

The Berreman Humanistic Legacy: Reminiscences

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Gerry is a pal of mine. We have known each other since our undergraduate days in anthropology at the University of Oregon from 1948 to 1952. We also spent the summer of 1950 together on an archaeological dig on the Colombia River. Although we are the same age, he has also been a mentor to me. If it were not for him I would not now be a happily, semi-retired professor of anthropology and Native American studies. I am certain my story can be repeated many times in terms of the students Gerry has assisted during his tenure at U.C., Berkeley.

He has also served as a moral compass for me and many others during his noteworthy career. This was especially true for me and other anthropology students during the Vietnam War years when some anthropologists cooperated with the military in pursuit of this cruel war, and the American Anthropological Association almost split over the issue.

Finally, I want to comment on his commitment to ethnic studies on the Berkeley campus.

Mentoring

Like many of Gerry's students whom he has sponsored and championed in their graduate work and pursuit of anthropological careers, I was a round peg trying to fit into the square hole of academe. As a gate-keeper for us "round pegs," however, Gerry was able to get me and many other deserving students through our graduate hurdles and into fruitful academic and professional pursuits. Let me illustrate this by using myself as an example.

My undergraduate college education at the University of Oregon (with Gerry) was interrupted by a brief stint in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean War. I was "drafted and shafted," as they say. I had applied for conscientious objector status due to my religious beliefs about the war but was denied it on appeal. Discharged from the service in 1953, I returned to the University of Oregon to complete a Bachelor's degree in anthropology. It wasn't easy, because I had received an Undesirable Discharge from the Marines due to my opposition to the war. Denied the G.I. Bill of Rights and other veterans' benefits, I had to work my way through college and at the same time support a family. Nevertheless, I persevered and was able to graduate in 1955 with a Bachelor's degree in anthropology. I then found myself denied financial assistance for continuing graduate studies at the University of Oregon due to the

Marine Corps discharge. In fact, I soon found out that I was blacklisted from many employment opportunities. During this McCarthyite period, whenever I took a state or federal job, the F.B.I. would show up, and my employment would be terminated.

I then hoped to continue my graduate work in anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, but that was a pipe dream. The closest I ever got to Berkeley at that time was a year in San Francisco at a minimum wage job as a hospital orderly. I was so "busted" that I couldn't even afford to get across the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge to Berkeley, let alone get into the university as a graduate student.

Fast forward ten years. After many trials and tribulations, and with the support of Quaker friends and the late social anthropologist, E.H. Spicer, I graduated from the University of Arizona with a Master's in anthropology and community development. The year 1965 found me at Berkeley as an applied anthropologist in the School of Criminology. With Spicer's recommendation and Gerry's academic support, I was admitted to the Ph.D. program in anthropology in 1968. I was 38 years old at the time.

During my first year in the graduate program I was working full time to support my family and going to school at the same time. This was, of course, frowned upon so, needless to say, I didn't make much of an impression when we new students were evaluated by the faculty at the end of the first semester. Gatekeeper Gerry stepped in, however, and persuaded the graduate committee to give me another chance. Then, through Gerry's additional intervention, I received a NIMH Career Fellowship by the middle of the second semester and could quit my "day job." After that I was able to compete successfully and received my Ph.D. in 1974. He has acted as a key academic reference for me ever since.

Because of Gerry's advocacy for the underdog, I am certain that my story, with the appropriate individual variations, has been repeated many times. Highly motivated men and women, whose personal histories and academic backgrounds did not fit the mainstream academic profile for graduate work—blue collar workers, mothers with families, radicals, older-than-average students, racial and ethnic minorities—have, nevertheless, made it through the anthropological gate at Berkeley through Gerry's help. Three American Indian friends of mine are among their number. One is at the Smithsonian, and another is a faculty member at the University of Arizona.

Anthropological Ethics and the Vietnam War

The 1960s and early 1970s were turbulent years on the Berkeley campus. There was the Civil Rights struggle, with some Berkeley students joining the bus riders to integrate the South, and others demonstrating in 1963 on Cadillac Row and at the Sheraton Palace hotel in San Francisco. The counter-culture (Hippies) also had an

impact on campus. At one time Berkeley had several thousand “non-students” attending classes. Students were dropping out of academic degree programs to attend experimental, philosophy, eastern religion, and ethnic study courses. In 1964 the free speech movement for student civil rights swept the campus (as detailed in Steven Warshaw’s 1965 book *The Trouble in Berkeley*, and Mark Kitchell’s 1990 film documentary, *Berkeley in the Sixties*). Then there was the on-going anti-Vietnam War movement, with many demonstrations at the university and marches to Oakland, culminating in the huge one-quarter million person march to Golden Gate Park in 1969. The anti-draft movement also developed, with students burning their draft cards, and others blocking troop trains that went through Albany, Berkeley and Oakland. The focus of struggle shifted from protest to resistance, and the movement to save People’s Park from being replaced by a university building took the spotlight. About the same time there was the drive to free Angela Davis, who was accused of complicity in the shoot out at San Quentin that resulted in the assassination of imprisoned Black activist George Jackson. At the same time, the Black Panthers armed themselves and were active with their “breakfast for children” and other programs in the East Bay. There were many other emergent activist groups as well, including the women’s liberation movement.

In the academic year 1968-69 the Third World strike took place, and the newly-formed graduate student union struck on the Berkeley campus. The Association for Radical Anthropology was organized, and in November of 1969, Indian students from the Berkeley and San Francisco State Universities occupied Alcatraz Island. Some of these struggles, and especially the anti-war movement, continued into the early 1970s. Gerry played a significant role in many of these activities, continually highlighting the ethics of the anthropological enterprise and the moral imperative of the social scientist to speak out on public issues. I recall seeing him and other courageous professors speaking at numerous noontime rallies on the steps of Sproul Hall during those years.

It was Gerry who “blew the whistle” on Berkeley’s Himalayan Research Project, with which he and other South Asia specialists affiliated. He discovered that it was compromised by the fact that its funding came from the U.S. Defense Department’s Advanced Research Project Agency, with the near certainty that its goal, unknown to the participants, was to supply information for covert U.S. intelligence activities. This caused a major stir in the academic community, the U. S. Congress, the U.S. Embassy in India, and the Government of India, with the result that the Project was terminated. He also came out strongly against anthropologists cooperating with the U.S. military in pursuit of the Vietnam War. (One of our Berkeley anthropologists was supplying strategic ethnographic information to the military as a paid consultant, in effect providing intelligence information for the Pentagon.) In 1968 Gerry published “Is Anthropology Alive? Social Responsibility in Social Anthropology” as part of a major social responsibilities symposium in *Current Anthropology*. This became a historical benchmark for anthropological ethics,

reflected in the first code of ethics in our profession (the 1971 "Principles of Professional Responsibility") which he co-authored as a member of the Committee on Ethics.

The American Anthropological Association came close to splitting over the Vietnam War. In 1971 Gerry was nominated for president of the AAA on a platform opposing the immorality of the war and anthropologists' complicity with it, together with advocacy of social responsibility in anthropologists' research, teaching, and practice. He was one of four candidates, three nominated by the association's nomination committee, and he by the previously never-invoked process of nomination by at least five members (he was nominated by five from each of two major departments). He was ultimately defeated by some high-handed maneuvering on the part of a conservative Berkeley faculty member who was at the time president of the association. Gerry was characterized to the other presidential contenders as a radical extremist whose election could destroy the association. As a consequence of this McCarthyite action, two of the other three candidates were persuaded to withdraw and throw their support to the single remaining and eminent opposition candidate. The character assassination and underhanded rigging of the election that led to Gerry's defeat is one of the darker chapters in the history of our professional association.

Gerry's leadership on these and other social issues during those years played a decisive role in forging the social consciousness of myself and other anthropology graduate students at Berkeley and nationwide. It was a major factor cited in his award of an honorary doctorate by the University of Stockholm on the occasion of its centennial in 1978.

The Support for Ethnic Studies

The 1960s and 1970s also saw the rise of the "new" Indian movement, one that I have since detailed in several academic articles and books. I became one of a number of activist students on the Berkeley campus who supported the Third World Strike for an ethnic studies college. In the end, we didn't get a college, but the university did eventually agree to a Department of Ethnic Studies. In the summer and fall of 1969 I became a volunteer instructor for the first Native American studies class taught at the university, "Native American Liberation." This was just before the Alcatraz occupation by Bay Area Indian students, many of whom were students in this class. Gerry played a significant role in the development of this course, and therefore in the new Native American studies program, in the following way. Since the Native American studies program had not yet been finally approved by the university officials, Gerry sponsored the course with anthropology credit. I was a graduate teaching associate in Anthropology at the time, so it was arranged that I would coordinate the class. By the following year the Native American studies program was off and running.

Gerry supported the Ethnic Studies Program through the years it was fighting for the legitimacy that becoming a Department would confer. He was for three years (1984-87) a member of the Program's Executive Committee. During that time, an administrative "Council for Special Curricula" was appointed, to "oversee" the Program. It later became the "Council for Ethnic Studies Curricula." Gerry served on these throughout their existence (1984-93), and was Chair of the Council (1988-93) until it became at last a Department.

The NIMH grant mentioned above that I had been awarded enabled me to do field research in Alaska during 1970-71. Upon my return to Berkeley from Alaska, I became an Acting Assistant Professor of Native American studies (NAS) in the new Ethnic Studies Program. During the next several years, ethnic studies waged a number of battles for legitimacy with the university administration. One by one, the university officials replaced the activist student leaders of ethnic studies with less militant program chairs and instructors. Although my role in the strike and the new department had been minor, my turn finally came. Despite unanimously positive recommendations from the NAS chair, faculty, and students, I was informed by the Provost that I would not be reappointed for the academic year 1973-74. The administration's excuse was that, although I had been granted an official leave-of-absence, I had not yet completed the Ph.D. dissertation. The truth is that I was so busy developing NAS courses and attending to other urgent program matters that I had temporarily put aside the dissertation. Again, Gerry came to my assistance. He was joined by the Faculty Senate, the American Federation of Teachers faculty union, the Association of Radical Anthropologists, Congressman Ronald Dellums, and the entire Ethnic Studies faculty and students, among others, in advocating my reappointment. Under this pressure, the Provost and I "cut a deal." The university would give me a final, one year appointment as a Lecturer to enable me to finish my dissertation if I agreed to resign at the end of the term. Gerry became the chair of my dissertation committee, and with his solid support and that of the committee (comprising Robert Blauner, Nelson Graburn, and Jack Forbes), together with a course reduction in my teaching load by the Native American studies program, I was able to complete my dissertation and receive the Ph.D. in anthropology in the spring of 1974.

Since then, throughout my academic career, Gerry has never failed to step in as a key reference to assist me to secure grants and teaching positions. He has always responded to my requests promptly and substantially. I am certain that his other students and associates have also found this to be true. This is one of his outstanding qualities—one which has subsequently set a high moral standard for me in my relationships to my own students and academic colleagues. Following Gerry's example, I have felt a particular responsibility to be diligent in this respect, and have received many awards of recognition from student groups during my academic career as a result.

Gerry's fundamental humanism, devotion to students, and ethical contributions that I have outlined above are a major part of the Berreman legacy. They should take their rightful place along side of his equally noteworthy scholarly contributions to anthropology.

Works Cited

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