

Sandi was a pathbreaker of US studies in anthropology. She entered US anthropology at a time when most US anthropologists studied exotic Others in far-flung places. If they studied the US at all, it was in studies of the “vanishing cultures of” Native America. Instead, Sandi’s work explored the cultural, political, and economic complexities of the United States itself. She was as interested in large-scale economic restructuring as she was in race, class, and gender interrelations. And she brought them together in groundbreaking ways.

Her work on the women’s health movement, for example, was one of the first comprehensive historical accounts showing how women’s activism in the 1970s to the 1980s shaped the contours of women health care in the decades beyond.

And it was pathbreaking as well in its exploration of political struggles around race and class within the movement. Her work on welfare restructuring, with Joan Acker, and Jill Weigt, is a policy studies masterpiece in a discipline that frequently eschews direct policy relevance, especially about the United States.

Expertly documented with evidence designed to substantiate findings in a hostile political environment, this work challenges popular and political claims that welfare reform has been a success. It also builds on Sandi’s earlier work on the women’s health movement to demonstrate the centrality again of gender, race, and class in shaping how poor families, welfare workers, and welfare administrators experienced and assessed welfare reform. Her work on taxes and right wing populism was once again ahead of the curve. More than a decade ahead of scholars who are just now scrambling to say something meaningful about white identity politics, she recognized the importance of political projects animated by the vilification of her past informants and sought to understand the lives and political perspectives of rank and file Tea Partiers, anti-tax activists, and right wing populists. Sandi was an expert at thinking through difficult political dilemmas in difficult times. She also nurtured and sustained the academic and personal lives of many scholars, across generations. She was deeply committed to diversifying academia, and fought for real diversity in many scholarly locations, from her home institution to the AAA, and beyond.

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