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Panel 147: Exploring new freedoms?: Moving anthropological writing into spaces of public engagement

"Segregation in the name of cultural differences"?

**Pro-Apartheid discourses in contemporary Japanese contexts
and the role of cultural anthropology/anthropologists**

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This paper discusses the public role of cultural anthropology/anthropologists against the contemporary racist discourses based on a case of a pro-apartheid column by a Japanese writer on a newspaper and the action to criticize this situation by a cultural anthropologist using a web journal in 2015.

On February 11th, 2015, just the 25th memorial day of the liberation of Nelson Mandela from the prison in 1990, Japanese readers were shocked to find a pro-apartheid column by SONO Ayako, a famous writer and columnist, on *Sankei Shimbun*, a conservative newspaper. She claimed the necessity to accept foreign workers in contemporary Japan without enough care workers for the increasing elder population, and at the same time, claimed the necessity of the segregation of residence of immigrants with quoting her own experience in South Africa.

To this controversial column, the Ambassador of South Africa, researchers of African studies, citizens and students immediately showed their opposing arguments. However, there were few comments among cultural anthropologists.

In February, the presenter published an academic article on *SYNODOS*, a Japanese web journal, to condemn these racist discourses with mentioning the history of the construction of apartheid with British anthropologists' commitments in the 20th century. This anthropological criticism acquired huge number of readers on the web by sharing in Twitter, Facebook and other SNS services.

Through this case, effects and significance of public engagements by cultural anthropology/anthropologists will be discussed. Also "the *raison d'être* of cultural anthropology" will be discussed in the viewpoint of public anthropology.

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[The English version translated by Peter Durfee]

<http://durf.tumblr.com/post/110772241382/yesterday-sono-ayako-contributed-an-opinion-piece>