Texas State University*

It has become the custom of the North American Ethnic Geography Specialty Group to invite one of its most esteemed and distinguished members to speak at the annual meetings of the Association of American Geographers. Last March in Honolulu, Michael P. Conzen was invited to present his ideas on the meaning of the term "ethnic space" in North America, particularly as it relates to the debate on the character and recognition of ethnic homelands. His remarks were

particularly significant since the ongoing homeland debate has informed numerous discussions in ethnic geography classrooms, among academic geographers, and in many key publications in recent years.

Conzen launched his presentation by defining homeland as a term having both an individual and collective meaning and being most clearly defined as it pertains to groups that are indigenous to North America. He then continued his

well-grounded and well-written critique of the homeland concept by reminding the large audience that the United States has been involved in the development and creation of an "American nation" since its founding, thereby rendering the concept of homeland less and less important. According to Conzen's theorem: "present or remnant homelands in American can be found only in zones that once lay beyond the political do-

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### Comments from the A.E.G.S.G. Chair

Greetings. I trust you all had a productive Summer and your Fall is equally productive.

Once again, the members of the American Ethnic Geography Specialty Group have worked extra hard for the upcoming Pittsburgh AAG annual meeting. I recently spoke to Kevin Klug at the AAG, and he said, "American ethnic is very visible at the 2000 meeting." We are involved in numerous sessions (as sponsors and co-sponsor), co-sponsoring special symposiums, such as the one for Allen Noble, our annual distinguished

scholar award, and posters. Thank you all for your dedication and devotion to this specialty group.

A quick reminder: If you have items that need to be addressed at our business meeting in Pittsburgh please let me know. Also, don't forget our student paper competition. Please encourage your students to participate.

Again, thank you. I look forward to seeing you all in Pittsburgh.

*Doug Heffington*

continued insidemain of the United States at the time of their maximum florescence." His three dimensions and nine criteria for defining a homeland follow:

1) Identity

- Ethnogenesis – a sense of peoplehood
- Indigenization – time to develop in place over multiple generations
- Exclusivity – promoted through geographical isolation

2) Territoriality

- Control of land and resources
- Dedicated political institutions
- Coherently manageable spatial units

3) Loyalty

- Defense of the homeland against "alien" invasion
- Compulsion to live within the homeland
- Production and veneration of "nationalistic" landmarks

Following Conzen's eloquent discussion of each of these axioms for defining a homeland, he presented his views on "ethnocultural space." Using the American national homeland as a jumping off point for his ideas in this section of the talk, Conzen elaborated upon the concept of homelands as expressed in areal units occupied by particular groups in North America such as American Indians, Hispanos, Mormons, Cajuns, and other European groups.

Conzen's lively and thought-provoking presentation also included an analysis of (1) "culture region" as discreet units of regional space "that may more plausibly be seen as defining culture regions and subregions within the national homeland." Citing examples such as the Upper South and Texas, Conzen built upon Zelinsky earlier work to distinguish a "culture region" from an "ethnic homeland;" (2) ethnic substrates and enclaves defined as "a zone within which a particular ethno-cultural group is consistently above a certain minimum proportion of the total population, thereby constituting a recurrent presence, even if a minority, from locality

to locality within the zone, which may influence the broad community values, regional identity, and landscape character of the zone as a whole;" and (3) "ethno-cultural islands and archipelagos," which he defined as the most venerable concept of space relating to cultural groups in North America.

A summary of Michael Conzen's major points at the stimulating Honolulu session follows: (1) Homeland, as cases of geographical culture regions with special character (of long ancestry, once exclusively occupied, and now or once politically independent) result only from self-consciously separate "peoples" whose sense of peoplehood and control of territory sustains the fact of, or ambitions for, political and cultural independence; (2) In an American context, the biggest and most successful homeland is the American national homeland developed over the last 200 years; (3) Prior American Indian homelands were extinguished, relocated, and massively reduced by the United States government by treaty and force, but many survived as official entities in the form of reservations, and might well be termed "government homelands; (4) Historic regional homelands originated through settlement and ethnogenesis only in locations beyond American sovereignty and that once hegemony from coast to coast was established, no new sub-national homelands emerged and old ones atrophied; and (5) With the development of national American society, regional populations (both folk and modern) and immigrant groups have occupied parts of the country in varied proportions and degrees of intermixture, leading to a spatial definition of a number of composite American culture regions, complete with "hearths," diffusion paths, recombinative staging areas, and heartland.

Conzen concluded by enthusiastically encouraging the ongoing debate of the homeland concept's deeper meanings and applications in ethnic geography and expanding upon several important avenues for further research on this topic, especially as it is being applied to studies of North American ethnic geography.

## Hawaii AAG Plenary Sessions

*Doug Heffington*

*Chair, American Ethnic Geography Specialty Group*

The AAG was very good to our specialty group financially at the Hawaii AAG by way of awarding us enrichment funds to co-sponsor two plenary sessions. One session entitled, "The Hawaiian Home Lands: A Temporal and Spatial Synthesis," was presented by Darrell Yagodich and Jobie Yamaguchi of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. This session was well attended and it presented the audience information on

Native Hawaiian land right issues. The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 set aside 203,500 acres of land in the Federal Territory that later became the State of Hawaii. It established homesteading for the native people of Hawaii - Native Hawaiians, there is a 50% blood quantum requirement (compromise position).

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands was established by the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) with federal legislation enacted in 1921. The 1959 Admissions Act required that the HHCA be adopted as a provision of the Hawaii State constitution. Federal Government passed on its fiduciary responsibility for managing the program to the State. As a compact with the United States, the State accepted the Trust responsibility for the program. Therefore, DHHL (the State) shares a trustee/beneficiary relationship with its clients. DHHL is an executive level agency, one of the smallest in the State. The federal government through Congress maintains legislative oversight and control of the HHCA. Some unique qualities of the Hawaiian Home Lands are: Fee simple title is held by the State of Hawaii, Hawaiian home lands cannot be sold, lands can be general leased (general leased lands can be mortgaged), department issues 99-year homestead leases for residential, agricultural, and pastoral purposes, only native Hawaiians and qualified successors can hold an interest in a homestead lease.

If you desire additional information about these complex Hawaiian land issues, please feel free to write Darrell or Jobie at Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, P O Box 1879, Honolulu HI 96805.

The second plenary session that the AAG funded was entitled, "Preserving Sacred Geography: Saving Native Sacred Sites in the 21st Century" by Professor Andrew Gulliford, Director of the Public History Program at Middle Tennessee State University. This session covered the complex and volatile issue of Native Sacred sites and their role in our present day society. Dr. Gulliford's talk specifically addressed Hawaiian issues involving Native Peoples and their sacred spaces and places. He has recently completed a manuscript on the topic and should be due out in book form in the near future. If you would like to contact Andy for additional information on his specialty feel free to do so at Public History Program, P O Box 0023, MTSU, Murfreesboro TN 37132.

## The North American Urban Kaleidoscope: Ethnic Geography and Asylum Law: the Salvadoran Case

Ines M. Miyares

Hunter College

With the growing diversity of the immigrant community in the US, understanding contemporary ethnic geography requires an examination of the legal status under which a particular group enters. Salvadorans, for example, find themselves victims of the internal inconsistencies of US refugee policy. They fled a tyrannical yet right-wing government supported by the US. Many were not themselves direct victims of persecution, but the proxy civil war supported by the US created their refugee situation. Nearly half of the Salvadorans in the US now hold a refugee-like, quasi-documented status invented and regularly redefined by the US government that keeps them in a legal limbo.

Salvadorans awaiting asylum hearings do not fit neatly into any theorized category of international migrant, and thus studying their ethnic geography must be understood in light of the legal quagmire in which they find themselves. Despite the definition of refugee given in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention of Refugees and the Refugee Act of 1980,<sup>1</sup> Salvadorans do not hold *refugee status* in the US. Thus they do

not qualify for the benefits and protections extended to refugees. Their lack of documentation prevents them from being *immigrants*. The restrictions imposed by temporary status programs limit interactions with El Salvador, preventing Salvadorans from being true *transmigrants*.

Migrant identity for the Salvadoran community has instead been defined by a series of federal programs that gave temporary status as they applied for asylum. These include Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Deferred Enforced Deportation (DED), the *American Baptist Churches vs. Thornburgh* settlement (760 F. Supp. 796, N.D. Cal. 1991) or *ABC*, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA), the most recent. These temporary programs have served as substitutes for granting political asylum. Initially, the policies were created with the intention of allowing Salvadorans to work as they await the resolution of their asylum cases. Instead of reaching a completion, both individual cases and temporary programs have been extended, creating a state of structural limbo.

The temporary status programs essentially provide individuals permission (*permiso*) to work and to reside in the US on a temporary basis until a permanent decision regarding their

<sup>1</sup> A person outside of his or her country of origin and unable to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion

asylum and residency is reached, either individually or collectively. Many Salvadorans have collectively interpreted *ABC* to mean simply permission to work legally in the US. They do not understand that they have applied for political asylum. Temporary programs give applicants permission to work, or *permiso*, until their case has been decided.

The temporary programs also entail several conditions. Applicants must keep INS informed of changes of address and telephone number. Through these temporary programs, INS knows where individuals live and work. Temporary program participants are neither allowed to leave the country nor to bring family here. This has had dire emotional consequences for those who have missed children, funerals, marriages, births, and other important events. Life at home continues, yet they could not be further away. Compliance with these conditions compounds the experience of limbo as applicants await resolution. The choice to not comply with the conditions of the program results in a loss of temporary status, as well as the rights provided by the program, including permission to work, a social security number, and the hope of becoming a permanent resident.

In the day-to-day, this legal limbo paralyzes Salvadorans' existence, inhibiting their ability to make basic household decisions. These decisions might include whether to make repairs and improvements in their apartments; whether to bring children to the US illegally; whether to risk returning to El Salvador for a funeral; whether to buy a home; how much to spend on rent; whether to study English; or whether to find a job that pays well now but has no opportunity for advancement. Salvadorans feel that they have been promised decisions and cheated out of them each year. They feel disillusioned, frustrated, angry, depressed, and stressed by insecurity; and the future remains uncertain.

Salvadorans are hyper-mobile, changing residences frequently to reduce rent or to adjust to changes in the size of the

household. Inadequate and unsafe housing conditions are commonly tolerated due to fear of landlord responses to complaints, which might include raising the rent if repairs are made, eviction, or reporting to INS if any household member is undocumented.

Household members who are commonly missing are children born in El Salvador. Parents cannot apply for family reunification visas for their children until they are awarded residency. Those who left during the civil war typically charged their parents with caring for their children until they could be sent for. The provisions of *ABC* prohibit parents from returning to El Salvador to visit their children, and few choose to risk entrusting their children to coyotes to transport them across a minimum of three national borders. Returning to El Salvador puts at risk continued eligibility for asylum. However, grandparents do not understand why their adult children send gifts and remittances but have not visited in a decade, and children, being raised by grandparents, only know their parents through gifts, remittances and telephone calls. Salvadorans must choose between the possibility of political asylum status and attending weddings, funerals, their children's birthdays, and other major family events in their home communities.

Despite the frustrations caused by the legal limbo that keeps Salvadorans trapped in a state of transition, this is a community that lives in creative hope. Against all odds, they are determined to find a way to remain in the U.S. While many would like to progress into the future, building families, homes, and careers, they feel unable to do so because of their tenuous legal status in the United States. Temporary legal programs influence the way they live their lives and the decisions that they make, and thus are the framework within which they are developing their ethnic geography here in the U.S.

## News from Canada Information Resources at CERIS

*Ted Richmond*

*Administrative Coordinator/Business Officer, CERIS*

Scholars interested in immigration and migration issues, and ethnographic demographics in Canada, should take note of the information resources available at CERIS.

CERIS is a collaborative project governed by a Management Board that encompasses Ryerson Polytechnic University, University of Toronto, York University, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, and the United Way of Greater

Toronto. The Centre was established in March of 1996 to study the settlement of immigrants into the economic, social, political and cultural life of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). With centres in Montreal, Edmonton, and Vancouver, CERIS is a major component of Canada's participation in the international Metropolis Project.

The CERIS Resource Centre (246 Bloor St. W., 5th floor, Toronto Ontario) is now open from Monday to Friday during

regular office hours. We have produced a simple guide to searching and using our unique collection, which includes a large number of unpublished community needs assessments related to settlement and equity issues, as well as documents produced by CERIS researchers and the Metropolis project affiliates. Publications can be reviewed on site or photocopied at cost. A guide to the complete collection is available online on our website at [HTTP://CERIS.METROPOLIS.NET](http://CERIS.METROPOLIS.NET). Follow the links Research and Policy / Research Projects / List of Holdings in the Resource Centre.

The number of documents available online in the Virtual Library (VL) section of our WebSite is growing slowly but steadily. Along with posting research papers from our funded researchers and relevant policy documents from our government and community partners, we are also beginning a process of scanning and digitalizing immigration-related research papers of historic interest for posting to the VL. The first document from this initiative has already been posted: "A Preliminary History Of Settlement Work In Ontario, 1900 - Present", Prepared by: Nuzhat Amin for the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Citizenship Development Branch (October, 1987). Check it out -- just click on the VL button on the CERIS site!

## Recent Releases

- Bourne, Larry S. (1998). *Migration, Immigration and Social Sustainability: the recent Toronto experience in comparative context*, Toronto: CERIS
- Li, Wei (1999). Building Ethnoburbia: the emergence and manifestation of the Chinese *Ethnoburb* in Los Angeles' San Gabriel Valley. *Journal of Asian American Studies* 2(1): 1-28.
- Li, Wei (1998). Los Angeles' Chinese *Ethnoburb*: from ethnic service center to global economy outpost. *Urban Geography* 19(6):502-517.
- Li, Wei (1998). Ethnoburb versus Chinatown: two types of urban ethnic communities in Los Angeles. *Cybergeo* No. 10, 1-12.
- Magocsi, P. Robert, Ed. (1998). *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Smith, Jeffrey S. (1998). Spanish-American Village Anatomy. *Geographical Review* 88(3): 440-443.
- Smith, Jeffrey S. (1999). Anglo Intrusions on the Old Sangre de Cristo Land Grant. *The Professional Geographer* 51(2): 170-183.
- Teixeira, Carlos and Gilles Lavigne (1998). *Os Portugeses no Canada - uma bibliografia, 1953-1996 (The Portugese in Canada - a bibliography, 1953-1996)*. Lisboa: Direcção Geral dos Assuntos Consulares e Comunidades Portugesas.

To help us expand our Resource Centre and related website holdings, donations are needed. Exchanges with research journals (in return for our newsletter and Working Papers series) are of great interest. We are also interested in receiving donations of scholarly papers and historical and contemporary policy documents related to immigration, migration and changing ethnoracial demographics in urban centres. Where practical, receipt of computer file copies as well as paper copies, along with permission to post to our website, would be much appreciated. Note: this is an excellent opportunity for younger, less-published scholars specializing in immigration and refugee issues to make their name and their research better known!

Another major effort in sharing information resources, soon to be publically released, is the CERIS MetaDatabase or database of immigration databases in the Greater Toronto Area.

If you want further information about accessing these materials contact the CERIS office at 416-946-3110. If you are interested in donating or posting materials, please contact Ted Richmond, CERIS Administrative Coordinator at [t.richmond@utoronto.ca](mailto:t.richmond@utoronto.ca)

## Upcoming Publication

### **Sacred Objects & Sacred Places: preserving tribal traditions**

by Andrew Gulliford (to be published in Spring 2000 by the University Press of Colorado)

*Sacred Objects & Sacred Places* combines Native oral histories, photographs, drawings and case studies to present current issues of cultural preservation deeply felt by American Indians, Alaska natives and Native Hawaiians. These issues involve respect for the dead and repatriation of human remains; care and curation of sacred and tribal objects, and preservation and protection of sacred places. Federal laws are reviewed in the context of tribal preservation programs, and sacred places are discussed without revealing exact locations.

In five chapters and with commentaries by native peoples, non-native curators, and archeologists, the book discusses the repatriation of human remains, the curation and exhibition of sacred masks and medicine bundles, and key cultural compromises for preservation successes in protecting sacred places on private, state, and federal lands. Case studies include detailed analyses of the Wyoming Medicine Wheel, Devils Tower National Monument, Mount Graham in Arizona, Mount Shasta in California, the Sweet Grass Hills in Montana, Taos Blue Lake in New Mexico and other Indian sacred sites throughout the American West.

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**The next issue (Vol. 8, No. 1) of *The American Ethnic Geographer* will be published in February 2000. The deadline for submission of items for the newsletter is January 31, 2000.**

Send submissions to: *Carlos Teixeira, Editor, The American Ethnic Geographer*, Scarborough Campus, University of Toronto, Department of Geography, 1265 Military Trail, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada, M1C 1A4. E-mail: [cteixeira@idirect.com](mailto:cteixeira@idirect.com)

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