CELEBRATING THE LIFE & LEGACY OF
PROFESSOR GERALD BERREMAN

A Symposium for launching the Berreman-Yamanaka Fund & HimalayanStudies@Berkeley

Friday, October 14, 2016
10 Stephens Hall
University of California, Berkeley
Prof. Gerald Berreman was an American anthropologist and ethnographer who was known for his theory on the caste system in India, as well as his contributions to the ethical practice of anthropology itself.

Prof. Berreman's anthropological research focused on issues surrounding the environment and development in the Himalayan regions of India and Nepal. For about 40 years, he studied issues of caste, gender, class and environment in their historical contexts in the Indian region of Garhwal and the city of Dehradun. His scholarship produced a significant long-term study of social inequality and the environment in the Garhwal region of North India and in the central Bazaar of Dehra Dun. A marvelous record of his village studies, *In Safri’s Home: Professor Gerald Berreman’s Photo-Diary from India (1957-1972)*, a collection housed in the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life in The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, may be consulted at http://bit.ly/In-Safris-Home

Prof. Berreman joined UC Berkeley’s Department of Anthropology in 1959 and remained there until his retirement in 2001. During his time on campus, he was an outspoken critic of the Vietnam War and of the United States’ Cold War entanglements and engagements. He was also a major figure in a campaign for socially responsible anthropology. He played a significant role in promoting (and writing) an ethics code that affirmed anthropologists’ primary responsibility should be to the people they study. He also was an early proponent of transparency in social science research.

Prof. Berreman earned a Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree in anthropology from the University of Oregon in 1952 and 1953, respectively. He received his PhD in cultural anthropology from Cornell University in 1959, and got honorary degrees from the University of Stockholm and the Garhwal University in India. He taught in Sweden, India and Nepal.
The ISAS Conference Room, 10 Stephens Hall, UC Berkeley

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<td><strong>“FACTS ON THE GROUND” IN THE HIMALAYAS AND ACADEMIC FASHION IN HIMALAYAN STUDIES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>THE COLLECTIVE SPONSORSHIP OF THE RENOVATIONS OF THE SVAYAMBHŪ CAITYA OF KATHMANDU IN THE LATER MALLA ERA</strong></td>
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THE
BERREMAN
YAMANAKA
FUND
at the Institute for
South Asia Studies
at
UC Berkeley

Established in memory of Gerald Berreman, by his wife Keiko Yamanaka and family, the goal of the Berreman-Yamanaka Endowment is to support Himalayan Studies across Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan.
Gerald Berreman took anthropology to the forefront of a public and politically engaged anthropology. His fifty-plus-year career was dedicated to the longitudinal study of what was previously called social stratification theory and what Berreman labeled Institutionalized Inequality, focusing on class, caste, ethnicity, and gender. He compared caste in the Hindu villages of the Himalayas with caste as it was “performed” in the pluralistic marketplace and central bazaar of Dehra Dun in the central plains. Long before Judith Butler introduced the notion of performativity, Berreman wrote and taught generations of graduate students to understand social roles as shaped by public performances of the multiple selves behind malleable social roles, depending on the nature of the particular social interactions and contexts in which these were played out, as if on a stage. His article “Behind Many Masks” is a classic statement of Berreman’s understanding of self and other from a social psychological and ethnomethodological perspective.

One of my favorite photos of Gerry is one in which he is standing proudly and smiling ear to ear in front of the “Data Hotel” in his beloved field sire in Dehradun. My reflections will focus on Gerry as an activist and public anthropologist.

Gerry Berreman’s anthropological writings were deeply influenced by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s: the US civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the Free Speech movement, and, later, the anti-apartheid divestment movement during which he and dozens of Berkeley faculty were arrested. His article in Dell Hymes’ game-changing edited volume Reinventing Anthropology, “Bringing it All Back Home,” in which Gerry rages against US entanglements in the Cold War, introduced the idea of an engaged ethnography, a “scholarship with commitment,” as Pierre Bourdieu would later call it. From his blistering address on “The Greening of the American Anthropological Association” (delivered at the plenary session of the American Anthropological Association’s 69th Annual Meetings, San Diego, November 19, 1970 and published in Critical Anthropology in 1971) through his 2003 article on “Ethics versus ‘Realism’” (in Ethics and the Profession of Anthropology, 2nd edition, edited by Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban) Berreman’s insistence on a transparent and critically ethical approach to social and public issues was inspired by his own intellectual mentor, C. Wright Mills.

When Professor Berreman was awarded an honorary doctorate at the University of Stockholm, Sweden in 1974 he was honored for “having been a courageous spokesman for a practice of social science which remains independent and critical in its stance toward political interests.” One of Gerry’s closest Indian colleagues, Ved Prakash Vatuk, praised Gerry for having “supported the freedom of Indians, but also the freedom of Vietnamese, Cubans, Blacks of the U.S. and Brazilian Indians. During the Vietnam crisis, his dignified method of non-cooperation was apparent. He not only opposed the war but he refused to train Peace Corps Volunteers going to India because he thought that a nation which was annihilating a people in one country cannot be truly interested in doing good to another. His friends chose power, money, and comfort, while he laid his life on the line to voice the fears and hopes of the downtrodden.”

I was introduced to Gerry Berreman in 1969, soon after I arrived in California, by our mutual friend and my first anthropological mentor, Hortense Powdermaker, who had recently retired from Queens College in NYC and come to live at the Alfred Kroeber compound on Arch Street in North Berkeley. Kroeber had died in 1960 but Hortense and Theodora Kroeber held frequent salons in their neighboring homes at which Gerry Berreman and I were frequent guests. Hortense, Gerry, and I joked about our representing three successive generations of critical or, as Hortense preferred, “avant-garde” anthropologists. We shared a few formative experiences, each of us having gone to the American “South” at a decisive moment in the transformation of American race relations there. Hortense went to Sunflower County, Mississippi in the 1930s to study the effects of the Jim Crow laws on race relations there (see her book After Freedom, reissued in 1993). Gerry lived in Montgomery, Alabama, where he was stationed in 1953-55 at Maxwell Air Force base just when the US Supreme Court abolished official race segregation in the public schools and when the military services were undergoing racial integration. It was also the time of the first rumblings of the Montgomery bus strike that lead to the American
civil rights movement. Gerry considered those years decisive with respect to his development of a broadly comparative
time line Bachan alia from his professor of social inequality that allowed him, for example, to compare caste relations in India, the American South and,
by further extension, to South Africa during apartheid. I also went South for two years in 1967-1968, joining a SNCC-
affiliated project in Selma, Alabama where I coordinated a field survey in several Black Belt counties on hunger and mal-
nutrition among tenants and sharecroppers that was presented as evidence 
in a class action suit; “Peoples v. the Department of Agriculture” (1968), in the

In Berkeley, Hortense Powdermaker, Gerry Berreman, and I formed a close bond around the view that anthropology could be a tool for human liberation. Gerry’s lifelong commitment to the study of social inequality (see Berreman 1960, 1962b, 1972a, 1976, 1980) alongside his masterful theoretical and methodological contributions to anthropological “symbolic interactionism” (see Berreman 1962a, 1971, 1972b, 1984) shaped and transformed generations of Berkeley graduate students, among whom I was extremely lucky and extremely grateful to have been numbered.

R. THOMAS ROSIN
PROFESSOR EMERITUS, SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

I fondly remember standing outside the Berreman office door at UCB, enjoying the political cartoons, puns, and articles pasted to his door, under a note from the Chancellor’s Office requesting undecorated doors to honor the building’s décor. Gerry was fearless in his pursuit of inquiry and critique into the ethics of his profession, his field of Himalayan studies, and above all the principles and values that guide this and other nations. In unifying scholarship and citizenship, he was committed to human dignity, and the issues of social inequality and stigma. Yet, he handled these matters with a sense of humor through an agility in story telling that keep open commu-
nication and mutual understanding. For example, in his sharp critiques of anthropology, we can take delight in amusing titles that challenged our profession: “Anemic and Emetic Analyses in Social Anthropology” (1966), “Is Anthropology Alive? Social Responsibility in Social Anthropology” (1968), “Academic Colonialism: Not so Innocent Abroad” (1969), and “Himalayan Research: What, Whither, and Whether” (1978). In researching this politically dynamic Himalayan zone, be fearless, but don’t forget to meet your critics with style, grace, and humor, as Gerry Berreman did.

ROBERTO GONZALES
CHAIR & PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY, SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

Gerry also taught by telling stories. For example, when Laura Nader invited him to a small graduate seminar on “Anthropology and the Cold War” in the mid-1990s, students had an opportunity to talk with him about his experi-
ences. He told us about many things, some of which were sobering and even disturbing: about being approached in the early 1960s by the US Army to conduct psychological warfare in south Asia; about the Berkeley Vietnam War teach-ins in which he participated; about the UC Himalayan Border Countries Project which he quit after Pentagon funding began pouring in; and about his experiences with the AAA in the early 1970.

The first story went like this: In 1970, while serving as members of the Ethics Committee, Gerry, Eric Wolf, and Mar-
shall Sahlins wrote statements that condemned anthropologists’ involvement in counterinsurgency work in Thai-
land. Though some applauded their activism, others were outraged. David Price recently noted that:

Because Wolf and Berreman were members of the AAA Committee on Ethics, their early condemnations later became the focus of criticism by the accused anthropologists and others, and led to moves to remove Wolf and Berreman from the Ethics Committee. A 1971 AAA investigation led by Margaret Mead enraged many AAA members by focusing more criticism on Wolf (and) Berreman. . . . than on the anthropologists engaging in counterinsurgency work.

AAA members consequently rejected the Mead Committee report, and the entire episode eventually led to AAA’s first Ethics Code which among other things prohibited secret research, redirected research towards the interests of anthropological subjects, and established new levels of transparency.

This brings me to Gerry’s second story, which he told with an even more serious expression. The AAA’s rank and file supported Gerry’s efforts and nominated him as a candidate for the AAA presidency in 1970. But the Association president (and Berkeley colleague) George Foster worried. Years later, in an interview with historian Eric Wakin, Fos-
ter said, “We were concerned that the normal vote would be split among the other three candidates and Berreman, and felt Berreman would not represent that Association in as balanced a way as a candidate nominated according to accepted procedures.” Though Foster denied asking anyone to withdraw from the race, two out of three of Gerry’s
opponents dropped out. According to Gerry, one of those who withdrew later apologized and claimed that Foster had asked him to do it because “the radicals are trying a take-over of the Association.” At this point, it became a two-way contest between Gerry and a well-known senior anthropologist who ultimately won. In Gerry’s words, “So much for the ethics of electoral democracy in the AAA of the time.”

I wonder what Gerry would think about our current state of affairs. I’m sure his sense of humor would be intact—So much for anthropological ethics in the 21st century, he might say. But I think he would also be doing his part to rouse the rabble or at least to encourage others to do so. We could use more of that in anthropology today.

I think it’s a testament to Gerry’s foresight that the same issues he raised decades ago have resurfaced in the 21st century with a vengeance (though some never went away): the militarization of anthropology, the problem of secret and clandestine research, ethics and social responsibility. And of course America’s caste system, which has become dramatically obvious in the wake of the killings of Treyvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner—and not so dramatically in our society’s rigid ethnic division of labor and de facto segregation, visible from the Silicon Valley in which I work to the hotels, neighborhoods, and streets of our nation’s capital. Gerry’s work on social inequality is perhaps more relevant today—at a time when even the corporate media express concern about America’s income inequality and social immobility—than when he was developing it more than three decades ago. I’m sure he would insist that we “bring it all back home” if he was here among us.

DONNA BRASSET-SHEARER
CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST

Gerry Berreman was my dissertation supervisor in the 1980s. It was the humanism embedded in the entire body of his scholarship that initially drew me to his work. But it was also his moral courage that I admired. Long in the habit of publicly speaking out against injustice and social inequality, he was a “selfless activist in the purest sense” as his longtime friend and anthropologist Ved Prakash Vatuk, said of him. But I also personally enjoyed the pleasure of reading his clear, incisive, and eloquent prose; the lack of affectation in his writing, and the accessibility of his ideas: He refused to follow the trend in those years of a scholarship that adopted a specialized, insider’s jargon that lent itself to obscure some of anthropology’s most valuable social messages. It was additionally no small matter to me that he treated his students with the same kind of empathetic respect that he extended to the individuals he came to know through his studies in the Himalayas. He left a legacy of inspiration and research relevance to generations of future anthropologists.

ISABELLE CLARK-DECES
PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

I started working with Gerry Berreman as an undergraduate in the mid ’80’s, a period of great change in anthropological research. I was then a single mother and Gerry took it upon himself to mentor me and admit me into the Berkeley graduate program. I was fortunate to have him as my graduate advisor just as the discipline moved from the reductive elegance of scientific and interpretive models to experimental ethnography. Gerry was somewhat ambivalent about it all in the beginning. However, it was a testament to his commitment to his students and to his intellect that, despite this early reaction to the so-called “crisis” of our discipline, he was to become the champion of socially responsible anthropology. He gave me complete freedom to take the courses I wanted to take, attend the nine-month Tamil language program in Madurai, and choose the topic of my dissertation. I’m not sure he liked the fact that I wrote my thesis on the ritual practices I had recorded in rural Tamil Nadu, but if he were of two minds about it he kept it to himself. As my own career developed, I’ve come to understand how much I owe to Gerry and appreciate the influence he’s had on the sociological study of caste in India and race inequality in the US. I also have come to get a sense of who Gerry was and what made him inseparable from the institution where he had spent his entire career. Gerry was brilliant, he had a great sense of humor and he always supported me. He was in fact generous and kind to all those who worked with him, treating us as colleagues and even as members of his extended family. Being his advisee was more than being a student; it was a life-long bond with him and Keiko. And while I will miss him as a mentor and friend, I’m comforted by the knowledge that his accomplishments, his students and his intellect are enduring and will continue to exemplify the very best in anthropology.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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