



UPDATE on our Collective Letter Against the Eradication of Anthropology in Poland

written by Judith Beyer
February, 2019



This is a follow-up post to our [collective letter](#) which we drafted last month in support of our colleagues in Poland who are fighting the eradication of anthropology as an independent discipline.

In the meantime, our letter has been shared numerous times worldwide, for



example by the [Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand](#) (ASAA/NZ). An email has been sent by the Chair of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK & Commonwealth (ASA), Professor Nigel Rapport, encouraging all members of ASA to sign and various collectives and groups have shared our initial post via their social media networks. Thank you all for your support!

The American Anthropological Association (AAA), who had issued its own letter of support already at the end of last year, has signed our letter as have hundreds of others, sometimes with detailed comments. Browsing through the list, we were struck by the outpour of solidarity. Here are a couple of comments to give those who are new to the issue an idea of what is at stake:



AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

REPLY

FEBRUARY 6, 2019 AT 11:35 PM (EDIT)

The American Anthropological Association, an organization with 10,000+ members worldwide, fully supports this petition.



LYNELLYN D. LONG, PH.D.

REPLY

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 4:39 PM (EDIT)

It would be a great loss for all, and especially for work in Central and Eastern Europe generally, if this decision prevails.



DR. MAC MARSHALL, PROFESSOR EMERITUS, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA [REPLY](#)

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 5:02 PM (EDIT)

I oppose banning Anthropology.



PROF. EMMA TARLO [REPLY](#)

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 6:22 PM (EDIT)

We hope you will recognise the value of Polish anthropology.



MUHAMMAD SULAMAN IJAZ, PHD CANDIDATE AT DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY QUAID I AZAM UNIVERSITY, PAKISTAN [REPLY](#)

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 6:22 PM (EDIT)

Survival of Anthropology is the survival of Humanity



PROF PAT CAPLAN [REPLY](#)

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 8:11 PM (EDIT)

In the hope of a change of policy and in solidarity – a word which I believe has a special resonance in Poland.- with Polish colleagues.



FAYE V. HARRISON

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 9:43 PM (EDIT)

REPLY

Faye V. Harrison

Professor of Anthropology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

Past President of International Union of Anthropological & Ethnological Sciences

Anthropology & ethnology constitute a distinct discipline with a significant record of knowledge that warrants its full-fledged recognition and representation in the research & curricular domains of academic life.



DR RODERICK EWINS, UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 11:43 PM (EDIT)

REPLY

It passes understanding that a country's government should attempt to eliminate the study of humankind, which is the function of Anthropology. It poses the question of just who or what the government imagines it is governing, or more importantly, representing, if not those very humans it does not deem it worth studying.

I join my colleagues worldwide in condemning any such move, and asking the government of Poland to immediately reverse this really very silly decision.



MICHAEL W. YOUNG, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

JANUARY 25, 2019 AT 2:43 AM (EDIT)

REPLY

Malinowski would turn in his grave!



SUBHADRA MITRA CHANNA

JANUARY 25, 2019 AT 6:19 AM (EDIT)

REPLY

As the Senior Vice-President of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) I strongly support the petition against the abolition of anthropology as a subject in Poland



**DR HAB. DOMINIKA FERENS, UNIVERSITY OF WROCŁAW,
POLAND**

JANUARY 25, 2019 AT 9:53 PM (EDIT)

REPLY

Polish cultural anthropology and religious studies have such radically different histories, methodologies, and theoretical underpinnings that forcing scholars in these disciplines to function in the same departments and evaluate each others' work can only lead to conflicts and misunderstandings.



CHRISTINE VERBRUGGEN

JANUARY 26, 2019 AT 9:29 AM (EDIT)

REPLY

With full support for a Polish anthropological tradition to remain highly visible and distinct, and with respect for the authors of this letter to be able to voice the matter of factness of this political mistake, in the face of blunt ignorance.

Christine Verbruggen

KULeuven, Social and Cultural Anthropology



AHMET KERIM GÜLTEKIN

JANUARY 26, 2019 AT 11:08 AM (EDIT)

REPLY

Dr Ahmet Kerim Gültekin (Ethnologist)

I was dismissed from my position in Munzur University (Dersim/Tunceli – Turkey) Sociology Department via a decree law in January 2017 by Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) because of signing a declaration of Academics for Peace, against AKP's militarist oppressions.

I fully support Polish colleagues and their struggle for anthropological tradition.



PAUL STOLLER

JANUARY 26, 2019 AT 6:05 PM (EDIT)

REPLY

In Solidarity with my Polish colleagues. Let's stand up to mindlessness



PROFESSOR JUDITH OKELY, AFFILIATE, OXFORD SCHOOL OF ANTHROPOLOGY, EMERITUS PROFESSOR HULL UNIVERSITY

JANUARY 26, 2019 AT 11:58 PM (EDIT)

REPLY

Poland should celebrate and develop NOT destroy the legacy of Europe's if not one of THE world's greatest anthropologist. He encouraged people to go and live for many months with people to understand and explain their differences thus helping us learn from and relate to people from the entire range of humanity. How ironic that after 9/11 the CIA tried to recruit anthropologists because they wanted to understand terrorism. I was taught by a pupil of Malinowski at Cambridge, Edmund Leach, and I owe everything to that wonderful year long course we postgrads did on the entire work of Malinowski. It facilitated my academic fieldwork from then on. I have also helped teach Polish students anthropology when visiting professor in Denmark and lectured around Poland. I was so impressed with the different universities and students steeped in anthropology. Poland we need your expertises in the discipline developed by your distinguished ancestor. Don't destroy your cultural legacy and future



ALEX MOLTZAU

JANUARY 28, 2019 AT 9:40 AM (EDIT)

REPLY

I am a student at the University of Oslo studying Anthropology with a minor in Computer Science. A similar process is happening here. I support you and anthropology in Poland. Wish you all the best of luck!



VINTILA MIHAILESCU

JANUARY 31, 2019 AT 7:39 PM (EDIT)

REPLY

It's unbelievable – but more and more frequent with raising nationalist-populism in Europe. It seems that we have to unite too...

Vintila Mihailescu

Professor of Anthropology

National School of Political Studies and Administration

Bucharest, Romania



PROF.SR.SHARON MACDONALD

FEBRUARY 1, 2019 AT 10:41 AM (EDIT)

REPLY

Social and cultural anthropology are vital disciplines for understanding the nature of experience in our contemporary world. For the country that is home to some of the most globally important anthropological heritage to cut the discipline is an error on an epic scale, surely also for those who claim to have the country's best interests at heart or who might hope to elevate the country's international standing.



RICHARD RATHBONE, EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF AFRICA, SOAS, LONDON [REPLY](#)

FEBRUARY 1, 2019 AT 4:53 PM (EDIT)

I cannot believe that a nation which has played such a major part in the exploration of what it is that makes us human in an intriguing variety of ways can abolish a discipline that lies at the cutting edge of the quest for mutual understanding and tolerance.



PROF. DR. CHRISTOPH ANTWEILER, UNIVERSITY OF BONN, GERMANY [REPLY](#)

FEBRUARY 5, 2019 AT 1:03 PM (EDIT)

I express my solidarity!
Polish anthropology is important for world anthropology.



ROBERT LAYTON, PROFESSOR EMERITUS AND FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY [REPLY](#)

FEBRUARY 5, 2019 AT 4:59 PM (EDIT)

An extraordinary decision from the government of the country that gave us Bronislaw Malinowski, one of the most influential founders of modern anthropology. May I respectfully request that Polish government ministers inform themselves more fully of anthropology's broad scope and its huge potential for improving the quality of human social life?

Where do we go from here? We have already mailed out the first list of signatures (550 of them) on January 31, 2019.

We have now agreed to send out a new regular mail to Minister Gowin every time we add 500 new signatures to our list in order to keep the pressure up.



So please keep on sharing our post and make sure you alert people to the [accompanying post by Mateusz Laszczkowski](#) for background information on the situation in Poland.

If you haven't done so already, please sign here by adding your name to the comment section at the end of the letter.

Thanks, Allies!