

We and They: Building Diversity into Life's Landscape

Distinguished Lecture in the Humanities, given in Muskegon, Michigan on May 21, 2018 by
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One day, a year ago, I was driving an Amish woman on an errand in rural Pennsylvania. We were chatting enthusiastically about all kinds of things, when she said, “You know, Gretchen, I think all people are really alike. But they are also very different.” I almost drove off the road. This very statement is the core of anthropological thought. How is it that all humans, sharing 99% of their genetic makeup develop such different ways of life?¹ In this case, my friend lived an almost 18th century lifestyle, with no electricity, little running water or plumbing, no use of motor vehicles, and a work day that started at sunup and ended at sundown. Yet, we could spend hours together and never be bored. I asked her advice about family issues, we did housework and gardening together, and I took care of the grandchildren she often had with her. One day, she said, “I wish you were my grandmother. You have so much fun.” After that, she brought her whole family, 17 people, with her to dinners and game nights at our house. We played musical chairs, hide-and-seek, acted out stories from Grimm’s tales, and visited. The men asked me to sit with them and not with the women in another room. They wanted to talk about their work and work lives and knew I was interested and could add to the conversation. I thought to myself, “This is exactly right. I am an anthropologist doing participant observation. I am loving my friends while learning how they arrange their lives to fit their premises about the ways of the world. We are learning from each other and enjoying every minute.” That is how it has been from 1960 until today.

In this essay, I will share with you what it means, as an anthropologist, to be an observer and a participant in the lives of others. My connection to Muskegon and some examples of my work as an anthropologist will bring a glimpse of the stories that make up the worldview of others. Finally, I will offer some ideas about how to expand our willingness and capacity to relate to strangers in authentic

ways. Perhaps these ideas will open us to a more richly populated “landscape,” which is the view we each hold of our own world. If we are lucky, these ideas may lead to us to create more “we’s” and fewer “they’s” in life.

Muskegon, Michigan, the home of my mother’s and my father’s families at least since the end of the 1800’s was also my home for my first six years. The “homesteads,” if the Wade humble household and the picturesque Engle farm could be given such a lofty name, remain sharp in my memory today. Louie Wade, my maternal grandfather built his family home just after the turn of the century on Park Street. It was very close to the railroad tracks that ran through Muskegon Heights, the same tracks my great-grandmother had followed in 1888 when she and her seven children hiked along them to meet her husband who had arrived from Germany via Chicago or Milwaukee before her. Perhaps someone gave her a ride on a wagon as they saw her struggling. At any rate, she arrived, and was overjoyed to meet her husband and move into the little house they had acquired. After a century of use, that house no longer exists.

The Engle farm on Sheridan Road is still a lively home and business, the divided properties now owned by Sandra Engle and Marvin Engle. Great Grandfather Martin Engle had arrived in Muskegon in 1866 from Norway. Like many of his descendants, he was active in several trades before he opened a meat market with his wife, Mary. They did business in various locations in Muskegon, and he passed on his skill and interest in the business to his son, Fred, my grandfather Engle. Fred Engle also had a great interest in what we would now call organic farming and established a large family on the family farm shortly after the turn of the century.

My father, one of six boys and one girl, left school at age 14 after receiving his eighth grade certificate, and began to help his father in his meat market in the Occidental Hotel. He later finished high school by means of correspondence courses. When he married in the early 1930’s at age 21, he decided

to start his own business on Muskegon's Jefferson Street in the early 1930's and named it Engle's Market.

Leaving their first home on Sanford Street, my father, moved by patriotism and the fever of war, bought a farm in Fruitport in order to start a 60-acre "victory garden." He rebuilt an old farm house into a model home, and struggled to maintain his market along with the farm. He had not counted on his own lack of experience as a farmer, or the lack of laborers available for farm work in 1940. With everyone in the Armed Services, he could only find an elderly man and a young, disturbed youth as farm workers. My sister and I were enrolled in the Fruitport schools, I in kindergarten and she in the third grade. We found the country adventurous, and I followed my sister in all of her ideas for play. After a year on the farm, my father tried to join the Army, but his poor foot structure led him to be classified 4F or "unfit for service." Despite that, he wanted to contribute to the war effort, so he packed up the family and drove west to Olympia, Washington, to be near his aunt and uncle who were very dear to him. He and Uncle Nels found jobs at the Army base at Fort Lewis, preparing food for Japanese prisoners of war.

My first recognition at age six of terrible injustice in the world occurred at Uncle Nels' kitchen table. I remember my father was crying and Uncle Nels was also upset as they consoled each other. They talked about the rotten meat they were required to prepare for the prisoners' meals. They spoke of trichinosis, a parasitic worm that entered the digestive tract of those who ate such meat. This vivid picture entered my mind, never to leave. Our thoughts were filled with the mysteries of war. We were warned when we lived at Fort Lewis, not to get too close to the enclosures where the prisoners were kept, and we had to take the bus to school, although it was close enough to walk. We moved to a bungalow on the outskirts of Olympia where we liked to look for quail eggs in the woods. While there were no prisoners behind barbed wire, danger still lurked there, and we were warned not to pick up unusual rocks, as they might be bombs.

With the subtext of war and danger very present in our lives, it is not surprising that my sister, Hilda, four years older than I, introduced me to the Nancy Drew mystery series which she read aloud to me. Hilda read the Nancy Drew books to me in our bedroom closet, closed up tight with the light on. One day, while reading The Mystery of Larkspur Lane, Hilda said to me: “If you want to find out how it ends, you can read it yourself.” Thus, as I remember it, Caroline Keene’s children’s mystery novel was my introduction to reading.

When we returned to Michigan at the end of the war, my father opened a store in Grand Rapids, also called Engle’s Market. We went back and forth to Muskegon to see the various relatives, especially Grandpa and Grandma Wade and the Wade cousins, aunts and uncles.

Our parents were very concerned with racial justice. My father became a deacon in the neighborhood Congregational Church, but resigned when the church refused to allow an African American child into the nursery school. Instead, they joined the NAACP and the Urban League at that time. My parents invited Grandpa Engle (Fred Engle) to our house for a meeting to establish a civil rights committee. It did not develop into a real activity, but it was an issue around which my mother and father could unite and include Grandpa Engle who became an iconic figure to me. He never hid his beliefs and stood by even the most unpopular of them according to the stories my parents both told.

My mother was diagnosed with ocular melanoma as I entered the sixth grade and her left eye was removed. It was a very stressful time. She decided to go to Florida to recover. Leaving my father behind in Grand Rapids, she took us girls to West Palm Beach. There we rented a small house in a compound where her sister, Doris, lived. It was a new experience for us and the first loss of our father. While there, my mother confronted the racial segregation of the south which was pervasive and obvious.

Mother hired an African American woman, Mrs. Wilson, to help with the housework and ironing, but spent a great deal of time talking to her about experiences of black people in West Palm Beach.² One day, my mother told Hilda and me to come into the kitchen to talk to Mrs. Wilson and listen to what she

had to say. According to Mrs. Wilson, she and her husband had saved enough money to buy a small house in a newly developed African American community and had begun to enjoy it very much. According to Mrs. Wilson, the city, evidently in an effort to quell upward mobility of Negroes, subsidized poor and economically unqualified blacks to buy into the community. The city refused to provide city services and deliberately degraded the new settlement so that it lost its value in a few years. It was then repurposed to house poor white families. Hilda and I were having more experiences with racial injustice and becoming sensitive to the issues.

Despite their ideological common ground, my parents divorced the year after we returned to Grand Rapids. My father went back to the West Coast and entered the real estate business with Uncle Nels. My mother, Hilda and I stayed in Grand Rapids. I was thirteen and in the eighth grade.

A trusted family acquaintance, unknown to my parents as a pedophile, did not wait long after my father left before he caught up with me at my grandparents' house on Park Street in Muskegon. He said he was going swimming and offered to take me with him. My mother had no objection, and he drove me, not to Lake Michigan, but to an isolated, small, muddy lake devoid of swimmers. He offered to carry me out deep, so we could swim in clear water. In water over my head and in his tight grip, he sexually assaulted me. I threatened to tell his wife and my mother about what he was doing, but he stopped only when I threatened to tell Grandma Wade, and then he threw me back toward shore. Hardly knowing later how to describe this assault to my mother, I did my best to tell her what had happened. She said, "It was your own fault." I did not tell another soul about this event for almost 50 years, feeling hurt, confused, and shamed.³

Much later, I found that neither the assault nor my mother's response was unusual. Past middle age, several of my friends told me of similar events in their own lives. In the 1950's, unprotected girls were fair game for licentious men, and the responsibility was totally on the girls to ward off predators. After the fact, it was expected that one would "get on with life" and "forget" such episodes. Two of my

friends who had lost a parent to death in those years also were told not to talk about it and concentrate on “moving on.” No quarter was given to the fear, anxiety, or grief of children, nor did anyone have a vocabulary that could describe trauma that transgressed the norms of the day.

Another consequence of my parents’ divorce was a pervasive stigma that settled upon my mother and her daughters⁴. I knew of only one other girl in my class at Ottawa Hills High School out of hundreds whose parents were divorced. Children like us were referred to as “coming from a broken home.” The pervasive trope was that children from such homes were “wild” and unreliable companions for their peers. A few of our favorite cousins were no longer available to us as companions, and some schoolmates were honest enough to tell us that their parents had asked them to find other friends, not us. The feeling of stigma and exclusion remained an undercurrent throughout my life and influenced all my work forward.

High school, however, provided an excellent education for us, and we had many wonderful teachers and some very good friends. Some certainly recognized our unhappiness and found ways to be extraordinarily kind. Certain adults, among them a few aunts, became mentors and cheerleaders for us and made a positive difference in our development. I was an able student, but not outstanding. In my senior year, an innovative teacher, Russell Jones, created a new course called “Social Problems,” and, remembering that conversation in West Palm Beach, I wrote my term paper on housing integration. Fifteen years later, that became a focus of my doctoral dissertation and our family’s life.

At the end of high school, I was able to join “Teenagers Abroad,” a program of youth hosteling in Europe sponsored by the Grand Rapids Council on World Affairs. The participants had to cover their own expenses for the eight-week trip. My parents, thrifty and careful of their limited resources, always encouraged Hilda or me to take advantage of any potential opportunity for experience or education. Later, I understood how important that attitude was and remain very grateful. After that summer, I knew that my life would be spent periodically in Europe.

Staying in youth hostels around France that year, our Teenagers Abroad group found the lavatory conditions poor and hard to use. Sometimes they were only an outhouse with a porcelain square on the ground with a hole in the middle. I wrote a letter of complaint to Grandma Wade and received this very salient answer in response. She reminded me that “we” and “they” were more alike than different. “Have you ever been to a union picnic at Grand Haven? The bathrooms get messy all right! Lots of people and nobody in charge of cleaning. I don’t think it’s any different in France than it is here.”

After that summer and a year at Grand Rapids Junior College, I received a scholarship from Antioch College in Ohio. While college is often a transformative experience for young people, Antioch was more: a radical school, one of the oldest in the nation, a pioneer in the most progressive educational practices. If Antioch had a motto, it was the quote from Horace Mann that we all memorized: “Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity.”

Antioch, then and now, bases its philosophy on the idea that practical experience should be paired with academic learning. Everything about Antioch was right for me: the beautiful environment, the opportunity to work and study abroad, the belief that students were adults who could do amazing things and understand complexities. I had a double major in German and sociology and worked in a settlement house in Berlin at a critical time just before the Berlin Wall was built! Other Antioch jobs I had were as part of a Quaker work-camp in Decoy, Kentucky, and a member of an urban renewal and resettlement team in Washington, D.C. I learned that I could go anywhere and start living and working with great confidence, doing meaningful things with people from whom I could endlessly learn. In my last year at Antioch, I worked with a visiting professor, Abe Rossman, an anthropologist from New York. I wrote my senior thesis on Decoy, Kentucky and knew I was an anthropologist. I was called to my vocation!

I married Harry Schafft shortly after graduating from Antioch. He had grown up in a working class family with German immigrant parents. I could speak German with all or any of them when I chose. It was a wonderful confluence of values, ideas, and chosen life styles. We were both studying

when we married, but we tried to fit our ideas about civil rights into our lives. We hung a statement by Martin Luther King on our wall: “True integration will be achieved by men who are willingly obedient to unenforceable obligations.”

Later Harry incorporated into his work something that engineers were calling “building in reliability.” The idea was that one could build reliability measures into micro-electronic devices, as they were being manufactured, so that problems could be identified as they occurred rather than only at the end of the process. I began to see our lives in that fashion. We were not waiting for some final point at which we would be able to see if we had lived the life we had intended, but rather strove on a regular basis to live that life.

I made two critical decisions in those early years of marriage. First, because I did not want to lose my German language skill, I would read German fiction rather than English for entertainment. We had a large library of such books left to us by Harry’s parents when they moved to Florida. Most were written from the perspective of the struggles of poor people in Germany in the 1920’s and ‘1930’s. Second, if I was to be a housewife and raise our children for the next period of my life, I would make that household welcome to a wide mix of children.

We found the perfect community, “Neighbors Incorporated” in northwest Washington, D.C. It was started as an action to counteract “red lining,” the real estate practice that used racial categories to divide city blocks or neighborhoods. Deciding on a geographic target, realtors would sell to one black family in an all-white neighborhood and then convince other whites on the block to sell their homes before their housing prices dropped as whites moved out. Neighbors Inc. fought this practice by advertising in the New Republic and Atlantic magazines for people to choose “in-town, integrated living” and by running their own housing service. We knew this was the neighborhood for us. We lived there for 12 years and still enjoy “best friends” from those days.

Our two sons were born in the integrated neighborhood. One day, taking our four-year-old for a walk around the block, he asked, “Why do you say hello to the black ladies at the fence, but sit in the kitchen with the white ladies?” At the time, I was studying for my PhD in anthropology at Catholic University, and thinking about a dissertation topic. There it was! What was the true nature of integration in the neighborhood? How was it acted out in practice? I narrowed the study to children’s experience in school and on the streets. Without realizing it, I was beginning to listen carefully to children as well as adults.⁵

The outcomes of my research were different than I expected. I found that minority status is context-specific and carries a stigma even for those who are not considered to be “minorities” in larger society. It became apparent that minority status was relative, and that we all experience being in the minority in some situations during our lives. People manipulate their interactions when possible to be comfortable and avoid discomfort. The white children in the school I studied were cautious about their use of school territory and activities. Black and white children did not automatically seek each other out, but every child found some friends across racial lines. The children admired the skills of their peers and recognized that no characteristic could be assigned to a single group. They grew academically and socially regardless of their perceived racial status.

I realized that I did not want our children to be in the “best schools.” but in supportive environments with peers from many different backgrounds. Deep down, I wanted them to experience being a minority as I had been, for I recognized that with that challenge comes acceptance that there are various hierarchies of values, one can develop an appreciation of little characteristics as opposed to stereotypes, and one can foster the ability to find common ground regardless of superficial differences.

I am under no illusion that white children’s experience with minority status was or is the same as black children’s experience when they are a small minority. Whites are supported by a national environment of privilege.⁶ Life was geared to white expectations. We could leave our minority status

behind whenever we chose to move. Living for 12 years in Neighbors Inc. took no toll on us at all and required no sacrifice. Our children were well educated, we all had many close friends, we could use the resources of Washington to enjoy cultural opportunities, and we were happy.

In taking care of our children, we also had opened our house for neighborhood children, some of whom were home alone after school. One little boy came in while I was making banners for a peace march one day and said, "I know Mrs. Schafft that you are for peace. You always say, 'give me some peace and quiet!' It wasn't all serious business.

As our children grew older, I finished my doctorate and worked more regularly as a consultant, and then as a research director, for various groups and agencies. My work involved issues of equity and access to resources such as food stamps for the homeless, the WIC program, educational initiatives, AIDs education, and infant and child health care. During that time, I went back to school to get an additional master's degree in public health. I realized that funding for desegregation was ending although, as we have learned since then, the issues remain critical. Resegregation of American schools has increased in the last decade or more.⁷

One example of this period of my work was an eight-month project of promoting breast feeling among WIC mothers in seven different sites in various states⁸. One of the sites was Belle Glade, Florida among migrant workers. We gathered mothers of small children into a focus group with the help of missionary nuns. Conducting the focus group was difficult due to Creole, Spanish, and other dialects and languages being used by this group. We had several translators, but it became obvious that we were not gaining rapport using them. We stopped what we were doing and asked the women to create a drama without words. "Show us how you go to the food stamp office for help and nutrition advice." They immediately did that in their own ways and demonstrated that from getting on the bus to go to the office until they obtained benefits, the process was fraught with difficulties. The men in their lives did not want them to get on buses driven by other men. It was culturally unseemly for many. In the office, the

workers were often rude. Most of them did not want to get close to the women and their children across a racial divide and were also afraid of contagion, as the scourge of AIDS was becoming well known among Haitian migrants.

The unspoken drama was very revealing. The participating women understood that at the end of the focus group, we would pay them \$10 for their cooperation and provide lunch. Instead of lining up immediately for the money, they asked if we would wait a minute. Soon they came back with their babies and little children, all of them dressed in their best clothes, and one after another, the mothers thrust the little ones on us so that we could take each, hug, and kiss them. I wanted to cry, so deep was their need for acceptance of themselves and their babies. Only after we had shown affection for the little ones did they take their money and enjoy their lunches.

With our sons living on their own and my husband still heavily involved in his own work, my interests turned once again to Germany. Harry and I found out at the end of the 1980's that a heroic cousin of his mother, Kurt Bangemann had died in a concentration camp during the Third Reich (the term used by Hitler for the period of his rule 1933-1945.) He had left a wife and son behind in France. Within our family, he had always been spoken of as a resistance fighter and a very brave man, but when anything more personal came into the conversation, one or another relative would change the subject. At that time, the last of these relatives died and left us with some identifying information about the Bangemanns. We followed up and found the wife and son of the victim in France.

Kurt Bangemann's wife was the daughter of a Senegalese mother and a French colonialist father. She and her son told us that the American relatives had not seen a way at the beginning of WWII to bring a mixed race couple to the United States. Thus, Kurt stayed behind as a German in the French underground until his capture and eventual murder in the concentration camp Mittelbau Dora. The realization that this combination of German genocide and our relatives' fear of the outcomes of virulent

American racism led to the death and dissolution of a family struck us to our core. We went to visit the German concentration camp and there saw on the wall a quotation that said it all:

One thing I ask of you.

You who survive this time,

don't forget.

Don't forget the good

And not the bad.

Patiently gather all the evidence

about the fallen.

One day, this today will be the past.

People will speak of that terrible time

and will speak of the countless heroes,

the history they made.

They were men who had names, faces, longings, and hopes.

Therefore, the pain of the least of them was not smaller

than the pain of the greatest of them whose name has been remembered.

I want you always to keep them near,

Like acquaintances, like relatives

Like yourself.

~Julius Fucik⁹

At the concentration camp memorial, Harry and I met Gerhard Zeidler, an archivist who was about to retire. I told him of my plan to write a book about Kurt Bangemann, and although he endorsed my interest, he reminded me that many biographies of prisoners had been written. He suggested that I instead write a guide book to memorials in the former East Germany. When I explained that I could not stay in Germany long enough to undertake such a task, he volunteered to partner with me. Thus we began a 25-year collaboration in which both of us grew in our knowledge and understanding of each other's

culture, the history of the of East Germany and Poland during the Third Reich, and became acquainted with and friends of an international collection of extraordinary people.

Our *modus operandi* was to work individually to prepare for each upcoming research trip. I went to Germany for periods of three to four weeks, and we would attend seminars on the Third Reich, visit archives and memorials, interview survivors and go to their meetings. Gerhard would come to the U.S. for a longer period of time, usually about two months, and we would use the Washington resources of the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and Library, and give lectures and talks around the country. The guide book, our first publication, was published by a German press in 1996, after five years of work. In it, we described this history of a dozen concentration camp memorials that had been developed by the German Democratic Republic and included information about the Nazi euthanasia program and the rocket development site of Pennemuende.¹⁰

From that first project, we learned that anthropologists had played a major role in the design and administration of racial policy in the Third Reich. I visited the National Anthropological Archives (NAA) located in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. to see what American anthropologists had known about what their German colleagues were doing in the Third Reich. To my surprise, the archive assistant told me that large crates of research documentation confiscated from the Germans at the end of the war were stored in the archive, but had never been put on shelves. Therefore, the documentation was not readily available to researchers. Only an acquisition document had earlier described the research materials, and it was based on faulty information that had been available at the end of the war.

She brought me a few boxes out of one of the crates, and we found that they contained swatches of human hair in individual envelopes. Each was labeled with a number, the name of the place from which it had been obtained and the name of the German or Austrian researcher who had collected it. Swastikas were stamped on each envelope. Exclaiming to the assistant that we were looking at human remains, I sent the boxes back in horror, but asked to be informed when the total collection of materials from the Institute

of German Work in the East would be open for inspection. The archive director called me a short time later and invited me to analyze and catalogue that collection which was still in large crates¹¹. Recognizing that this was a rare opportunity, Gerhard and I undertook the archiving gladly.

Gerhard and I knew immediately that we had to follow the trails provided by the research materials we had cataloged. How did the anthropologists decide on which towns and villages to study? What did they think they would discover? What theories and methods did they use that fit into the Nazi schemes of dividing the population into segments, each carrying a particular fate? It took us 20 additional years of research to answer these questions, and we were pleased when our books and articles were published internationally.

Gerhard and I traveled over the eastern German border into Poland and, eventually, throughout that country to find the towns and villages that had been targeted by the anthropologists and listed in the Smithsonian documentation. The anthropologists were, primarily from the University of Vienna.

In 1940, most of the German Jews had been pushed to emigrate or had been forcefully removed to ghettos or camps in Poland from which very few emerged alive. We visited the sites of the major German extermination camps in Poland: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chelmno, Belsek, Majdanek, Treblinka, and Sobibor. Where archives within the memorials were available, we looked at them as well. In Auschwitz we found a document that was particularly explicit. It was a record from Dr. Mengele's files showing a crudely drawn set of lungs with the diagnosis "twin." The file indicated that the twins had been used for tuberculosis experiments.

Surprisingly, it was often the unexpected encounters that informed our studies the most. On one of our first trips into Poland, we found ourselves just over the German border in an area that did not have overnight accommodations. We had already found that if we did not have a place to stay by late afternoon, we could have real trouble in finding anything at all. We stopped at a public park and looked for someone who might give us information, but there were no apparent visitors. I went into the restroom

and found cleaning women working. I spoke no Polish and they no English, I indicated that two travelers needed accommodations for the night. One of the women drew a map to her house and told us to go there, and she would meet us to show us the apartment she had to offer. Indeed, her family had built a very nice apartment at the top of their house to accommodate construction workers who were pouring into Poland after the fall of communism. They were often entrepreneurs who had found a way to use their skills and make a living. At the moment the apartment was empty, and we could use it. Soon, joined by her husband and son, we sat in their garden, and they ran to get an English teacher living nearby. The conversation that followed was profound.

Luckily, the Jagiellonian University in Krakow had done an illustrated article about our research, and we could show them in Polish the broad outlines of our work.¹² The husband became very excited and insisted that we get in his marginally functioning car to drive to a destination we could not understand. After a hair-raising trip over country lanes, we arrived at an overgrown cemetery where many of the grave markers were covered in graffiti, particularly swastikas. The man was very agitated and tried hard to explain, but we didn't understand until we returned to his house and the English teacher's translation. What the man had tried to explain to us was that as the Germans invaded Poland, they stopped and rounded up random people, Jews and non-Jews, from towns and villages and took them into the forests where they executed them.¹³ The purpose during the first days of the German invasion was to strike terror in the hearts of the population to discourage rebellion. Our host's father had been among the town's people who had been requisitioned to bury the bodies. In the unmarked graves, various stones and markers had later been erected, but Nazi sympathizers in the town had desecrated them over time. That was what we had witnessed. Without the kindness and concern of these Poles, we would never have known this history. We found later that their account matched records of the Polish invasion of 1939 and 1940. We left feeling a strong bond with a good family who were no longer strangers.

On a different trip to Poland, we came across information about an archive in the town of Kalisch that we wanted to examine. I arranged with a Krakow travel agent for rooms in a Kalisch hostel, and we

got onto a train headed for that town. At the train station, we took a taxi and gave him the address of the hostel. He said in adequate English, "I will not leave you there, but I will show it to you." It was a shelter for homeless men, and many were lounging outside the front door. He indicated that some travel assistants in Poland were tired of dealing with those whom they considered wealthy tourists and liked to "play jokes" on them. The driver then asked what we were doing in Poland, and we explained that we were looking at Polish history of slave labor and concentration camps during the Nazi occupation and showed him the article from Jagiellonian University. He erupted with surprise and interest. He said, "My wife's mother and grandmother were taken into slave labor by the Germans during the war."¹⁴ They both suffered so much. If you will talk to my wife, I'll be your driver while you are here."

And so it was that he found decent accommodations for us and took us to the archive and picked us up there in the late afternoon. We then went to his apartment where we met his wife and son, a preteen who was busy with a friend playing with Legos. We talked for more than an hour over coffee and ice cream, learning about slave labor and the struggles of survival. We were all very moved at this unexpected meeting, and Gerhard and I by the hospitality and openness of our hosts. As we were leaving, I spontaneously, reached up and took off my earrings, explaining that I wanted to give something to them, and this was all that I had to give. The wife ran to the kitchen and reached inside a cupboard and brought out a set of delicate bracelets which she gave to me. This exchange had nothing to do with material goods, but everything to do with a mutuality of feeling and understanding.

As more people learned of our work in Germany and Poland, Gerhard and I were asked to meet with groups of concentration camp survivors and some educational groups of different ages. Our second book had been published in English in 2004 and translated into Polish in 2006¹⁵. One characteristic became clear to me. While, in general, men were given priority over women in the 1990s as purveyors of information, my status as an American meant that I was the one asked to address these groups. Gerhard and some others found it awkward to ask me, because they were not sure I would want to take on a speaker's role. In order to avoid a refusal on my part, they often did not tell me what was expected.

The first time this happened, I had just gotten off the plane from Washington in Frankfurt, and Gerhard and his friend picked me up, and we headed out in his Trabant toward Nordhausen, our destination. Shortly before we should have arrived, he said, “We are invited to a meeting in a town near Nordhausen. They are so pleased that you are coming, that they have offered us accommodations for the night. I was tired and surprised, but agreed to the plan. We went down to supper in the dining room of the inn, and I was introduced to the group of about 20 people. The leader of the group announced: “We are pleased to have Dr. Gretchen Schafft with us tonight. She will speak on the end of World War II from the American perspective.” Gerhard and his friend exchanged doubtful, embarrassed glances. Somehow, a good response popped into my head. I said, “I am delighted to be with you this evening, but I think it would be more productive for all of us if we had an open discussion about the end of World War II and how it affected each of us.” That met with hearty approval, for discussion was what they all wanted. Later, I never mentioned Gerhard’s deception to him, as I knew he had done his best to handle a delicate situation.

This happened again a few years later in Tarnow, Poland, where a respected director of a Jewish museum, who had also worked hard on the history of the Roma under the Nazis, asked me to address a school class on our investigations of the Tarnow Ghetto. Arriving at the city hall with my translator, I found crowds of school children who had been bussed in from all over Poland for the talk, while I had planned to conduct only a classroom discussion. Gathering my wits, I told the group some of the facts about the history of Tarnow, which had been one of the largest Jewish population centers in Poland and the largest ghetto under the Nazis in that country. I then asked them to put themselves in the place of people who had been taken from as far away as Austria and placed behind barbed wire to await an unknown fate. “Turn to your neighbors and make small groups of four or five. You are the incarcerated Jews. You know you will be interrogated. What will be your strategy? How will you present yourself to your captors? How will you maximize your chances of survival?” After ten minutes, different groups chose a representative to say how impossible it was to devise a strategy in an atmosphere of absolute

terror. Others said they would not tell the truth, but think of some useful function they could pretend they could perform in the ghetto. Some said they just might give up and try to stay with their families. After they had shared their thoughts with the entire group, I asked what they had learned from their small-group discussions. They told how even pretending to be in that reality did not bring them to an understanding of the real history. It was much more extreme than they had imagined. They said that nothing really mattered except survival. They said that the people of Tarnow should have known and shown mercy to the imprisoned. Others said they would now really want to know the ghetto history, and it would be more important to them than before this meeting.

For me, the similarity between the two events lay in the difficulty both organizers had in being frank about their expectations for my part of their programs. I realized that it had to do with the self-consciousness of newly liberated East Germans and Poles to confidently direct an American. They were used to programs being planned through a bureaucracy without spontaneity, but perhaps hoped I would introduce a different spirit to the students. They did not know how to articulate their expectations or wishes. I really very much liked the people I was meeting and wanted the best for them, so I tried to meet them half way and help build an outcome we would all find worth our efforts.

Gerhard and I completed a third book together which did not require as much travel. Gerhard was in his 80's and not well. We concentrated on a topic that had bothered us for some time: How do countries and their bureaucracies come to terms with history that discredits them in view of their history of violence and inhumanity?¹⁶ It was interesting to me that my city, Washington, D.C., at the time had a Holocaust Memorial Museum, but did not have a national public space that explored American slavery. Following the reunification of Germany, efforts were made to teach about the Holocaust through extensive curricula in schools, and concentration camps had their memorials. The memorials often had a small museum or extensive grounds showing some actual buildings and some rebuilt to give visitors an impression of what had occurred there. Germany's efforts came to fruition after the millennium with impressive national objects of remembrance.

We concentrated on the town where we had begun our explorations: Nordhausen. Using local archives and our accumulated knowledge of the German concentration camp history, we traced the development of rocket assembly in caves and into the hills around Nordhausen, discussed the horrific conditions under which 20,000 prisoners out of 60,000 died in less than two years, and how the town's people and the survivors chose to remember that time.¹⁷

My last visit to Gerhard was in 2014. He was 87, in an assisted living facility and very sick. I had just signed a contract with Leipzig University Press for the translation of Commemorating Hell, and he was pleased.¹⁸ He told me he was not afraid to die and would never stop rejoicing in the work we had done and the friendships we had forged. Our work had found its stopping place.

Harry and I bought a house in Pennsylvania in 2015, close to an Amish community. Our connection with this community was immediate and consuming. We provided work for an extended family as we remodeled the house, and I acted as their "driver," a function that non-Amish can provide for those who must rely on horses that cannot go more than twenty miles without resting for a significant amount of time. As with the other people with whom I have lived and worked, they became very close to me and a valuable part of my life. The happiness we achieve through our connections is a big reward, and learning about the Amish men, women and children's lives is my next big adventure.

I have had opportunities as an anthropologist to meet and have remarkable interactions with a wide variety of people. You are also in a world of great possibilities for engagement that bring their own rewards. Learning how others are so similar in ways that count increases our natural connectedness to the world around us. Sadly, we are too often schooled to replace curiosity with fear, generosity with withdrawal, and urged to choose insularity instead of universalism,

I cannot hear the words "security" and "homeland" without automatically translating them to the German, "Sicherheit" and "Heimat." In and of themselves, these words encourage safety within our own localities, and that can forge a worthwhile and comforting concept, and, in some cases, a necessary one.

But, I would gladly give up fear of the “other” for the discovery of friendship, and even love, for the stranger who is more like us than different. I would have us offer comfort, acceptance, welcome, and inclusion in the spirit of the Michigan pioneers and, indeed, in the best American tradition.

In the beginning of my lecture, I mentioned that the lack of vocabulary in the 1950’s made empathy with children suffering trauma difficult. We must be careful today that we maintain a vocabulary of empathy in the midst of a world of uncertainty and anxiety. We worry about the economy and work in our present lives and often cannot anticipate what our future holds for ourselves or our children. Our life’s perspectives, or landscapes, are in danger of shrinking as we try to make ourselves safe within our self-imposed borders.

However, perhaps the examples given here have increased your interest in and perhaps your courage to enlarge your landscapes to include, not just all those places on your bucket lists that you hope and plan to visit, but the people you hope to encounter in friendship and openness. In this way may each of us be glad of the chance to burst the boundaries of our life’s landscape and make it more meaningful and colorful.

1 Marks, Jonathan. What It Means to Be 98% Chimpanzee: Apes, People, and Their Genes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

2 Mrs. Wilson is a pseudonym.

3 The #MeToo movement in the past year has made it possible for many girls and women to come forward with their own stories of sexual assault. These accounts provide understanding of motivations and explanations that complete women’s history, as in this case.

4 See Erving Goffman. Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

5 Schafft, Gretchen Engle. The Unexpected Minority: White Children in an Urban School and Neighborhood. A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of the Catholic University of American for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 1976.

6 Kendall, Frances. Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships across Race. New York: Routledge, 2006.

7 Donner, Jerrel K. and Adrienne Dixon. The Resegregation of Schools: Education and Race in the Twenty-first Century. New York: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group., 2013.

8 The WIC program under the U.S. Department of Agriculture provides nourishing food to women, infants, and children who meet income criteria.

9 Grygen, Mojmir. Menchen. Ich hatte Euch Lieb. Das Leben Julius Fuciks. Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1961.

10 Schafft, G.E. and Gerhard Zeidler. Die KZ- Mahn-und Gedenksaetten in Deutschland. Berlin: Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1996.

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- ¹¹ Schafft, Gretchen and Gerhard Zeidler. "Register to Materials of the Institut fuer deutsche Ostarbeit.: Washington, D.C.: National Anthropological Archives, 1998.
- ¹² Schafft, Gretchen and Gerhard Zeidler. "Anthropologia Trzeciej Rzeszy." Alma Mater. Miessiecznik Uniwersytetu Jagiellonskiego, No. 47, styczen 2003m 12-15.
- ¹³ Kube, Erich. Als Polen deutsch war. 1939-1945. Muenchen: Max Huber Verlag, 1986, 56-70.
- ¹⁴ Fullberg-Stolbert, Claus et al. Bremen: Frauen in Konzentrationslagern. Edition Temmen, 1994.
- ¹⁵ Schafft, Gretchen E. From Racism to Genocide: Anthropology in the Third Reich. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004. And Schafft, Gretchen E. Od rasizmu do Iodobojstwa. Anthropologia w Trzeciej Rzeszy, Teresa Baluk-Uliewiczowa, (translator) Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2006.
- ¹⁶ Schafft, Gretchen. "Civic Denial and the Memory of War." Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis 26, no. 2 (1998) 255-272,
- ¹⁷ Schafft, Gretchen and Gerhard Zeidler. Commemorating Hell: The Public Memory of Mittelbau-Dora. Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2011.
- ¹⁸ Schafft, Gretchen and Gerhard Zeidler. Im Gedenken an die Hoelle. Zur politischen Darstellung der Geschichte von Mittelbau-Dora. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitaetsverlag, 2016.