Homophobias

LUST AND LOATHING ACROSS TIME AND SPACE

EDITED BY DAVID A. B. MURRAY

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Can There Be an Anthropology of Homophobia?

Don Kulick

THE END OF 2004 was marked by a horrific tragedy. An undersea earthquake off the coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra set into motion a massive tidal wave, a tsunami, that smashed into coastal areas across the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. Over 160,000 people, most of them local inhabitants, but many of them tourists, are known to have perished. In the midst of this devastating human loss, the Westboro Baptist Church in the American state of Kansas posted this notice on its home page, www.godhatesfags.com:[1]

> . . . Do you realize that among the dead and missing are 20,000 Swedes and over 3,000 Americans? . . . We sincerely hope and pray that all 20,000 Swedes are dead, their bodies bloated on the ground or in mass graves or floating at sea feeding sharks and fishes or in the bellies of thousands of crocodiles washed ashore by tsunamis. These filthy, faggot Swedes have a satanic, draconian law criminalizing Gospel preaching, under which they prosecuted, convicted and sentenced Pastor Åke Green to jail—thereby incurring God's irreversible wrath [Sweden's law prohibiting hate speech extends to speech that denigrates or incites violence against homosexuals. In 2004, pastor Åke Green, who in his sermons used language not unlike

> that found in this Internet posting, was convicted of hate speech against homosexuals and sentenced to a month in prison[2]].
>
> . . . America . . . is awash in diseased fag feces & semen, and is an apostate land of the sodomite damned.
>
> . . . Let us pray that God will send a massive Tsunami to totally devastate the North American continent with 1000-foot walls of water doing 500 mph—even as islands in southern Asia have recently been laid waste, with but a small remnant surviving. God Hates Fag America!
>
> . . . Thank God for the tsunamis & we hope for 20,000 dead Swedes!!!

Meanwhile, in another place and time, Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe opened the 1995 Zimbabwe International Book Fair with these words:

> I find it extremely outrageous and repugnant to my human conscience that such immoral and repulsive organizations, like those of homosexuals who offend both against the law of nature and the morals of religious beliefs espoused by our society, should have any advocates in our midst and even elsewhere in the world.
>
> If we accept homosexuality as a right, as is being argued by the association of sodomists and sexual perverts, what moral fibre shall our society ever have to deny organized drug addicts, or even those given to bestiality, the rights they may claim and allege they possess under the rubrics of individual freedom and human rights? (Engelke 1999:299)

And meanwhile, in another place and time, the following brief notice appeared on Friday, November 19, 2004, unobtrusively at the bottom of page six in the *Oakland Tribune*, a local newspaper from the city whose main claim to fame is as the referent of Gertrude Stein's aphorism "There is no there there":

> *Philadelphia*
> *11-year-old boy charged with rape*
>
> An 11-year-old boy sexually assaulted another boy in a middle-school stairway after chasing the victim from a bathroom, authorities said. A school officiate said they would try to determine where employees were at the time of the attack Tuesday meaning. The suspect was charged as a juvenile with involuntary deviate sexual intercourse.

This last example might not, at first glance, seem to have much in common with the other two. The report consists of three one-sentence paragraphs reporting on a sexual assault. It is written in dry, telegraphic Associated Press prose that is unremarkable—save for one malignant word occurring right at the end. Deviate.

Grammatically, *deviate*, like the word *involuntary* that precedes it, is an adjective, qualifying the type of "sexual intercourse" that occurred. "Involuntary" clearly refers to the will of the victim and signifies that the intercourse was unwanted. But what is the meaning here of "deviate"? Was the intercourse "deviate" because it was an assault, and to assault someone is to deviate from a statistical norm? In that case, one might wonder why rapes, say, or armed robberies, or murders—never committed by the overwhelming majority of people—are generally not qualified with "deviate" in press reports. Could it be that the word *deviate* refers to the fact that both persons involved were male, as in the familiar derogatory collocation "sexual deviate"?

The occurrence of the word *deviate* here signals a denigrating stance toward same-sex sexuality so banal (and gratuitous) that it might easily pass unnoticed. It is a far cry from an American church's ecstasy over the supposed deaths of "filthy, faggot Swedes" or an African despot's insistence that homosexuals have no human rights. In the *Oakland Tribune*, the word *deviate* is subtle. It functions more as a diacritic than an assertion, gently reframing the modality of the report from a straightforward journalistic account of a sexual assault to a distasteful commentary less on the assault itself than on the idea that the object of the assault should be another male.

What links all these three examples, then, even though they occur at different times and in different places (and in different registers), is a denigration of same-sex sexuality. This kind of denigration is a phenomenon often referred to by the word *homophobia*. Homophobia is a Western concept, coined in the early 1970s by George Weinberg, an American psychologist, to describe what he defined as "a disease . . . an attitude held by many nonhomosexuals and perhaps by the majority of homosexuals in countries where there is discrimination against homosexuals"(1972:n.p.). But even though it was the West that named it, the denigration of persons associated with same-sex sexuality, and hatred and violence against them, is hardly limited to North America and Europe. A chapter in this book recounts how, a few years ago in central Java, a social gathering of mostly gay men and transvestites was stormed by 150 men who assaulted those present with knives, machetes, and clubs. Another discusses how in Jamaica on any given week, at least three of the top twenty musical hits promote violence against queers with lyrics like "Bang, bang into the gay man's head / Homeboys will not tolerate their nastiness / They must be killed." Another reports on a brutal murder of a gay man and his lover in 2004 in Lucknow, India, where subsequent media accounts were much more interested in detailing the supposed sexual proclivities of the victims than in urging the apprehension of the killers. When it comes to homophobia, it seems, it's a small world after all.

As a cultural phenomenon of seemingly global scope, homophobia ought to be an obvious target for anthropological attention. And indeed, individual anthropologists have done important work showing how antigay prejudice affects how lesbian and gay anthropologists position themselves both in the discipline of anthropology and as fieldworkers in different societies (Blackwood 1995a; Bolton 1995; Leap and Lewin 1996; Newton 1993; 2000; Seizer 1995). This anthology differs from that approach in that it is less interested in how anthropologists experience homophobia than in how local people in particular ethnographic contexts are affected by it. In this sense, the book continues and extends the work of those ethnographers who have documented how violence against people associated with nonnormative sexuality is an integral part of heterosexist social, cultural, economic, and political systems that reward some people and punish others (Bunzl 2004; Kulick 1998; Lancaster 1992; Manalansan 2003; D. Murray 2002; Prieur 1998; Valentine 2003). The question this book asks is, in effect: Can there be an anthropology of homophobia? And the answers it gives to that question are developed in chapters that focus on the particular manifestations of hatred and violence faced by people who engage in same-sex sexuality. The different chapters each discuss "homophobia," but they do so without making the elementary error of taking the concept as an unproblematic, transcultural given. On the contrary, each chapter engages with "homophobia" in ways that interrogate and modify our understanding of it. This means that the book is about speech and acts that are generally glossed as "homophobic" even as the individual chapters simultaneously decompose and reframe that concept.

What Is Homophobia?

Homophobia, everyone seems to agree, is a problematic word. A few years ago, the historian Daniel Wickberg (2000) published a concise and helpful history of the concept. Wickberg points out that homophobia is nowadays regularly featured in Western liberal discourse as one of the "big three" obstacles to social justice—the other two being racism and sexism. But in addition to being a much more recent concept than racism (which appeared circa 1935) and sexism (circa 1965), homophobia differs from them in two important ways. The first difference is a semantic one and concerns the fact that homophobia specifies the direction of prejudice in a way the other two do not: while the targets of racism and sexism are overwhelmingly people of color and women, respectively, there is nothing in the concepts themselves that prevents whites and men from claiming victimhood from race or gender prejudice. They are, in this sense, equal-opportunity concepts. Reverse-homophobia, on the other hand, cannot exist.

A second, more significant difference between homophobia, racism, and sexism is that homophobia appears to locate the source of prejudice against homosexuals not in social structures but in the individual psyche. The stress on individual reactions to homosexuality links the concept, in ways suggested but not discussed by Wickberg, to a much older psychiatric concept by the name of "homosexual panic." But in contrast to how both homophobia and homosexual panic are generally thought about today, homosexual panic in its original formulation did not refer to a fear of homosexuals. Instead, it referred to cases where men who had been in intensively same-sex environments became aware of homosexual desires that they felt unable to control and unable to act on. The original formulation of the disorder was based on a diagnosis of a small number of soldiers and sailors in a U.S. government mental hospital after World War I (Kempf 1920). These men were not violent—they were, on the contrary, passive. The disorder was characterized by periods of introspective brooding, self-punishment, suicidal assaults, withdrawal, and helplessness. So homosexual panic was generally understood not as a temporary, violent episode but, rather as an ongoing illness that comprised severe bouts of depression. Patients suffering from it were catatonic, not violent.

During the course of the 1900s the original understanding of this condition shifted, and it came to be applied even to men who reacted violently in situations where homosexual desire was made explicit. In the psychiatric literature, there is no consensus that the concept of homosexual panic should or can be used to explain sudden violent outbursts like these. But in the popular mind, homosexual panic has come to be perceived as a surface manifestation of homophobia, a concept that in only three decades arguably has been naturalized as a set of understandable psychological structures that everyone has (even homosexuals) but that reasonable people resist and try to come to terms with.

This pathologizing framework has been criticized by many people, perhaps most trenchantly by the literary scholar Eve Sedgwick (1990), who has noted that the very existence of such a concept rests on an assumption that hatred of queers is a private and atypical phenomenon. But think about it, she says. To what extent would anyone accept race-phobia as an accountability-reducing illness for a German skinhead who bludgeoned a Turk to death? Or gender-phobia for a woman who shot a man who made an unwanted advance to her? (Think for a moment of how many bodies would be swept out of bars and clubs every morning.) On the contrary, the fact that a concept like "homophobia" exists at all indicates that far from being an individual pathology, hatred of homosexuals is actually more public and more typical than hatred of any other disadvantaged group.

For these reasons, every chapter in this book takes some issue with the term *homophobia*. One of the strongest positions is taken by Lawrence Cohen. He suggests that "homophobia as such may not be what is at stake in accounting for specific institutions and practices that punish persons recognizable under the globalizing gaze of LGBT/queer." Cohen's chapter on India discusses a situation in which "the policing of sex between men through arrests, blackmail, sex on demand, and rape is ubiquitous in many Indian towns and cities, but no organized public apparatus of homophobic punishment, interdiction, and shame exists in India to the extent it has in the United States of the last half century." In this context, crimes and arrests involving homosexuality have different resonances than they do in places like the United States—resonances that Cohen analyzes as "feudal" rather than homophobic. On the other hand, there is some indication that a shift may be underway. The final case discussed in Cohen's chapter—a violent murder of a gay man and his lover in August 2004—was reported in the press in a partly novel way; one which may indicate that same-sex desire is being thought about—and punished—in ways that until now have not been imaginable.

Tom Boellstorff's chapter is specifically about this kind of shift. It discusses recent attacks by Muslim groups on gatherings of homosexuals and transvestites in Indonesia. Indonesia, like India, lacks what Cohen calls an "organized public apparatus of homophobic punishment"; indeed, Boellstorff explains that "historically, violence against non-normative men in Indonesia has been rare to a degree unimaginable in many Euro-American societies." This, however, has changed since the fall of the Soeharto regime in 1998, and attacks and threats explicitly directed at homosexuals and transvestites have become increasingly common and increasingly violent. The anthropological question is: why? What has occurred to make this new genre of violence seem conceivable and logical?

Boellstorff's discussion of this novel genre of violence hinges on a distinction he draws between "heterosexism" and "homophobia." This is a distinction that suggests an important general point. Recall that one of most recurring criticisms of the word *homophobia* is that it focuses attention on the psychological rather than the structural dimensions of hatred of and violence toward queers. It is arguably possible to direct a similar kind of criticism at the terms with which *homophobia* is most frequently contrasted on this count: *sexism* and *racism*, both of which direct us to social structures. A problem with terms like *sexism* and *racism* (or the alternative often proposed for *homophobia*, *heterosexism*) is that while they do indeed lead us to pay attention to social structure, they background an exploration of the emotional involvement that people come to have in those structures. To be sure, different kinds of -isms reproduce inequality and foster prejudice and discrimination against minorities, women, and queers. But what is their emotional resonance? How do -isms come to be invested with emotional significance that moves people to think and act in particular ways?

This is where Boellstorff's distinction between heterosexism and homophobia is useful. Heterosexism is the belief that heterosexuality is the only natural or moral sexuality. Homophobia, on the other hand is the fear and hatred of nonnormative sexualities and genders. In Boellstorff's terms, it is possible for a society to be heterosexist without being homophobic. Indonesia, for example, is a place where heterosexuality has been the doxic mode of being without the presumption of its naturalness and superiority leading to or depending on violence against people who engage in same-sex sexuality.[3]

Boellstorff's main point with his distinction is to suggest that at certain moments or periods heterosexist values can move from being unreflected-upon doxa to being visible and therefore, as Bourdieu taught us, open to challenge and contestation. At this point, a hitherto unreflexive relationship to heterosexuality may crystallize into a panicked allegiance to it. This is the moment at which people can come to invest emotionally in heterosexist structures in ways that transform heterosexism into homophobia.

One spark that seems to light this fuse is the rise of gay and lesbian movements. Several of the chapters in this volume note that the establishment of such organizations in various countries has corresponded with increasingly overt hatred toward gay men and lesbians. To note this, however, is not the same as saying that sexual rights activism is to blame for increased violence against queers. It is to make the more interesting observation that hatred and violence against people associated with same-sex sexuality is a historical and political process that is empirically investigable and understandable in terms of both local political struggles and wider-scale processes of change. Anthropological study of these processes is a necessary complement to more recent psychoanalytically or linguistically grounded accounts that suggest that the expression of distaste for or hatred of homosexuals is a resource people draw on to secure a sense of themselves as heterosexual (Butler 1993; Cameron 1997).

The meaning and power of people's senses of themselves as heterosexual leads directly to another theme present in virtually every chapter in this book, namely, the link between same-sex sexuality and the nation-state. In case after case, the nation emerges rhetorically through an engagement with and rejection of homosexuality. As David Murray's chapter reveals, Barbadian public discourse frequently compares the morality of Barbados to that of the United States, which is held to be in a "moral morass" because of its "pro-homosexual stance." Suzanne LaFont notes that the Grammy winner Beenie Man's hit song "Damn" includes the lyrics "I'm dreaming of a new Jamaica, come to execute all the gays." Lawrence Cohen relates that the murder of gay men in Lucknow provided a newspaper columnist with an opportunity to dilate about how India is being corrupted by "a nexus between employees of international aid agencies and the gay underworld." The perception by some that the post-Soeharto Indonesian nation has become embattled electrifies the figure of the effeminate male in novel ways, resignifying him as a kind of metonym for the fragile state of the nation and justifying violent attacks on him by men who feel that he materializes their shame that their nation is no longer strong and virile. In each of these instances, homosexuals are figured as the despised contrast in opposition to whom the nation can exist and thrive. And in each case, the crucial anthropological question is the processes through which particular forms of sexuality become more than acts or identities. How do particular configurations of sexuality emerge as salient and emotionally engaging symbols of the nation?

A related question, not addressed in this book but in dire need of more ethnographic research, is the way in which a supposed tolerance of homosexuality is increasingly being invoked by both conservative, racist political parties and spokespersons *and* by liberals and progressives in the global north as a means of demonizing Muslims. The campaign in 2002 of the extravagantly gay Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn was a harbinger of this kind of discourse, which reached one horrific nadir in the U.S. soldiers' torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib. Throughout his campaign, Fortuyn stressed the difference between the permissive and modern Netherlands and the conservative and backward countries from which immigrants to the Netherlands originated. His own homosexuality, he argued, both gave him insight into oppression and highlighted the progressiveness of the Dutch state. "In what country could an electoral leader of such a large movement as mine be openly homosexual?" Fortuyn asked the newspaper *Volkskrant* in 2002. "How wonderful that that's possible. That's something that one can be proud of. And I'd like to keep it that way, thank you very much" (Poorthuis and Wansink 2002). Fortuyn specifically targeted Muslims, dubbing Islam a "hostile religion" and "backward culture," writing a book titled *Against the Islamisation of Our Culture* (Fortuyn 1997), advocating the adoption of legislation that prohibits more Muslims from entering the country, and purposely provoking conservative Muslims, "because each time they responded with some diatribe about unnatural behavior and Western decadence, his supposed progressiveness only gained" (Asselberghs and Lesage 2003). And gain he did—before he was assassinated in May 2005, only six days before the national elections, it was widely speculated that Fortuyn might end up being the next prime minister of the country. His eponymous party Lijst Pim Fortuyn went on to win an unprecedented debut of twenty-six seats (of 150) in Parliament (van der Veer 2006).

Fortuyn's strategy of portraying Muslims as the dark repressive homophobic shadow threatening to eclipse the bright freedoms of a sexually progressive West is a consummate example of what the queer scholar Jasbir Puar (2007) has recently termed "homonationalism." Homonationalism is the form that homosexual identities and discourses about homosexuality have been developing in the global north during the past thirty years. It is a "brand of homosexuality [that] operates as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce those sexual subjects" (2007:2). In other words, homonationalism is an understanding and enactment of homosexual acts, identities, and relationships that incorporates them as not only compatible with but even exemplary of neoliberal democratic ethics and citizenship. The problem, of course, is that even while this incorporation widens the scope of citizenship, it also does less happy kinds of work: it secures particular racial and class privileges for only a minority of homosexual subjects (many or most of whom, as Puar points out, are in fact not embraced by this discursive and juridical magnanimity of the neoliberal Western state) and it simultaneously produces whole populations of sexual and racial others whose rhetorical function is to provide a backdrop against which countries like the Netherlands or the United States can appear as progressive, democratic, desirable, and humanitarian. Through these kinds of processes, homophobia at "home" can be downplayed and disavowed because it is projected onto other spaces and other bodies, which emerge as both uncivilized and threatening. The complicated interplay between homonationalism, imperialism, racism, misogyny, and homophobia, in Puar's analysis, is key to understanding how the torture in the Abu Ghraib prison was framed, enacted, and responded to. The power of Puar's analysis in this context is her insistence that any critical engagement with homophobia will always necessarily be marked by squalid and destructive histories of race, gender, class, and Orientalism. Those histories inescapably shape anything we have to say about the topic. And for that reason, they have to be acknowledged and incorporated into any analysis of homophobia that we might wish to pursue.

Anthropology and Homophobia

In 1992, in an anthology called *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price*, the anthropologist Walter Williams contributed a chapter titled "Benefits for Nonhomophobic Societies: An Anthropological Perspective." Williams's anthropological perspective was a bracing spoonful of Margaret Mead. Surveying the globe, he noted that "the majority of other cultures that have been studied by anthropologists condone at least some form of same-sex eroticism as socially acceptable behavior" (257). He then described the various ways in which acceptance of homosexuality enriches society. Drawing on his own research among Native American groups, Williams claimed that social acceptance of homosexuality results in better religion, better families, better relationships to children, better friendships, and a better society generally, because, as he put it: "The suppression of sexual diversity *inevitably* results in social turmoil" (272; emphasis in original).

My invocation of Margaret Mead when describing Williams's text is not meant facetiously. Personally, I think that we could do much worse than to follow her snappy, "Listen, cookie . . ." advice on how we might more humanely organize society. However, the time is surely past when we can hope to move or influence anyone out of intolerance and prejudice simply by reaching into our anthropological top hat and pulling out examples of traditional societies that do things differently than "we" do. That Boasian argument at the best of times has always been a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it did show us that our way was not the only way of doing things. On the other hand, precisely because the societies from which the examples were drawn were considered to be primitive, they could always be dismissed as precisely that—backward, irrelevant, uncivilized, ripe for and even desirous of colonial domination and exploitation, and proof that our way of doing things was in fact more advanced than theirs.

If we are going to enlist anthropology in the struggle against hatred and violence against queers, then we are going to have to go beyond Boas and Margaret Mead, even as we reaffirm their fundamental insight that distaste at the thought of same-sex sexuality or hatred of people who engage in it are cultural phenomena that can only be comprehended through careful ethnographic fieldwork. The chapters in this book approach prejudice against people associated with nonnormative sexuality as a research problem in its own right, and they focus on the way that local forms of those prejudices are structured and disseminated. The goal is partly to understand how distaste, hatred, and violence are locally configured. But because the texts in this book are examples of critical ethnography, all authors also share a commitment to combating the phenomena they describe.

The problem is that the link between understanding a phenomenon and changing it is never straightforward. Constance Sullivan-Blum, for example, discusses how the resistance and vitriol that evangelical Protestants express toward homosexuality is understandable once it is realized that they have made homosexuality an icon of modernity, which is to say of all those social processes that challenge the epistemological underpinnings of a particular Christian doctrine. If, as Sullivan-Blum stresses, "for evangelical mainline Protestants the stakes over same-sex marriage could not be higher," then it will do little good for anthropologists to hope that Protestants might change their minds and become more reasonable if we share with them a sensitive cultural analysis of why they behave the way they do. In this and other cases discussed in this book, the key to change lies not in anthropologists coming to the rescue but rather on an emphasis that homophobic attitudes and practices are not completely hegemonic or unchallenged. Murray observes that many Barbadians are more tolerant of homosexuality than mainstream media discourses would lead people to believe. And Sullivan-Blum emphasizes that although they get more airtime and have more political influence and power, evangelical mainline Protestants are continually being challenged by other Protestants who argue, from a Christian perspective, that LGBT people should be accepted and welcomed by the church.

Hatred of people who are associated with same-sex sexuality is not a happy topic, and one of the reasons why this is the first anthology to discuss it is that anthropologists are still generally trained to expect to like the people with whom we work. The reasons for this are partly practical: few people would willingly choose to live for a year doing fieldwork among people they hate—or, rather, crucially, among people who hate them. But the problem is also epistemological: anthropology is rooted in a humanist legacy that extends back to Boas's and Malinowski's project of de-exoticizing primitive people. This sense of anthropology as a kind of defender of the powerless was reinvigorated most recently by the Writing Culture moment in the discipline, when the epistemological project itself was attacked from within as colonialist and self-serving. Arguably, the doubt that this criticism sowed within anthropology weakened its critical ability to engage with pernicious social forms. It is striking, for example, that until very recently anthropology has had relatively little to say about phenomena like the rise of the New Right in Europe, or of the rise of fundamentalist movements in the postmodern world; it is also noteworthy that the kind of hatred documented in this book has largely eluded substantive anthropological examination.

But at the risk of sounding a bit like Margaret Mead myself, we need an anthropology of hate. Anthropologists need to ethnographically extend the work being done by cultural studies scholars like Sara Ahmed, who in a recent book discusses the social structure of hate and explores "how hate works as an affective economy" and how it "circulates or moves between bodies and signs" (2004:60). Painful as this kind of ethnography may be to actually carry out, it has to be done if anthropology is going to have anything of real relevance to say in a world that seems increasingly to be structured by hate and fear. To accomplish this anthropology, we need to move beyond Walter Williams's well-meaning invocation of Boasian cultural uplift, and we need to engage, purposefully and actively, with the processes and forces that promote hate. We also need close analyses of demographic distribution of hate, where it is located, how it acts politically. This is why historically engaged analyses are important—we need to grasp the history of homophobic values, how they have come to emerge, spread, and signify. Moments or periods of transition are also crucial. When Cohen suggests that a shift in the portrayal and meaning of violence against people who engage in same-sex activity may be underway, when Boellstorff pinpoints such a shift and links it to changing ways through which the gendered self and the nation articulate, and when Murray discusses how globalization impacts on local economies in ways that allow corrupt politicians to portray male homosexuals as an internal "Other," we understand how homophobia becomes intelligible and salient, and how it comes to move people.

It is crucial to understand the language through which hate gets articulated. Hence the importance of interview studies like Sullivan-Blum's, in which the purveyors of hatred are allowed to talk and explain themselves. In addition, we also need an understanding of how homophobia circulates not just about queers but also among queers. This topic is one of the main subjects of Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages*, in which she discusses at length how "some homosexual subjects are complicit with heterosexual national formations rather than inherently or automatically excluded from or opposed to them" (2007:4). What the chapters in this volume contribute to that discussion are mundane but crucial ethnographic examples. So when a white gay man, using the Tagalog term that means "man with a female heart," dismisses Filipino forms of same-sex sexuality to the anthropologist Manalansan with a tart "That *bakla* thing—it is so homophobic"; or when a lesbian in Athens kicks two men out of her bar because they were kissing and is subsequently accused of homophobia, what exactly does "homophobia" mean? Can it possibly mean the same thing in those two different cases, given the racial, gendered, and classed positions of the different people who invoke the term? Who *can* invoke the term in the first place, and who is discouraged or prevented from doing so? With what right? To what effect? Finally and crucially, we need to engage in work that suggests ways of combating hatred and violence against queers. LaFont's warning that the language of human rights might not always be the most efficacious way to do this is both a solid anthropological caution about imposing Western values on non-Western cultures and an example of acute activist sensibility.

With all these studies in mind, we can reiterate the question asked by this book, "Can there be an anthropology of homophobia?," and we can answer it affirmatively. Indeed, on the strength of the chapters collected here, one could argue that there *should* be an anthropology of homophobia, an anthropology that documents hatred and violence against people associated with same-sex sexuality, that contextualizes it, dissects it, and seeks ways of combating it, even as it continually reopens the issue of what homophobia is, how it appears, what positions, subjectivities, and powers it anchors or challenges, how it circulates, signifies, moves, and works.

Notes

1 Accessed on January 3, 2005. The Westboro Baptist Church has about sixty members, most of whom are relatives of Fred Phelps, the man who founded the church. The church appears in the mass media much more frequently than its tiny size would seem to warrant because of the remarkable viciousness of its hateful messages and the spectacular ways in which it broadcasts them. For example, church members frequently picket the funerals of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan because they insist that their deaths are God's punishment for America's tolerance of homosexuality. In November 2007, Phelps and two of his daughters were ordered by a U.S. district court to pay $11 million in compensation to a father who sued the church for having picketed the funeral of his son, an American soldier who had been killed in Iraq. During the funeral, members of the Westboro Baptist church stood in view of the mourners, holding signs that said "God Hates You" and "Thank God for Dead Soldiers" (*New York Times* October 26, 2007; November 1, 2007).

2 This conviction was later overturned by the Swedish Supreme Court, whose decision can be read at http://www.domstol.se/Domstolar/hogstadomstolen/Avgoranden/2005/Dom—pa—engelska—B—1050–05.pdf.

3 Boellstorff also suggests that it is possible to have homophobia without heterosexism, and he offers Latin America as an example. It is difficult to imagine how Boellstorff can think that Latin America is somehow not heterosexist—even by the terms of his own definition of the concept. My own experience working in Brazil (Kulick 1998; Kulick and Klein 2003), and with the writings of anthropologists like Lancaster (1992), Melhuus and Stølen (1996), S. O. Murray (1995), Prieur (1998), and Weismantel (2001) leads me to strongly disagree with Boellstorff's conclusion and to wonder whether homophobia without heterosexism could ever actually exist in fact.