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Action Anthropology and Sol Tax in 2012: The Final Word? Darby C. Stapp, eds. Richland: Northwest Anthropology. 2012. 264 pp.

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Action Anthropology and Sol Tax in 2012: The Final Word?, edited by Darby C. Stapp, constructs a vivid portrayal of Sol Tax (1907-1995), the engineer of Action Anthropology. The text cites Tax as an influential anthropologist whose research and theoretical approaches continue to be relevant today as seasoned anthropologists teach and practice action anthropology. An essential read for students, as well as seasoned anthropologists, interested in the theoretical origins of Action Anthropology and activism, this volume offers insights from contemporary anthropologists on Tax's initial insights that led to the impetus of community-driven change in anthropology. As an orientation within anthropology that speaks to activists, Action Anthropology provides a framework for how to practice anthropology and collaborate with groups of people based on the theories and work of Tax. Often "identified by names such as collaborative anthropology, engaged anthropology, and participatory action research" (3), Action Anthropology inspires activism in the most gentle sense of the word. Tim Wallace, in Chapter 8, "From Activist to Action: How Dr. Sol Tax Helped Me Find my Way into Anthropology," writes of how Tax taught him "that no Action Anthropology is possible without being a fieldworker" and that "Action Anthropologists are anthropologists and field workers first and change agents second" (112).

With cultural relativism at the core of our discipline, anthropologists recognize that it may be difficult to separate oneself from the desire to enact positive change as defined by their own culture. Positive change, in Action Anthropology, is defined by the community itself. For the action-oriented anthropologist, the change is the result of fieldwork, not the purpose, and the community leads the way, sometimes in spite of what may be best for the action anthropologists' research or career. Furthermore, change is the result of the process of Action Anthropology, but may not always be the driving force. Tax promoted an anthropology that placed the anthropologist as a communicator whose priorities are defined by that of the community in which they work. It is obvious that Tax believed in genuinely helping communities find their own voice. For Tax, Action Anthropology meant developing a open-dialogue in anthropology for positive change and community empowerment. In Tax's vision, Action Anthropology's place in applied anthropology was a space in which community interests were first and foremost. Douglas Foley clarifies the differences between Action Anthropology and applied anthropology in Chapter 7, "A Hometown Ethnographer's View of the Fox Project," noting that in Action Anthropology, there is a clear motive to work with and for community, a sense of commitment to social justice, where applied anthropology encompasses a broader approach that may include working for the benefit of corporate or government interests (101).

Through the combination of multiple literary forms, editor Stapp develops a book that is useful in understanding a man and his purpose in relation to the applied field of anthropology. As a text that guides practice in applied anthropology as well as a memoir of Tax, this unique volume includes both professional and personal accounts of Tax through the use of vignettes, commentaries, and historical items, including a timeline and obituary. The book also

incorporates all presentations from the 2011 Society for Applied Anthropology Conference in Seattle session titled “Learning from Sol Tax in 2010.” In Chapter 1, Joan Ablon shares of the personal qualities of Tax that enabled him to push forth in a time when applied anthropology faced challenges in academia. Although Action Anthropology may not have been widely accepted at the time it was developed, Tax’s contribution now provides a valuable praxis for contemporary anthropologists by building a place in anthropology for anthropologists with similar interests.

In multiple chapters, the delicate work done by Action Anthropologists and the potential challenges that they may face is explored. Including close friends, relatives and colleagues’ personal accounts to demonstrate Tax’s challenges, Stapp builds a comprehensive understanding of Tax’s development and application of Action Anthropology. Ablon and Wahrhaftig both write of Tax’s belief in the community’s freedom of choice, even with the possibility of negative consequences (defined by the community, of course). To further complicate the already complex underpinnings of working in communities, Tax acknowledged that communities themselves must be free to make “mistakes” in deciding their directions. Referencing his work with Tax on the Carnegie Project, Wahrhaftig recalls their work with a Cherokee community and how they learned to be “cautious about secular assumptions inherent in anthropology” (36). At the core, Tax’s Action Anthropology endorses community empowerment. It is up to anthropologists to use their formal training to decipher their best move to assist the community-driven change--sometimes in a moment’s notice. Action Anthropology may not always allow extended time to develop detailed analysis. It is also apparent that learning on every parties’ end may occur after reflection following action.

These reflections from seasoned anthropologists create a historical context and a definition of Action Anthropology that is easily understood by students. As many anthropology students graduate and begin careers outside of academia, Action Anthropology provides a framework from which to build a career outside of anthropology that remains grounded in anthropological theory. Widely applicable, Action Anthropology and this text could be beneficial for those working in government and non-profit sectors. In the preface, Stapp writes of how Action anthropology provided a foundation that allows anthropologists to appreciate the process of work with communities (xi). Action Anthropology provides a connection to a variety of careers that many anthropology students enter following graduation. Much like Stapp, many students may have never had exposure to Action Anthropology through formal education despite its value. As anthropology students seek employment following graduation, the ability to understand and use Action Anthropology only becomes more relevant to their marketable skill set as an anthropologist. In the foreword, Deward E. Walker Jr. reflects on how Tax “led the way in using anthropology to define, confront and provide solutions to a world of problems not unlike those we now see again in the 21st century” (vii). For students planning to work with or research in tandem with groups of people for social change, Tax’s Action Anthropology provides an approach that is applicable today as it puts the community first while acknowledging the challenges that may exist for anthropologists.

An insightful memoir that offers a glimpse into the personal world of an influential anthropologist, *Action Anthropology and Sol Tax in 2012: The Final Word?* presents concepts and facets of Action Anthropology not just for students, but also for seasoned anthropologists and anyone who is interested in social welfare, justice and community organizing who may be looking to understand Action Anthropology at its core.

Author Biography: Nicole Collier Ryan is a graduate student studying Applied Educational Anthropology at the University of North Texas. Conducting research alongside high school students, she is currently researching social justice and student empowerment as vehicles to education reform.