

I considered the potential loss, as well as the implications of keeping her surgery secret, in this light.

Secrets are a difficult, but very real part of human lives. Emotionally, secrets can hold a huge part of our collective lives as a kind of internal bookmark, something we hide from others, continuing on as though they don't exist. As we keep on with our daily "normals," secrets can become a weight—something we dread but also feel we must hold inside of ourselves. A secret is at once a trust and an albatross. We all keep secrets. As I've explored the boundaries of student and teacher interaction in formal and informal classrooms, I am struck by how much we (as the human animal) seem to feel we *must* internalize, and hold far away from any critical or sympathetic eye, those parts of us that are so real, so important to who we are in day-to-day existence. It is striking that the parts of us that seem to matter most are the same parts that we work tirelessly to hide from others, to *not* share, to *never* divulge. Why do we suffer the weight of secrets rather than open up to confidants?

Larger questions in the context of anthropology might be: Is an "ethnography of secrets" possible? How do different people understand the concept of the "secret"? What, if anything, might secrets tell us? Knowing that all engagements with others are partial, can we really presume to understand of the depth of the ones we study? If we cannot break the shell of our own hidden, secret selves, can we do so for others?

The notion and context of the "secret" is varied indeed. There is private information that we do not wish to turn into gossip. There are more colloquially known versions of the "secret," painful in their own right and more intractable than others. "Unconscionable secrets" are particularly powerful. This phrase appeared in a recent newspaper article about the demise of a marriage, where the immediacy of the term was unmistakable: "unconscionable" was a codeword for "Oh my god the husband/wife must be gay/lesbian." *Not* "telling all" in this case was a clear violation of what "marriage" was supposed to be all about. On the other hand, some secrets *must* be held (as I learned) in order to respect others' wishes. Secrets come in many different flavors.

Secrets can do something else that is hard for all of us: they can become a way to keep the truth out. This may be as fundamental as respect, or as powerful as self-preservation. It may be as complex as maintaining familial relations and recognizing that some sort of peculiar diplomacy must take precedence over personal pain. Whatever it may be, our ability to explore secrets—whether in content, use or conceptualization—poses serious dilemmas. Absent their disclosure, how can we be certain that what we hear is not filtered by some need to maintain secrecy? If we recognize that key aspects of the "others" we study may be self-consciously kept secret or comprise some hidden part of *their* identity, can we ever be sure we have captured the knowledge we seek?

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Society for Linguistic Anthropology

MARK ALLEN PETERSON AND JAMES STANLAW, CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

On Heartfelt Commitments and Gifts in Linguistic Anthropology

By Debra Spitulnik (Emory U)

At the end of the spring 2009 semester I wrote a letter to my "Language and Culture" students. We had read about Western Apache oral traditions (Basso), the register of US defense intellectuals (Cohn), "Eskimo" "words" for "snow" (Martin), Spanish-English codeswitching (Zentella), and my work on recycled media phrases and Zambian language ideologies, among other things. We had studied the intertextuality of Martin Luther King and Obama's speeches. Dialogicality was a big course theme. But beyond a theoretical introduction to linguistic anthropology, beyond a toolkit for investigating the centrality of language in human experience, and beyond a whirlwind tour of communication styles and habits around the globe, what else did I wish to give them to take away, and put into circulation?

The evening before the last class, I posted the letter on our electronic bulletin board. The next morning, I projected it and read it out loud. It was a powerful moment. Letters from professors to students are usually business-like and private. I share a condensed version of mine here in the hopes that others will seek to share more about our lives as teachers with our students, and that we will fashion more spaces where expressing both a scientific and a heartfelt commitment to the subfield of linguistic anthropology matters and makes a difference.

Wishes for Students of Language and Culture

I wish for you to see the norms and expectations of your own linguaculture... I wish for you to see this as foundational for who you are, but also as something deeply contingent. I wish for you to be able to shift your frame of reference, to break your habitual grooves of speaking and thinking—Be the Goy in the Jewish Ghetto, Be the Pacifist/Feminist among US Defense Specialists, Be the Visitor to the Arizona Reservation, Be the Urban African for whom Linguistic Hybridity is a Way of Life, Be the Person who Tries to Balance Interdependency with Individualism.

I wish for you to push your comfort zones, to appreciate other ways of being and communicating and to bring some of this into your lives, into your friendships, into your workplaces. I wish for you to imagine—and perhaps even practice—a linguaculture of accommodation. I wish for you to resist the forces that say that all languages are not created equal. I wish for you to feel the power of silence. I wish for you to feel the strength of stories. I wish for you to be agents in human language's complex oscillation between centripetal and centrifugal forces. You can work to support those centers of language standardization and stabilization that

serve just causes. And you can work to play with and promote all the marvelous variety and openness that is human language.

Don't let your relation to language and languages ever become flattened or routine. Experiment with slowing down time, with sitting and writing, with reviving genres that seem to be slipping away. Know that the principle of linguistic relativity rings true every day, and should continue to. Know that strict scientific standards of causality do not always apply when it comes to the relation between language and culture. Know that we can be rigorous in our inquiries nonetheless. Know that there is no anthropology without linguistics—and no linguistics without anthropology.

It happened at long tables pushed up against the walls, stumbling over backpacks to write with dried-out markers. I wish for you all to leave this space, with echoes of our new communal property resonating and bearing fruit in other areas of your life ... no matter where you go or who you become.

Please send your comments, contributions, news, announcements and movie ideas to Jim Stanlaw (stanlaw@ilstu.edu) or Mark Allen Peterson (petersm2@muohio.edu).

Society for Medical Anthropology

KATHLEEN RAGSDALE, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The Future of HIV/AIDS: Why Anthropologists Are Needed More than Ever in a Global Recession

By Douglas A Feldman (SUNY Brockport)

These are financially bleak times, and it is not clear whether spending for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment will be maintained at current levels, either domestically or globally. On the international level, it is uncertain whether the Global Fund to Prevent AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria will retain funding from European nations during this severe global recession. Similarly, it is questionable whether the \$48 billion allocation over the next five years for the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) will remain fully funded.

It is for this reason that we must become more effective in what we do. Anthropological expertise is now needed more than ever to ensure that HIV/AIDS monies are well-spent and successfully target intended goals. HIV prevention programs must be culturally sensitive and culturally appropriate, based upon solid qualitative and quantitative research by anthropologists and other social and behavioral scientists.

No longer do we have the luxury of spending billions of dollars on woefully ineffective abstinence-only HIV prevention programs—programs that have been proven not to work—to mollify the political agenda of the religious right. No longer should countries and organizations be required by PEPFAR to sign a statement condemning sex work, while some of those same countries (including those where sex work is perfectly legal) and organizations