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Letter From the Editors

The Editors

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Editors, The, "Letter From the Editors" (2005). *Ecological and Environmental Anthropology (University of Georgia)*. Paper 17.
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Letter From the Editors

We of the new journal *Ecological and Environmental Anthropology* thank you for visiting us and hope to engage you in the discussions and debates we aim to spark. We would like the journal to serve as a nexus for the free flow of ideas of scholars and practitioners in a wide range of fields, since many disciplines are both contained within, and influenced by, ecological and environmental anthropology.

Interest in and compassion for people lie at the heart of anthropology, and we would like to dedicate our first issue to the people of Asia and Africa who became victims of one of history's most powerful natural disasters on 26 December 2004. It has now been almost two months since the earthquake and tsunamis, and the death toll continues to rise to well past a quarter million now. Over one hundred thousand people still have not been found in the Aceh province of Indonesia alone; mass graves continue to be filled there daily. Many families are being shuffled around, as they try to find food, clean water, medical supplies, and housing, as well as seek protection from disease, theft, political tension, child exploitation, and sexual violence. We here at the University of Georgia have been personally affected. Three of twelve exchange students who came here several years ago from Banda Aceh are known to be dead or are still missing.

Around the world, there has been a historic outpouring of money into international, national, and local aid programs. The programs have saved many lives, and are actively working to rebuild enough of the devastated communities to allow the people to resume their lives after this tragedy[1]. But at the same time, there has been much squabbling among nations, organizations, and communities over proper reactions to this disaster and preparations to make for future ones.

The results of this disaster will not fade in the near future. For survivors, rebuilding homes and communities is only the beginning. Over one million people have lost access to their primary means of making a living. Environmental destruction to coastal areas impacts subsistence and commercial fisheries, as well as a growing tourism industry. The tsunami's terrific wave energy ripped up trees and destroyed algae, delicate corals, and other marine invertebrate species, as well as washing soil, fishing gear, plastics, vehicles, and hazardous chemicals out to sea and onto reefs. It will take months to years for coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves, and estuaries to recover. Alterations to nearshore habitats are predicted to impact the ability of these areas to serve as effective fish refuge and nursery grounds, thus reducing fishery recruitment. And although hotels and resorts may rebuild quickly, depression in income from tourism will persist until potential visitors perceive that the region is safe, basic amenities are available, and natural beauty spots have recovered

Experts in many fields have analyzed this story from a variety of angles, and there is a continued need for the exchange of knowledge across disciplines, institutions, and local groups of people. Anthropologists, environmentalists, politicians, aid workers, and local people all bring different perspectives on the disaster itself and changes that will or should take place in its aftermath. Dialogue fostered by this event can not only help us all understand the complexities involved in dealing with other natural and social catastrophes, but it can also enrich our understandings of the links between humans and their multifaceted environments.

Warm Regards,
The Editors

[1]One such program we would like to endorse here is the Aceh Adopt-A-School Program, in which several students and faculty from the University of Georgia, as well as local Indonesians and the remaining nine of the twelve exchange students from Aceh, are involved. Please see www.acehschool.org for more information.