Ten years ago, in the aftermath of mass slaughter in Rwanda, a broad international consensus emerged "never again" to acquiesce to genocide. Today, mass killing is taking place in Darfur, Sudan, and the international response appears inadequate to avert the deaths of hundreds of thousands. To date, as many as 70,000 lives have been lost and over 1.5 million Fur, Tunjur, Masalit, Zaghawa and other autochthones of Darfur have been displaced from their homes. Mass summary executions, the burning of entire villages, destruction of food stocks and livestock, and poisoning of wells, speak of an effort to destroy the entire basis of life of the targeted populations. Mass rape, the branding of victims, and the racial aspersions by which the pogrom perpetrators refer to the Darfuri farmers are suggestive of hatreds rooted in supremacist stereotype. The violence is systematic, sustained and grossly disproportionate to quelling the military threat posed by Darfur's rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The extent of the destruction, death and displacement is unprecedented, and could never have occurred without the support and participation of the government of Sudan. Reports of helicopter gun ships attacking defenseless villagers and fleeing refugees from the air suggest that the Sudan government is obviously supportive of the murderous janjawid militia and also indifferent to international criticism of the use of scorched earth tactics. The crisis may be entering its most deadly phase, as malnutrition and disease potentially take the lives of hundreds of thousands of the refugees and internally displaced persons, who huddle in desolate, undersupplied camps out of fear of being raped, maimed and killed if they venture outside. Insecurity stymies the provision of food, water, and medical care by international humanitarian organizations. Not just peace but a more vigorous international humanitarian response is needed. Currently, the international community's capacity to deliver aid and care to this remote region of Africa is less than half of what will be needed to avert accelerating mass death by famine and epidemic. Observers may still disagree about whether this is genocide or ethnic cleansing but the problem of naming the crisis and finding words appropriate to describe its scope and severity need not distract any international agency from acting vigorously, now.

Anthropological experts on the region have published numerous analyses of the crisis, giving emphasis to the complexities of the situation that the world confronts in Darfur. No easy consensus may be possible. Yet anthropologists who know the ways of life Darfur's people at first hand are speaking out, situating today's crisis in detailed historical context. Members of the public and policy makers who seek to become aware of the possible dangers of intervening clumsily, out of ignorance of the multiple, cultural, political and ecological dimensions of the crisis, would benefit from listening to the opinions of these anthropological experts. Even while raising such warnings, no expert denies the need for international pressure to restore peace to Darfuris living in fear; none disputes our obligation to provide
aid to those who are in danger of perishing of want and disease. The international community should support efforts to reverse ethnic cleansing, return the displaced to their communities, and restore their destroyed assets and livelihoods.

Anthropological perspectives suggest the following emerging scholarly consensus on Darfur policy: 1) It is misleading to describe the conflict as one that pits "Arabs" against "Black Africans." Though the janjawid themselves cast their rebel adversaries and civilian targets as "Blacks," North American race relations constitute an inappropriate social model of the conflict, and divert attention from underlying problems of ecological decline and heightened resource competition. 2) It is a considerable simplification to characterize the conflict as arising from conflicts between pastoralists and farmers. The "pastoralist" groups appear in fact to be sedentarized pastoralists who sought farmland in the last few decades. Many pastoralists are uninvolved. It would be more accurate to say myriad conflicts arose over the years in Darfur due to disputes over water rights, farmland, and pasture, and from disagreements about administrative and political jurisdiction. 3) The most legitimate agents of humanitarian intervention are African. Even as the first need in Darfur is peace, European or US military entering into Darfur would almost inevitably come to be seen as invaders, all too easily rendering Western-led humanitarian intervention counter-productive. The first recourse must be for the world's most powerful states to bolster the capacity and willingness of African Union forces to provide security for Darfuri people and for the delivery of humanitarian aid. 4) It was easier to create the janjawid than it will be to disarm them. The janjawid appear to have varying degrees of autonomy from Sudanese governmental control. With the entry of external peacekeepers, many of these groups may lapse into banditry, potentially posing a security threat for years to come. Those armed groups that cannot be brought into peace negotiations must be isolated militarily, and prosecuting an extended war against a shadowy enemy may pose a major challenge to the legitimacy of even African peacekeepers as well as slowing reconstruction of the region's economy. 5) All parties to the Darfur conflict are equally indigenous. It must always be of concern to anthropologists when an ideology of cultural and racial supremacy is used to justify violence. Yet neither the janjawid nor the anti-government SLA and JEM fighters are primarily comprised of or led by outsiders to Darfur. Conflicts among Darfuri groups were settled through local conflict resolution institutions prior to Darfur's ecological decline and the entry into the region of massive amounts of light armaments, during and after the 1980s. Indigenous leaders have lost much of their power but they may still hold the legitimacy to bring militia and rebel groups around the negotiating mat. Reinvigorating autochthonous institutions and capacities of conflict resolution should be encouraged. 6) Even so, the culpability of outside forces must be recognized, and those responsible, brought to justice. Though the parties to the conflict are mainly indigenous to Darfur, it is vital not to lose sight that armed struggle in Darfur is one front in a larger rebellion against the Bashir government in Khartoum. This point in no way diminishes the international community's responsibility to hold the Sudan government responsible for the atrocities of the militia it has supplied. The responsibility of the government of Sudan should involve at least prosecuting the leaders of the janjiwid, seizing their illicit assets, restoring the rule of law to Darfur, providing conditions under which the displaced can return to and rebuild their villages in safety. Considering also the larger currents of conflict enveloping Sudan, it
seems likely that preventing a resurgence of fighting in Darfur will depend to some degree upon negotiation of a comprehensive peace, involving all the parties to the larger national and regional conflicts.

Raising our vision further, to consider the character of the concern that has been expressed through the most influential Western information media, questions must be raised about both the slowness with which the public's attention turned toward Darfur and the narrowness of its eventual focus on that region (to the exclusion of human rights crises of comparable gravity elsewhere on the African continent). Both the slowness and the narrowness of outside compassion suggest an inability to rouse Western publics from apathy about more than one international crisis at a time, and raise the specter of a Western human rights double standard, directing scrutiny and criticism preferentially toward Islam and "Arabs," while turning a blind eye toward human rights disasters occurring in African states deemed more friendly to democracy.

Already, each major international set of actors seems to be shifting responsibility and blame onto each other for the larger failure to act decisively on Darfur. The African Union deserves praise and support for its attempts to negotiate a peaceful end to the conflict in Darfur and to provide an effective force for protecting international monitors and humanitarian aid delivery. Avoiding unilateral military intervention and recognizing the complexity of the situation on the ground seem only prudent. Even so, there is a role to be played by non-African countries and international organizations in brokering peace in Darfur, and the transportation and humanitarian aid capabilities of the world's most developed economies will be needed to bring the needed additional African peacekeepers and international assistance to the region. While there is never a justification for reckless intervention, the greatest responsibility to act is borne by those with the greatest ability to prevent killing and to bring the perpetrators of massacres to justice. This responsibility has been accepted by too few outside the African continent with a level of concern equal to the conviction that African lives truly matter. AAA Statement on Darfur, dec 04 3