**Voices of Virginia: A Qualitative Study of Shared Understandings and Civic Engagement in the Aftermath of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections**

11/2017

Washington Association of Professional Anthropologists

Frances Norwood, PhD

Principal Investigator

[francesnorwood@aol.com](mailto:francesnorwood@aol.com)

Victoria X. Danner, MA

Co-Principal Investigator

Project Manager

[vxdanner@smcm.edu](mailto:vxdanner@smcm.edu)

The results of the 2016 U.S. elections and the highly contentious public debates followed appears to show how divided the public is on issues of both national and local concern. What is not clear, however, is if this is a divide that is indicative of what media is representing, what politicians and political candidates are promoting, and/or what citizens at the community level actually think and feel about their neighbors and their communities. Voices of Virginia offers a two-year qualitative study of the perceptions, concerns, and conditions that are influencing civic engagement activities of 300 Virginians in six (6) diverse communities in the swing state of Virginia. This study will explore the extent to which people from various backgrounds share the divisive views permeating political and media representations of current events and how the attitudes of these Virginians translate into civic engagement. The aim is to highlight where shared understandings exist at the community level and to show where and how individuals are able to unite on issues of shared concerns at a grassroots level. The study uses Foucauldian discourse theory to illuminate the impact of competing discourses at the public and community levels and to provide important information on what both divides and unites U.S. citizens in the aftermath of the 2016 elections.

The Washington Association of Professional Anthropologists (WAPA) is an association for professional anthropologists in the DC/MD/VA region dedicated to the promotion and practice of anthropology in several industries, including non-profit, health, archaeology, politics, and research. This pilot project came from the objective of several WAPA anthropologists to explore and ultimately understand main areas of contention and commonality among voters after the 2016 presidential election. This project utilizes anthropological method and theory to understanding the cultural and societal impact of the presidential elections and its inferences on current attitudes among voters across political affiliations.

WAPA is currently recruiting for unpaid field researchers or professors who want to use this two year study as an opportunity to provide your students with research experience. If you are interested, contact Victoria Danner, Project Manager and Co-PI at [vxdanner@smcm.edu](mailto:vxdanner@smcm.edu). Training is available and all levels of expertise are welcome.