

Amina Rahman

Funding Proposal to the Reed College Anthropology Department

11.3.13

I write to request funding from the Department to attend the 112th AAA Annual Meeting in Chicago this year from November 20th- 24th. It would be an amazing opportunity to spend 5 days of intense anthropological immersion at the “hub” of the anthropological community in the US and to attend numerous sessions that would be directly relevant to my current thesis research.

I am writing about the U-Visa, a form of humanitarian relief in the US’ immigration system, and will be exploring the both the structure of the visa and application process as well as the layers of mediation, re-framing or orienting of persons and their lived experiences to the language and expectations of USCIS. The “Transborder Ethnography” session on 11/20 is a collection of speakers who explore different layers of immigration across the US-Mexico border – and as many of the U Visa applicants and recipients are Mexican nationals, Javier Tapia’s presentation on “Doing Public Anthropology: Working with Government and Education Officials in Mexico and the US” could give me an opportunity to hear about or ask questions regarding perceptions around the U Visa from these officials, and even ask or learn about USCIS-related rituals, such as medical examinations, or general trends in crime-based migration into the United States. This whole session offers a variety of theoretical discussions around transborder ethnography (eg. “Politics, Margins and Border Theory” presented by Sergio Lemus, and “A Path to Applied Anthropology on the US-Mexico Border” presented by Guillermina G Nunez) that I am writing about.

“Social Justice in the Neo-Liberal Immigrant City” (11/22) would be really helpful to think about the neoliberal subjectivities that are implicitly demanded by migration apparatuses, and often by social justice organizations, that an applicant for a U Visa or any other humanitarian relief would encounter. I’d also like to attend the session “Removed from the Nation: Illegality, Detention and Deportation in the Lives of Young People” (11/20). The U Visa falls in a similar category of versions of the DREAM Act and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, and I would like to explore the threat and politics of deportation that enshroud the lives of undocumented youths. What are the (additional) barriers they must face to “come out” and apply for these programs?

The U Visa is a fairly new program – the regulations were written in 2006 – and my goal in most of these sessions would be to ask presenters where humanitarian-based immigration relief relates to their research. A program like the U Visa that demands applicants to prove their eligibility, merit and traumatic experience in order to receive immigration status is part of larger phenomena of legalization of presence, proving one is “deserving” of status, and using small humanitarian programs as a “quick fix” for human rights issues while drawing attention away from larger failures of transborder migration systems. There are a lot of sessions surrounding these larger phenomena at the AAA, and I’d like to see how the U Visa could contribute to discussions regarding the politics of migration and humanitarianism.

Additionally, I am thinking about pursuing graduate studies in anthropology post-Reed, and I think that attending the AAA conference would be helpful to glean the inner-workings of the academic community and provide a basis for thinking about futures with anthropological studies. This year’s theme “Future Publics, Current Engagements” (and, arguably, most central discussions about our discipline) will be oriented towards the value and futures of

anthropological work, and I am deeply interested in thinking about ways to continue to diversify and complicate our already heavy task.

I would be attending the conference November 20th-22nd, leaving from PDX on the 19th and departing Chicago on the 23rd. If granted the funds, my friend and peer Jodie Moon (who is being sponsored by the department) and I would be able to room together. It looks right now that to be near the Hilton, it will cost around \$90 a night.

Projected Budget

Round Trip Flight Tickets = \$330

Conference Registration Fees: \$170

Lodging for 4 nights minus Jodie's lodging budget = \$150

Total Requested: \$650.00