

In Memoriam: Professor John Ogbu

John Uzo Ogbu, professor of anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, died August 20, from a heart attack after undergoing back surgery at Kaiser Hospital in Oakland. He was 64.

Ogbu was a path-breaking scholar working at the intersection of anthropology and education. His provocative theories on collective



John Ogbu

identity, that is created and sustained by both external and internal factors, and his distinction between voluntary and involuntary minorities, revolutionized thinking about minority education, especially that of African Americans.

"In every article on the subject of minority education, inevitably there are references to John's work," says Herbert D. Simons, Professor of Education, UC Berkeley, and co-author of "Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities: A Cultural-Ecological Theory of School Performance with Some Implications for Education," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 1998.

According to Ogbu, voluntary minorities come to a new environment with their collective identity intact, because it was an identity already in place prior to their emigration. In marked contrast, involuntary minorities such as African Americans formed their collective identity after coming to the New World and in the context of oppression by the dominant society. Hence, their collective identity is "oppositional", whereas the collective identity of voluntary minorities is "non-oppositional". This distinction became part of the groundwork for understanding and debate on race and ethnic differences in educational and economic achievement.

In 1996-1997, Ogbu was prominent within the highly publicized debate about the place of "ebonics" or Black American English. As a member of the Task Force on the Education of African American Children in Oakland, Ogbu helped write the Ebonics Resolution adopted by the Oakland Board of Education in 1996. His analysis stressed that beliefs held about "standard" or "proper" English required in the classroom were incompatible with black vernacular English, spoken at home and out of school. He believed the incompatibility was closely tied to critical notions of group identity and learning.

Ogbu's latest book, *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: Study of Academic Disengagement*, (Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers) is based on his 8 months of fieldwork in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Concerned parents and other members of the middle class black community in Shaker Heights invited Ogbu to study them in an effort to determine why black students in a highly regarded suburban school system were "disengaged" from academic work, and performed less well than their white counterparts. Rarely do subjects of anthropological study request that an anthropologist come study them. Ogbu concluded from his research that African Americans' own cultural attitudes hinder academic achievement and that these attitudes are too often neglected. The book created controversy even before it was published, and upon its publication, journalists and educators

across the country hotly debated Ogbu's findings. *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb* was the subject of a featured article in the *New York Times* (November 30, 2002) entitled "Why Are Black Students Lagging?" The book went into its second printing in less than three months.

Ogbu's distinction in minority education has been recognized in numerous ways. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* featured him in its article "What 15 Top Anthropologists Are Working On Now" (1997). That same year, Ogbu was elected to the International Academy of Education (1997) and was appointed Chancellor's Professor at Berkeley, an award which includes an annual \$20,000 research stipend for three years. Also in 1997, a special issue of *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* (Vol. 28 #3) was devoted to "Ogbu's Theory," with contributions by an international group of scholars.

In 1998, he received the American Educational Research Association's "Research Contribution to Education" Award, which is given "to honor a meritorious contributor to educational reach; its purpose is to publicize, motivate, encourage, and suggest models for educational research at its best."

In 2000, Professor Maurice R. Berube of Old Dominion University in Virginia, a specialist in educational leadership, published a book entitled *Eminent Educators: Studies in Intellectual Influence*. Berube chose four individuals whom he believed "best represented the legacy of progressive education." He selected one philosopher, John Dewey, two psychologists, Howard Gardner and Carol Gilligan, and one anthropologist, John Ogbu. Berube devoted a chapter to each individual. He writes that Ogbu "has caused a major paradigm shift in American education."

Ogbu was born in 1939 in the small village of Afikpo, in eastern Nigeria. He attended a Presbyterian high school about 100 miles from the village. Later he went to a Presbyterian teachers college, and he taught Latin, mathematics and geography for two years in a missionary high school. As part of his plan to become a minister, he was sent to Princeton Theological Seminary in the U.S. There he realized that to work for the church in Nigeria, he needed to know more about his own country, and he turned to anthropology. He had never heard of anthropology before coming to the U.S.

Since 1961, Ogbu has been closely associated with Berkeley. He earned his B.A. in anthropology in 1965, his M.A. in 1969, and his Ph.D. in anthropology in 1971. He began teaching in the anthropology department as an acting assistant professor in spring 1970, before receiving his Ph.D. He received tenure in 1976 and was promoted to full professor in 1980.

"John Ogbu's humanity and warmth informed all of his intellectual work. He didn't avoid the controversial questions but always brought a fresh comparative perspective to the answers he sought. He will be missed as a scholar but also as a mentor and a friend," says a former student of Ogbu, Angela Davies, Ph.D. anthropology, UC Berkeley.

Ogbu is survived by his wife of 28 years, Marcellina Ada Ogbu of Oakland, and his five children, Elizabeth of Boston; Nnanna of Los Angeles; and Grace, Cecilia and Christina, all of Oakland. He is also survived by numerous brothers and sisters and other relatives in the United States and Nigeria. He was buried in Nigeria.

A memorial service will be held in the Great Hall of the Faculty Club on October 7, at 4pm. Donations may be sent to the John Ogbu Memorial Library Fund, 6531 Exeter Drive, Oakland, CA 94611.

October Happenings in Anthropology

All **Brown Bag Lectures**: noon, rm. 101, ARF, 2547 Channing, unless otherwise noted. All **290 Lectures**: 4pm, 160 Kroeber, unless otherwise noted.

- 10/1 **ARF Brown Bag Lecture**: Steve Shackley, *Pot Hunters, Geographers and Archaeologists: 100 Years of Southwest Archaeology at the UCB Anthropology Museum*, Special Location: Hearst Museum gallery, noon.
- 10/3 Lowie/Olson applications available from Ned Garrett (205 K).
- 10/6 Excom 10-12, Faculty Lounge
House meetings, 3-5
- 10/7 **Memorial Service for John Ogbu**, Great Hall of the Faculty Club, 4pm.
- 10/8 **ARF Brown Bag Lecture**: David Palmer, *Current Archaeological Research at Alma Plantation, Louisiana: Daily Lives of African American Sugar Cane Workers in the Post-Bellum, Handcutting Era*.
- 10/13 **290 Lecture Series**: Mary Weismantel, Northwestern University, *Tube, Orifice, and Flow: Interpreting Moche Sex Pots*.
- 10/15 **ARF Brown Bag Lecture**: Scott Hutson, *Being, Dwelling, Dumping: Spatial Archaeology at Chunchucmil, Yucatan, Mexico*.
- 10/17 Language Exam (a.m.), Gifford Room.
- 10/20 Excom 10-12, Faculty Lounge
Faculty mtg, 3-5
- 10/21 **Internal department lecture**: Sarah Franklin, Lancaster University, *Embryonic Economies: the IVF/Stem Cell interface and the National Embryo Supply in Britain*, Hearst Annex, 2-3:30 (Rabinow's L&S126).
-  **Emeritus Lecture**: Honoree: Professor Emeritus Eugene Hammel
Speaker: G. William Skinner, UC Davis, *Family-cum-Gender as a Cultural System*, 4pm, Alumni Hall, reception following.
- 10/22 **ARF Brown Bag Lecture**: Maury Morgenstein, *From Tool Kit to Outcrop: Chemical and Microscopic Approaches to Chert Provenance Studies*.
- 10/24 Lowie/Olson applications due.
- 10/29 **ARF Brown Bag Lecture**: Bill Whitehead, *I.T. Applied to the Uhle Peruvian Archaeology Collections at the Hearst Museum*, Special Location: Hearst Museum gallery, noon.
- 10/31 **HALLOWEEN PARTY!** Stay tuned for details to be e-mailed.

Recent Ph.D.'s Succeed on Job Market

Aihwa Ong suggested that mentioning positions secured by our Ph.D.'s would be not only interesting but perhaps hopeful for our present grad students. The idea was to list the student and the position, but then Nelson Graburn submitted a far more detailed account. Nelson's contribution was so entertaining that we included all of it. (And we welcome faculty to provide similar detail on their advisees!) Many thanks to Aihwa for the idea and to Nelson for going for extra credit.

Bonnie Clark, a tenure-track position at the University of Denver; **Stephen J. Collier**, International Affairs, New School University, New York City; **Andrew Lakoff**, Sociology, University of California at San Diego; **Damani J. Partridge**, Depts. of Anthropology and African-American Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; **Caitlin Zaloom**, Metropolitan Studies, New York University, New York City.

From Nelson:

Pam Stern has taken a position as Assistant Professor of Anthropology, at the University of Waterloo, in Ontario, Canada. She is enjoying settling down there but the dreaded electricity "black out" struck within 24 hours of her arrival. She just had an article on "Time Discipline in Inuit Life" published in *Anthropologica*, Canada's leading anthropology journal.

Kenji Tierney is happy to take up his ExEAS (EXpanding East Asian Studies) postdoc at Columbia University. He says, "As the focus of the postdoc (East Asia and transnationalism/globalization) fits in well with my next project, [comparative study of shochu liquor in Japan, Okinawa and Korea] I am really looking forward to the experience. I am especially pleased that I will have the chance to be teaching this fall."

Rachel Goddard Griffin has accepted position as assistant (for exhibitions and tribal consultations) to Bruce Bernstein (a former undergraduate in my Anthropology 152 course) at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC. The exhibition work would be primarily at the Heye Center in New York, and the position would require her working with folks both inside and outside the Museum. She also interviewed for a position as Assistant Curator for Native Arts at the Denver Art Museum.

Catherine Mathers writes at length that she is happy to be back in "this crazy, confused messed up country of mine." She is living in Johannesburg and commuting to her postdoc at the National University of Pretoria. She has an office "big enough to live in" in the Geestwetenskappe (Humanities) building. Her department is schizoid and consists of four very activist, involved sociocultural anthropologists, and three practitioners of Volkekundige (a kind of ethnology characteristic of Afrikaans language universities). The latter are attempting to make themselves relevant by setting up centres of "community development" and "community tourism"—with the goal of constructing "cultural villages"—which attracts many students whose career goals seem to be becoming tour guides! There are also "18 badly educated postgrad students in archaeology with no advisors" (they all quit) so Pretoria has just announced that they will be hiring two new archaeologists. Go and join Catherine!

Publications from Berkeley Anthropologists

Rosemary Joyce

The Languages of Archaeology: Dialogue, Narrative, and Writing. Blackwell Press, 2002.

(with Lynn M. Meskell) *Embodied Lives: Figuring Ancient Maya and the Egyptian Experience*. Routledge, London, 2003.

(co-edited with Julia A. Hendon) *Mesoamerican Archaeology: Theory and Practice*. Blackwell Global Studies in Archaeology, 2003.

Pauline Kolenda

Caste, Marriage and Inequality. Rawat Publishers, Jaipur, India, 2003.

Laura Nader

Le Forze Vive Del Diritto, Un'introduzione all'antropologia giuridica. E. Grande, ed. Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2003.

Aihwa Ong

Buddha is Hiding. UC Press, 2003.

Paul Rabinow

Anthropos Today—Reflections on Modern Equipment. Princeton Univ. Press, 2003.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes

"A Beastly Trade in 'Parts'"

Op-Ed piece in the *Los Angeles Times*. July 29, 2003.

(A PDF of this article can be found on <http://www.library.berkeley.edu/ANTH>, under Dept. of Anthro pubs/Journals & Chapters.)

(co-edited with Philippe Bourgois)

Violence in War and Peace, an Anthology, 14(3) Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

William T. Whitehead

(with Maria Bruno)

Chenopodium Cultivation and Formative Period Agriculture at Chiripa, Bolivia. *Latin American Antiquity*, 2003.

Laurie Wilkie

The Archaeology of Mothering. Routledge Publishing, 2003.

Thanks to Four Faculty—and One Librarian

Four faculty have been cited for meritorious service. Laura Nader and Nancy Scheper-Hughes are to be congratulated for each sponsoring an undergraduate in the Haas Scholars Program. Margaret Conkey served on the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Steering Committee, whose aim is to improve undergraduate education at Berkeley. Ruth Tringham took part in the Library/Mellon Faculty Institute on Undergraduate Research pilot program. Along with Ruth, Suzanne Calpistri collaborated in the pilot program, and her vision and energy were vital to the project. These individuals are already over-extended, yet each extended herself a bit further in order to improve undergraduate education at Berkeley.

The Ear

Paul Rabinow will be lecturing on Oct. 26 at 3pm at Pacific Film Archive in conjunction with its *Gene(sis)* exhibition . . . **Aihwa Ong** presented "The Chinese Axis: Zoning Technology and Variegated Sovereignty in East Asia," at the East Asian Institute, Seoul . . . **Nancy Scheper-Hughes** has been appointed a temporary advisor to the World Health Organization on Global Transplant Ethics and Practice and will address a Transplant Vigilance committee in Spain in Oct. . . . **Lisa Hua** left for a promotion in integrative biology, and **Linda Eason** has taken her place as our purchasing assistant. **Annette Gearlds** has joined the staff as curriculum scheduler. Stay tuned for interviews with Linda and Annette in a future **BAM!** . . . The newest face in anthropology is **Ned Garrett's** baby, **Dayton Yoshio Garrett**, born August 22. When asked if he saw himself as social culturalist or archaeologist, Dayton cried.

