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Looking Back on Fieldwork, Collaborations, and Applied Anthropology: An Interview with Linda M. Whiteford

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Linda M. Whiteford is Professor of Anthropology at the University of South Florida. During her long tenure there, she has served as Chair of the Department of Anthropology, and held numerous administrative positions, most recently as Vice Provost for Program Development and Review. While serving as Associate Vice President for Strategic Initiatives in the office of the Provost, she facilitated the creation of the School of Global Sustainability and the development of the Office of Community Engagement and Public Scholarship. As Associate Vice President for Global Strategies in the office of the President, she initiated the USF World Program and helped establish the USF Global Partners Program. She is the recipient of USF's Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award (1994), President's Award for Excellence in Research and Teaching (2003), Women in Leadership and Philanthropy Research Award (2007), and Sustainability Mentor Award (2012).

She received her Masters and PhD in anthropology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and a Masters of Public Health from the University of Texas. Throughout her career, Linda Whiteford has been actively involved with applied anthropology, from helping to develop interdisciplinary training programs to serving in various capacities with the Society for Applied Anthropology, including as SfAA President from 2003-2005. Her research (conducted throughout Latin America and, most recently, in New Zealand) and writing, shaped by her long-term commitment to collaborative and interdisciplinary work, has focused on issues of gender and social justice in the areas of maternal and child health, reproductive health, global health policy, water-borne diseases, local and global responses to disasters, and humanitarian ethics. Linda Whiteford has consulted for many international agencies such as WHO, PAHO, the World Bank, and USAID, and has received funding from the National Science Foundation

This interview was conducted in Seattle, Washington by Barbara Rylko-Bauer on March 31, 2011. It was edited for accuracy and continuity by John van Willigen and Barbara Rylko-Bauer; added material is presented in brackets.

RYLKO-BAUER: What I [would like to] do today, is to talk about four aspects of your career and work in applied anthropology. The first is research that you've done that you feel has made a significant contribution to the discipline. Second, training programs that you've been involved with. Third, your involvement in the SfAA and especially your tenure as SfAA president and finally, your most recent administrative positions within the Office of the Provost at the University of South Florida. Linda, could you [start with] a bit about your background, your training, some key influences—people or events that have helped to shape your career.

WHITEFORD: Thank you. I look forward to this opportunity to talk to you. I'd like to start by saying how really indebted I am to the Society for Applied Anthropology, which was the first professional meeting I went to. I found it then, as I find it still today, a very welcoming society. People who are interested in a diverse and wide-range of topics and who really live up to the name. And I think the original intent of the founders [was for it] to be an interdisciplinary and applied organization. So, I am very much indebted to the society and grateful to the people who attend, many of whom have become really deep and enduring friends of mine. And I look forward to the meetings for going to sessions like I did this morning that were provocative and evocative and also for seeing my friends. So this is an opportunity for me to give back a little bit to the Society.

RYLKO-BAUER: That's great.

WHITEFORD: So what were influences on me? Without a doubt one of my early and most significant influences was living in South America when my parents took the family to Popayán, Colombia. We lived there for a number of years and that experience of living outside the country as a young child with my family I think shaped my interest in human variability and different cultures. I was fortunate enough that my father, who was an anthropologist and my mother, who has spent her life in the care and feeding of anthropologists, picked us up and hauled us around all over the place. As I've grown older, I've come to admire and respect that they did that much more. My dad, as you know, was Andrew (Bud) Whiteford, anthropologist and raconteur. He died several years ago, but his stories and his body of scholarly work and his students are still very much in evidence. My mom is still alive, Marion Whiteford, and she is still feeding and caring for anthropologists. So, since you asked about my family, I have two brothers who are also anthropologists. Michael Whiteford, who [until his retirement was] Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Iowa State, and Scott Whiteford, who was until [a couple] years ago Director of Latin American Studies in the Latin American Center at the University of Arizona. I have a younger sister who watched all of us get our PhDs and work hard and make no money and she said, "I'm not going to do that." [*Both laugh.*]



Linda Whiteford with local women, Otavalo, Ecuador.

RYLKO-BAUER: She was the smart one.

WHITEFORD: So she got an MA in Urban Planning, which didn't pay her any better than what we're doing. We were really lucky because we spent a lot of time together outside of the United States in Mexico, Colombia, and Spain, and I think for all of us it shaped our curiosity about different lifestyles, different people. And not just the curiosity, but our interest in explaining and understanding those forces that shape human decision-making, whether individual decision-making or the cultural, historical, or economic backgrounds that shape cultures. So, I think we were a very fortunate family to have those experiences and very fortunate to find careers that allowed us to continue to do the things we love which is studying human behavior, writing about it, asking more questions, and having an opportunity to come to meetings like this where we get to share that information or learn more information. I've been an incredibly lucky person.

RYLKO-BAUER: You've been an applied anthropologist from the start, at a time when that was not something that was pushed in a lot of departments.

WHITEFORD: I think for me it was a natural inclination. I'm interested in theory. I'm interested in rigorous methodology, but I like to see the results used. I think that, in part, comes from the kinds of questions that I ask. Early on, I did research along the US/Mexico border and looked at access to healthcare and I think that my interest in healthcare has actually directed me toward application. I truly believe that we find the things that interest us and that's what, if we're lucky, we get to do. My own background, other than my family, is that I have a MA and a PhD in anthropology. Then I was offered a scholarship to attend the University of Texas School of Public Health and get a masters in public health (MPH). That very fortuitous opportunity allowed me to take theory from anthropology and graft it on to some of the methods of public health that were particularly useful to me. Using epidemiology along with ethnography has provided me, I think, with a useful tool kit and a conceptual kit. And so, for me that has been very helpful and it has also moved me into looking for ways to do theoretically rigorous, methodologically strong research that has implications not only for the body of literature and theory but for practical applications. Healthcare and, in my case, international health policy, is a good place for anthropologists to make a difference.

RYLKO-BAUER: You mentioned getting your MPH, and that, I'm assuming, was a reason why you got involved in creating a combined anthropology PhD program and MPH program at USF?

WHITEFORD: Yes, that's true. The University of South Florida, where I have been for eons. When I first came there, one of the ways they recruited me was that they said they were going to develop the first, at that time, College of Public Health in the state, and they did. And the USF College of Public Health is a very strong and vibrant organization and it was a natural home for me across from anthropology so I was then, and still am today, an affiliated professor of public health. It grew out of friendship [between] people in the College of Public Health, who were anthropologists, and people in my own department in anthropology—we wanted to bridge the two. Create a possible way for anthropologists to get a degree in public health and the same for people in public health to access anthropology. So we created a dual degree program that's been very, very successful. And it's been terrific for the anthropologists because like me, they get the specialized information. Almost all of my students are dual degree—they have their PhD in anthropology, but they'll get a masters in public health, [either in] global health, epidemiology, or I've had quite a few students who have gone into some of the laboratory areas that we don't have in anthropology.

RYLKO-BAUER: These are sub-specialties of public health?

WHITEFORD: Right. They are tracks or departments. One of my students just finished his PhD and part of what he did for his research was in Costa Rica. He looked at issues related to water and sanitation in a small rural community divided by ethnicity and immigration issues [concerning] people coming from Nicaragua and people from Costa Rica. And then he tested water samples and fecal samples, looking at the microbial loads by ethnicity. So that's a fascinating piece of work. His name is Jason Lind and it's a great dissertation, but he couldn't have done that just with ethnography. He was able to do the chemical analysis himself and I always love the idea of an anthropologist going around asking for fecal samples. *[Both laugh.]*

You know, how do you bring them home in your suitcase and things like that. But because he was trained at the School of Public Health, he was able to do the analysis in the field and not bring the samples home. So for us it's been a really rich exchange. I don't think that we've had as many PhDs in public health accessing anthropology and that's because of barriers that we put up in our department. So we make it hard for them to

join us unless they take a bunch of anthropology courses. Whereas in public health, up until very recently, it was only a graduate degree and there were no undergraduate requirements to fulfill. We benefited greatly from that dual degree training program.

RYLKO-BAUER: Uh-hm.

WHITEFORD: I'm also very proud of [another program], because it happened while I was in the department and I think I had some small role in facilitating it. We have the Monte Verde field methods school that we do every year and while I started it, Nancy Romero-Daza and David Himmelgreen (two anthropologists in our department) have been the key players in keeping it running. We run it with public health and anthropology. It is a health-based community-based field school and I think our students again have benefited greatly from that experience.

RYLKO-BAUER: I can only imagine because it's really giving them on the ground [experience].

WHITEFORD: And David and Nancy deserve tremendous credit for it because they've built their own research into that field school so it's an on-going set of projects that they are particularly interested in, but the students get experience. David is a nutritional anthropologist and Nancy is particularly interested in HIV-AIDS. So both of those are critical issues in this part of Costa Rica which is a tourist area. You have HIV-AIDS and then the concomitant problems of changing nutritional patterns.

RYLKO-BAUER: Now, does USF have an applied track?

WHITEFORD: We have an applied degree. Our MA is in anthropology. Our PhD is in applied anthropology. But the whole department is applied so we have archeology, we have physical anthropology, we have linguistics [as well as cultural anthropology]. It's a four field program, but they all have an applied orientation. So we do lots of methods courses, lots of theory courses, but they all have "Now what are you going to do with it?" as a piece of it. So students come to us because they're looking for applied training.

RYLKO-BAUER: Uh-hm.

WHITEFORD: And they stay with us because they get it.

RYLKO-BAUER: You have done a lot [of research] in many parts of Latin America, both short term and long term work, and I am amazed with the breadth of your work because you've done maternal and child health and reproductive health. You've done water-borne diseases, but also, water as a human right. Global health policies and practices—we've done some stuff together with that. Human impact and responses to disasters and then also anthropological ethics. So that's a broad range. One of the things that I read early on of yours was this great article that appeared in *Practicing Anthropology* with this great title: "Staying Out of the Bottom Drawer, the Art of Research Utility." So, have you been able to keep your work out of the bottom drawer, to have an impact and get people to listen to it and act on it?

WHITEFORD: I am very pleased to have you mention that silly article. I worked really hard on it. I actually had to learn a great deal about evaluation to be able to write it. So it wasn't something I knew before. One thing I learned from that experience was not to title articles with clever names because then people can't look them up [or] index them. They don't know what in the world that woman's talking about—about staying out of the bottom drawer. I have really tried to take that seriously most of the time. Sometimes I can't resist and so there are strange subtitles like the "Fallacy of the Level Playing Field," [for] a book I [edited] with Lenore Manderson. That came out of a discussion about the assumption many international healthcare organizations make, that it's a level playing field. Whether you're in Thailand or Cuba or Malawi, the healthcare policy generated in Geneva will be the same [when it's practiced on the ground]. And so that book was [composed of] case studies looking at the failure to translate global health policies into the local realities, [and this became] the title of the book.

But you asked an intriguing question. To paraphrase it: "What are the common themes that go through this wide swath of interests?" I think women tend to be one of my common themes, probably because they're accessible to me as a woman. It's much easier [for me] to interview women across the country and across the world. Also women quite often are, if not [the primary] decision-makers, they are certainly the people who

carry out the labor of daily life, so they are ones who may be the first line of defense in a disaster or an epidemic. In some ways, they are a conduit to the household and the family, but they're also a conduit to the larger reality of the population.

RYLKO-BAUER: Uh-hm.

WHITEFORD: So I think gender, but particularly women, is a theme that is found in all of my work. And probably a sense of a moral justice, that the people who are most often ignored or forgotten—sometimes also the same women, are the ones that I want to foreground. They are the ones that I want to have first and foremost in my imagination when I think about what happens when people are forcibly removed from their home into a disaster shelter. What happens to them and who are they?

RYLKO-BAUER: Uh-hm.

WHITEFORD: The issues of people who tend to be ignored but yet carry on tremendous labor, or people who are left out of the decision-making, when the decision-making is made at international or national or even regional areas. That's part of what I'm very interested in. More recently, I've been particularly interested in how healthcare policy is generated at international global levels and what those policymakers know or don't know about the people on the ground who will be carrying out those policies.

RYLKO-BAUER: Can you give a specific example?

WHITEFORD: I've been working for many years in Ecuador. There are many good things about working in one place for a long time and one of them is you get to know people at different levels of the political hierarchy. And for several years, I've been working with Graham Tobin, a colleague and geographer at USF, whose area is hazards, and we've been working around an active volcano called Tungurahua.

And working in a small country, probably since about 1992 on different things, I've gotten to know people in

the government and certainly in the Ministry of Health, but also in Civil Defense. We have done some very good ethnographic field work with our Ecuadorian colleagues, Dr. Carmen Laspina, who is in the Ministry of Health and *Ingeniero* or Engineer Hugo Yepes, Director of the Geophysical Institute and chief volcanologist. Isn't that wonderful? So we work very closely with the two of them and in doing work about people understanding the risks of living near an active volcano, we discovered that policymakers know absolutely nothing about the local communities. So they generated a policy about evacuation or relocation based on data from other countries or other studies, but not understanding or knowing much about the people in the local communities.

Because we've worked there so long, people in Civil Defense invited us to talk at several different conferences of people in the government working on civil defense. Part of what we did was that we encouraged them to develop lines of communication to the local communities. And that actually happened and became a policy change that the government made in response to the data that we provided which was ethnographic, along with health data, epidemiological data, but also survey information, so we had a rich combination of databases for them. And they then began to think that it wasn't enough simply to deal with civil defense and the local government, but they needed to have some better understanding of local communities. So I think that's one of the places where we've made a difference. [*Note: Since this interview, Ecuador has created a Ministry of Risk Mitigation, which includes much of the work discussed here.*]

And again, it was not just what I was doing, but it was a collaborative, interdisciplinary, long-term engagement and responsibility. I have at the moment a National Science Foundation funded grant to work with my colleague Graham Tobin and two co-PIs, Art Murphy and Eric Jones, who are anthropologists. What we put into every grant is that when we finish the project, we return it to the community. The question is "Who is the community?"





Linda Whiteford and Graham Tobin near Tungurahua, a volcano in Ecuador.

RYLKO-BAUER: And in what form?

WHITEFORD: Yeah. Usually we return it to the local community through the mayor or civil defense or through the hospital, depending on with whom we are working and what the project is. This time I think our focus is going to be two organizations in the central government—Civil Defense and the group that helps relocate individuals and communities following a disaster. We want them to be the recipients of the information. You also asked in what form. In the past we've done videos or short books that they can use. It depends on who the focus group that we want to get it back to will be.

RYLKO-BAUER: Good. I've been struck at how interdisciplinary your collaborative relationships are. And it seems to me that that's actually a strength of applied anthropology in that it opens up [more such] possibilities than do traditional anthropological approaches.

WHITEFORD: I certainly have been and continue to be happiest working in collaborative teams. I'm not the lone wolf anthropologist. I like working with other people, in part because I can't do it all myself and in

part because I learn tremendously from them. A number of years ago, I was working in the Dominican Republic, doing a study of low birth weight babies in a Dominican hospital. I was doing it all by myself. I had permission from the hospital to be there all the time and I was wearing green scrubs, and one time in the delivery room there was only one physician and there were three women in labor and delivering. And so, he asked me to go and deliver one of the babies. I said, "I can't, I'm an anthropologist." And he said, "I don't care what you are, that woman over there is about to deliver. I want you to go catch the baby." So I walked over to the woman and she said, "It's okay, I've had five of them. All you have to do is stand down there between my knees and hold the baby and when the baby comes out, don't drop it. Bring it up and put it on my chest." And as I was saying "No I can't, I can't," she had the baby. And I caught the baby and she did just beautifully.

I thought afterwards, "I really need to know a lot more. I need to be a nurse. I need to be a doctor." That experience really pushed me to work in teams, because I didn't become a nurse or a doctor. But I did work with nurses and I started working with physicians. I've worked with economists [and more recently], with engineers. I got a grant with a chemical engineer and an environmental engineer and somebody from public health. We created a graduate certificate program called "Water, Health and Sustainability," in which all of our students had to take courses from [each of us], and our PhD students had to have three of the four PIs on their dissertation committees. They then had access to this wonderful richness of interdisciplinary exchange. It is hard to work in teams like that because you have to learn a whole new vocabulary. But my students are much better prepared to do the kind of work they want to do because they speak engineering, because they speak public health. And without being overly biased, I think the engineering and public health students are much richer for working with, and in, anthropology.

RYLKO-BAUER: Right.

WHITEFORD: So that's been a really exciting and fun experience and we continue it today.

RYLKO-BAUER: Well, that certainly opens up a lot more employment possibilities. I also saw that you even have an article coming out on solar toilets. [*Whiteford laughs.*]

WHITEFORD: That's part of that program.

RYLKO-BAUER: That's what's I wondered. It's co-authored with a group of other people?

WHITEFORD: Yes, and that's the team. And I have another one coming out on *gacaca* [a small intestinal

WHITEFORD: Yes, and that's the team. And I have another one coming out on ascariis [a small intestinal round worm] which is a *helminth*. But the anthropologists who come through this kind of multi-career training, I think that they become better anthropologists, because they then know how to translate not just anthropology. For instance, if you work in water and you're trying to help a community come to an agreement about what kind of water system [they need], you [need to] know something about the engineering of water systems—now you don't have to be an engineer, but you need to know something about it. And the best way is to get an engineer on the project with you. [And this] makes our students as anthropologists so much better equipped to see long-range implications of decisions and actions.

RYLKO-BAUER: You have also been very involved in the Society for Applied Anthropology. Maybe you could talk a little bit about [how you began] with the Society and then shift to some reminiscences about your tenure as president?

WHITEFORD: Wow. I don't actually know how I became involved with the society. I suspect it was through personal relationships.

RYLKO-BAUER: When did you come to the University of South Florida?

WHITEFORD: 1981.

RYLKO-BAUER: And that was an applied program at that time?

WHITEFORD: They had an MA in anthropology and they were getting ready for the PhD program to start. So that was done by Gil Kushner and Alvin Wolfe, and Al Wolfe was past president of the society. Gil Kushner was a recipient of the Sol Tax Award several years ago. But it was a department that self-identified and was very proud of being an applied department, and was deeply enmeshed in the society. Peter K. New, for whom the Peter K. New Award is named, came to USF as the Chair of the Sociology Department.

RYLKO-BAUER: Okay.

WHITEFORD: And he was a great friend, I believe, of Gil Kushner and Alvin Wolfe. I think he died the following year [1985]. I never got to know Peter well, but there was a very strong connection between the department and the society and that has been kept alive. Also, Tom May, who is SfAA Executive Director, was a close friend of those men and had always facilitated having the department involved in the society and I'm very grateful for his many acts of kindness. But I think I was, again, lucky because our department encouraged us to attend [the SfAA meetings] and be engaged. I attended the AAA as well and [served] on the Board for SMA [Society for Medical Anthropology] and I was Treasurer for the Society for Latin American Anthropology.

RYLKO-BAUER: Uh-hm.

WHITEFORD: SfAA has always been much closer to my department and to me. I don't actually know how I got involved, but I became a member of the SfAA Board. You know, a lot of it has to do with what you think is good about a society and you join because you want to be involved, and then you see that maybe there are ways that it can change. I think SfAA has had remarkable leadership and has been very responsive to changes [both] in the academic world, and better than that, the outside non-academic world.

Two things I did as president—and I don't know how I feel about them now, except they seemed awfully important at the time—were that I put together a budget committee because it seemed as though we needed to have greater involvement by the Board with understanding revenue streams and generating alternative revenue streams. I think that was the first thing. And the last thing I did before I rotated off, was I was fortunate that the Board voted to make [human rights and social justice] a standing committee.

RYLKO-BAUER: Okay.

WHITEFORD: Until then, there was no such committee. It seems that [just as] all research requires an ethics review, all societies should have some [means for raising relevant human rights issues. Incidentally], the Society for Applied Anthropology is one of the oldest organizations and had the first ethical guidelines in

RYLKO-BAUER: Yeah, many years before the AAA did.

WHITEFORD: Absolutely, and they've been revised and I guess maybe that's where I first started with Carole Hill in helping revise the ethical guidelines. I think that discussions of ethics [and human rights] are critical for all researchers to be constantly engaged in, and for applied researchers, even more so.

RYLKO-BAUER: Right.

WHITEFORD: So, I think that's a good thing for us to do. It's also intellectually fascinating because [these are] such complex questions and beg cultural relativity and so then, you negotiate—how do you feel about cultural relativity? Are there ethical standards [or human rights] that go across the board? It's a fascinating discussion.

When USF started their PhD program, one of the things they wrote into that proposal was a required course in ethics for all PhD students. When I got there, they didn't have anyone to teach it. So they said, "Would you like to?" I said "Sure." So I taught that course until I left the department to go into the Provost's Office. Bob Trotter and I wrote a nifty little book on ethics and applied anthropology. Both of us feel that it's an important topic and very complex and it's good to know where you can look for some guidelines. It's a short book, but it has lots of places to go for further information.

RYLKO-BAUER: I had not realized that you had this long history of being involved in ethics. It's a very good point you make that in applied anthropology it's even more so, because all kinds of situations come up that [are different from] standard kind of anthropological field work.

WHITEFORD: Plus, I think it puts researchers in conflicting situations so that there are dilemmas that, if you think about them before you go into the field, some of them you can avoid, and you have some tools by which to analyze your way out of or around [those you can't avoid]. I think those are really critical parts of our discipline.

RYLKO-BAUER: Are there any interesting stories from your tenure as president? Were there issues that came to the forefront during your tenure that were either a challenge or—

WHITEFORD: Sure. The president before me was Noel Chrisman and before that it was Linda Bennett. They both attempted to bridge a gulf between the AAA and SfAA. I believe it began under Linda's tenure and then was handed to Noel, who created a collaborative committee to try to bring SfAA and AAA into closer communication and remove some of the quite artificial, but sometimes also real, divisions. That did not come to fruition in the way any of them wanted it to. I think one of the first things I did as president, I took it to a vote at the business meeting and it was voted down. [*Whiteford laughs.*] It was a resounding failure to succeed, which was a very interesting experience because it made me more aware of how little I knew about something I thought I knew. And it really was that people in the Society did not want that to happen and so that's why you have a vote. It has continued, particularly from the AAA, [which] has been working to create a practitioner focus group and they have been very successful, I think. And I still hope that SfAA and AAA will [continue to] find ways to allow differences but increase communication. Now that you mention it, when I became inaugurated as president of SfAA, the U.S. was in the Iraq War.

RYLKO-BAUER: Because I think you served from 2003-2005.

WHITEFORD: And you remembered what happened. Go ahead.

RYLKO-BAUER: You went ahead and submitted a motion condemning the involvement of the United States and us going to war, and the motion passed.

WHITEFORD: It was a not a vote of the entire membership, but it was a vote of the membership at the business meeting and because we were going to do that, we had put flyers out and we had a packed room. So it wasn't 5 people saying we'll vote on this, but it was closer to probably 100 people in the room. I'm very pleased we did that. We went on record saying we are opposed to the U.S. involvement and that was certainly

the sentiment of the applied anthropologists and the applied geographers and the applied sociologists and everybody else in the room. So it was a good way to begin my tenure.

RYLKO-BAUER: This [raises another] question that I've been wondering about. Do you think that there's a role for the society to take stands on certain issues? And is it more challenging for the society to do that because it has an interdisciplinary membership and it has people from across the board. Is it harder than it might be for the AAA? So I guess it's two questions. Is there a role, and how do you pick what you stand for, given that the world is full of issues?

WHITEFORD: I think this is an ongoing discussion and it has to be an ongoing discussion because the membership of SfAA changes and SfAA itself changes. There may be a time when SfAA wants to have committees, like the AAA does, that formulate some recommendations that are then voted on. I think at the moment we don't and it may in part be the reasons that you suggested, but I don't know. So I think that as times change, that may change as well. For instance, embedding anthropologists in the military, the AAA came out clearly against it. SfAA had a lot of discussions about it, but there were people on all sides. So, I think the discussions are a critical part of the function of the Society and I don't know whether one has to have a statement that reflects the Society or not. It may be that that will happen sometime.

RYLKO-BAUER: That's a good point you made, that if you have at least the opportunity for issues like this to get raised, it then allows dialogue and debate which are very important, because [later] some of these people will remember that and it may lead to formulating certain policies or raising issues, whether it's in ethics, or methods, or whatever.

WHITEFORD: Uh-hm.

RYLKO-BAUER: You have served as Chair of the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Florida, but recently you've taken a different route and have taken on more administrative roles. I was hoping that you could say a little bit about the work that you're doing in the Office of the Provost. I've also been wondering how being an anthropologist affects that and how having an administrative role affects how you can help shape anthropology?

WHITEFORD: The last one, I don't know about, but you're right. I have, as my colleagues like to say, moved over to the dark side. [Rylko-Bauer laughs]. I have in the last four years worked for the provost at the University of South Florida. My position now is Vice Provost and I had an opportunity to be Associate Vice President for Global Strategies and report to the president. And then I had an opportunity to be Associate Vice President for Strategic Initiatives, which was a provost report line. In those two positions, I had an opportunity to help develop the University of South Florida's global vision and global outreach, which was tremendously fun and a great position for an anthropologist because of thinking about strategic relationships, looking at cultural variability and cultural change. Because no university can have all the relationships they want, so they have to be strategically chosen. Those were great fun positions and I did them and I'm very pleased.

This year I became Vice Provost and part of my task now is academic program development and review, and facilitating the development of programs throughout the University that the departments want, but trying to expand them and make them more interdisciplinary and cross-university. As we're all going through these horrible budget cuts, they again have to be extremely strategic. They have to fit the strategic goals of the university and further the strategic goals of the department and the college. We try to have them be innovative and unusual and not duplicate other existing programs. It's challenging and very exciting and so far we've got some, I think, quite unusual programs we're developing. So I think that's a good place for an anthropologist. One of the things that the provost uses me for, and I don't know if he's cognizant of it, but he uses me to work with faculty across the university in a variety of different roles and partly because of my interdisciplinary background. So I think that he finds that I'm useful in his office. I'm the only anthropologist there and so I think I'm useful to him and to the university.

RYLKO-BAUER: Uh-hm.

WHITEFORD: I'm having a very good time doing it so it's a "win-win." But you ask another question,

which is intriguing. I think that what I do that's different is I'm a really good observer, and I think that quite often it is not what people in the provost's office do very well. Partly because the provostial tasks tend to be managerial, difficult in [these] particular financial times, and they tend to be mandates from the Board of Governors and on down, so there's not a lot of room for observation. But as a trained observer, it's my comfort zone, so I tend to watch how things are falling out and try to mitigate the untoward consequences of some kinds of actions.

RYLKO-BAUER: It sounds to me like you're doing the global policy-local realities, in a sense.

WHITEFORD: Yeah, I think that's well said.

RYLKO-BAUER: The university global policy and then the realities for students.

WHITEFORD: Yeah, I think that's very insightful because I think that I work closely with Deans and with faculty and I think you're right. It's an attempt to make the relationship between those levels of power clear, as much as possible, and responsive.

RYLKO-BAUER: Do you think because you are an anthropologist and—you know this is a position of power.

WHITEFORD: Uh-hm.

RYLKO-BAUER: Has that kind of opened people more to accepting anthropology or feeling that anthropology has a role to play?



Linda Whiteford with Mayor of Banos, Ecuador, and two community members, while conducting research on the consequences of exposure to volcanic eruptions.

WHITEFORD: Good question. I don't know. I tend to talk about anthropology sometimes in humorous ways. Certainly, in the provost leadership and with the Deans, I'm the only anthropologist in the group and I frequently will say something about "Well, what you really need is an anthropologist to be able to do that." Some of it's jovial and some of it's true. I've told the provost multiple times that he could hire three anthropologists for the price of one engineer and he should. [Both laugh]. Or he should pay us more. So I don't know. I really have no data, but certainly what I've tried to do is to give anthropology increased visibility at that level without being too obnoxious. [*Whiteford laughs.*]

RYLKO-BAUER: Well that's interesting. Is there anything else that you can think of that you want to share? Any anecdotes from when you were president?

WHITEFORD: No, I don't. Well, thank you.

RYLKO-BAUER: Thank you very much. This has been really interesting for me. We've been close friends for many years and I learned things about you that I didn't know. Thank you, Linda.

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