consistently employed in order to silence political critique of Israeli state violence and policies of depopulation. Such calls for “balance” or assertions that one must give “equal air time” to all sides in a conflict work to hide existing imbalances in military, political, economic and discursive power. The Israeli-Lebanese war of this summer was not a conflict between two equivalent actors.

Furthermore, mainstream media coverage in the US consistently represents Arab lives as less valuable than Israeli ones. Sympathy is not the issue here; providing an alternative to misrepresentations and policies that condone civilian deaths is.

For a deeper, more contextualized understanding of Hizbullah, this recent war and its ramifications, I once again refer readers to my primer at www.merip.org, to Augustus Richard Norton’s writings on the party, and to the reports of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, as well as to a recent special issue of the MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies on the topic.

The notion that Hizbullah started this war rests on an extremely short-range view of events, ignoring a longstanding history of conflict that includes at least three Israeli land invasions of Lebanon and numerous air attacks. Since the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon territory in 2000, the reports of the UN Interim Forces in Lebanon have noted border violations by both sides—the crucial difference being that the bulk of Hizbullah’s violations involved attacks on Israeli soldiers, while Israel’s violations included the kidnapping of Lebanese civilians, as well as almost daily violations of Lebanese airspace by Israeli planes engaged in psychological warfare against the Lebanese population through breaking the sound barrier over major urban areas. In such a situation of imbalance, a critical anthropology that is committed to critiquing asymmetries of power should interrogate the conditions that produce rhetorical justifications for state violence and civilian deaths.

Lara Deeb
UC Irvine

Drug Tourism

I agree with the problems of ayahuasca drug tourism raised by Marlene Dobkin de Rios in her article in the October 2006 AN; however, I believe there is another trend in the rise of ayahuasca ecotourism in South America that was not addressed, namely the growth of international shamanism conferences and courses. In 1990, I attended a two-week-long field school on ethnobotany and shamanism at Jatun Sacha, a biological research station in Ecuador. Days were spent with botanists and curanderos identifying plants, and evenings were spent drinking the ayahuasca brew. Notables in attendance included the psychotherapist Ralph Metzner and the pharmacologist Jonathan Ott, the latter of whom concocted a brew so strong that one poor soul from Iowa imagined that he was in the midst of a nuclear apocalypse.

Fast forward to 2005, and I was told that the Ecuadorian Napo Runa family, who had facilitated my graduate anthropological fieldwork, had been invited to the first annual Amazonian Shamanism Conference in Iquitos, Peru. I attended as the family’s official “anthropologist,” despite the unusually high conference fee of $500. Well known anthropologists, psychologists, pharmacologists, biologists, journalists and curanderos were present including Luis Eduardo Luna, Dennis McKenna and Peter Gorman, among others. The keynote conference, which was its third annual installment in summer 2007, alternated days of lectures and presentations with shamanistic healing ceremonies facilitated by predominately male curanderos from the Iquitos area.

While the conference papers had scholarly merit and were presented by respected researchers, the real draw of the conference for attendees was to experience healing ceremonies with respected indigenous curanderos, mainly from the Iquitos region, and to connect with the ecotours of Machu Picchu and the Amazon River after the conference. Conferences such as these are a burgeoning cottage industry, as the fascination with ayahuasca healing plants spreads throughout American popular culture, and the virtual community dedicated to these topics grows.

Anthropologists involved with this issue have the responsibility to defend legitimate ayahuasca research and use of the drug in a ritualized context, yet the growth of ayahuasca drug and ecotourism deserves more careful examination to determine what effects regulation would have on the local economies that profit from these activities. In order to assist in this determination, research studies documenting the rise in incidence of poisonings by inexperienced curanderos should be a precursor to any policy recommendations.

Juan Luque
Moffitt Cancer Center

AN would like to renew readers’ attention to the AAA’s recommendation (from its Resolution on Open Employment, 1972) that in employing anthropologists “solicitation of letters of recommendation should occur only after an initial screening of candidates to minimize inconvenience to applicants and referees. Names of referees may be requested, however. The language in the Job Placement Statement on Policy has been revised to better express this recommendation.—Ed.

Jonathan Marks
U North Carolina at Charlotte

Save the Apes From The Ape Rights Activists!

Animal Rights activists started up The Great Ape Project in 1993 with the goal of generating worldwide support for the extension of human rights to the apes, specifically those of life, liberty and freedom from torture.

Of course, no sane person is in favor of death, incarceration and torture for the apes. I still don’t know what a “right to liberty” would actually imply, although it seems rather that they want to shut down all zoos and dump the apes on the streets of Nairobi. While attending two recent conferences (“Chimpanzees in Research: A Vital Resource for Medical Advancements” and “Nonhuman Primate Models for AIDS,” both hosted by the Yerkes Regional Primate Center of Emory University in Atlanta), I learned about the success the Great Ape Project has enjoyed over the last decade, and its consequences are chilling.

LIVING CONDITIONS IN RESEARCH FACILITIES

I don’t work directly with chimpanzees. In fairness, they frighten me, because they are considerably stronger than I am, and are sometimes unpredictably violent in their behavior, both in the wild, and in otherwise caged captive settings—as the sad case of St James and LaDonna Davis, who were attacked and mauled in a chimpanzee sanctuary in California last year, amply demonstrated. I was grateful, however, for the opportunity to see the chimpanzees in the Yerkes research facility and to see their living conditions. The chimpanzees at Yerkes, and at the few other facilities that keep chimpanzees for scientific research, live in stimulating environments and are tended by sensitive, compassionate and knowledgeable caretakers.

The apes are in no way being tortured, imprisoned or murdered. Indeed, the major deficits in the lives of these chimpanzees are coming paradoxically from the activities of the Great Ape Project.

The success that the Great Ape Project has enjoyed in convincing people that these chimpanzees are being maltreated (as of course chimpanzees have been, in other times and in other places) has resulted in budgetary constraints that serve to retard the ambitions of these facilities to upgrade the quality of life for the chimpanzees, which they would actually like very much to do. They are not keeping the chimps in steel shoeboxes, as the Great Ape Project seems to think; they are keeping them in small groups. The research the chimpanzees are being subjected to is far more like the medical treatments I receive today (injections, blood drawing, CAT scans and so forth) than like the treatment people received in Auschwitz.

One significant aspect of both the quality of life and the preservation of the species involves the breeding of chimpanzees in these research facilities. Partly as a result of the agitation of animal rights activists, there has been a moratorium imposed since 1997 on the breeding of chimpanzees in these research facilities. Here is an ingenious paradox then: the Great Ape Project’s work has helped to make it impossible at present for these chimpanzees to enjoy the pleasures of parenthood.

Animal Research and Medical Consequences

There is an even darker side to the working of the Great Ape Project, however. Since there are no chimpanzees in these research facilities below the age of ten, there are also none with naive immune systems. Why might it be desirable to have...
The real problem that apes face is not in research facilities. It is in the wild, where irreversible anthropogenic changes—principally deforestation and economic development, but also disease and hunting—leave very dire predictions for their existence only a few decades from now.