



Happy Retirement, Matt!

Dear Matt,

What would my Brown experience have been without you? You pushed me in so many amazing ways. Your no--nonsense truth telling was exactly what I needed as a 21-year-old, "wet behind the ears," graduate student. I can't believe it has been 21 years since my Classical Theory seminar with you, Jen, Caroline, and Lisa. It was a memorable one. I don't know if you remember, but I quoted you in the Preface to my book. In that seminar, you asked us whether the role of anthropologists was to change society or tell stories. I'm still working on answering that question 21 years later.

So many great memories. I loved being your Teaching Assistant and encouraging you to wear a dress to class. What fun!!!! I remember you pulling out your prelims as evidence that while mine weren't great, yours probably weren't either (I'm sure they were brilliant). I remember you taking the time to attend my very first AAA presentation and telling me that I would need to heighten the level of my discourse for a job talk. I hadn't even considered a job, yet, as a second year student. However, when I finally did give a job talk, I remembered what you said, and you better believe I applied it!

Thank you for the wonderful words of advice, the constant support, and the many letters of recommendation that you wrote for me over the years. I am so glad that Ken Guest's Introduction to Anthropology

textbook, which I use every semester, covers your work on machismo. It connects me to you constantly. Of course, I name drop you to my students, casually telling them that you were one of my favorite professors and mentors.

I wish you a wonderful retirement filled with however much or however little of anthropology you desire at this stage of your life. You have earned it!

Love, Angela McMillan Howell (and your intellectual lineage in Baltimore)

Dear Matt,

I still remember my first seminar with you, sometime in the late 90s. I was never very confident in grad school. I didn't think I belonged, and I had tremendous anxiety, particularly in the context of seminars or conferences. I will never forget the day I very cautiously offered an answer to a question you raised about the materials for that day. I don't remember what the texts were or what the question was or what I said, but I remember your response. You told me that my comment was insightful. It was the first time someone had told me that. And I think it was the beginning of me finding my voice, pushing against the idea that grad school (and the academy) was not a place for me or people like me, and it is something I carry with me to this day.

Thanks for your incredible support over the years. I wish you a life of happiness and a fulfilling journey as you move to other adventures.

Un abrazo,

María Elena

Dearest Matt,

Thank you. Thank you for agreeing to be my advisor when I felt entirely lost and undecided. Thank you for telling me that there might be two reasons why a topic is not thoroughly studied: One, maybe it just wasn't worth it. Two, maybe I was on to something... And then assuring me that you did indeed believe I was on to something. Thank you for all the times when we sat together during my research and you asked me not only about the intricacies of my work but also SO much about the bigger picture. Those big questions made me delve into my work further as well as take me out of it to regain perspective and remember collegiality and solidarity in the midst of PhD obscurity. Thank you for walking around Istanbul with me during fieldwork, making me rethink how I conceptualized and described each neighborhood. Thank you for making me stop hesitating as I asked for recommendation letters over the years - and there were many - and for saying it outright that you would "always write for me." Thank you Matt, for always writing and rooting for me.

I was your student when you weren't only teaching and

researching but when you also had multiple administrative hats taking you across the globe every few weeks. And you told me your kids and your students had to come first. And I felt I did. Thank you for all the drafts you read on those airplanes and all the jet lag you spent relaying comments to me.

I have learned from you what it means to support, encourage and protect one's students when academia can be hostile and precarious and when novice candidates' inexperience and existential wavering can overwhelm. I am forever proud to be your student.

Yağmur

Istanbul, April 15, 2021



Querido Matt,

Why retire when you are still filled with youth and social energy?!

Thank you for your mentorship at Brown and beyond... and of course for so, so much more. I think back to warm and vivid memories about undergraduate thesis conversations and our adventures at Los Andes. Hopefully we will get to see each other soon - in Mexico, Cincinnati, Atlanta, or back at Finie's on Hope

With love and appreciation,

Aron



Dear Matt,

Congrats on your retirement! Thank you for your continuing support and advice over the years. I still remember sitting in your office as a first-year graduate student when you flipped a coin because I couldn't decide whether to do fieldwork in Brazil or Mexico!

What I will always remember and carry forward is your mentoring advice. In my first year, you encouraged me to email someone whose work I admired to meet for coffee at AAA. I was so nervous to do this as a young graduate student, but I still remember how valuable this was---this person later even ended up being my book reviewer and a tenure reviewer!

Similarly, I don't think I realized it at the time, but when I took your Latin America ethnography class, you carefully selected books that would not only be helpful to each of our own projects, but that were written by people we could connect with to build our research careers. This person became a long-term mentor for my work. From a small graduate program, you helped your students develop into committed, generous and rigorous scholars through your example. Now as I enter the next phase in my own career, I look back fondly on how you not only helped guide me as a student barely out of undergraduate with little anthropology background to become a confident anthropologist, but also how you helped plant seeds that have also helped me build

my mid-career networks. You also continued to support me through my winding road towards my current job. I appreciate all you have done, and for continuing to be there whenever I have a question or any news to share, large or small.

Best of luck in your retirement!

Felicitades!

Rebecca (Meyers) Galembo

*From Paula Dias*

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Dear Matt,

Thanks for all the support, encouragement, and recommendation letters during my PhD studies. Also, thanks for always challenging me to engage meaningfully with Brazilian scholarship. I don't know to what extent I succeeded, but striving for this goal had a lasting impact on my work.

I wish you a healthy, relaxing, and joyful retirement.

Abraços,  
Paula

Dear Matt,

I don't think too many anthropologists can say that their dissertation advisor was so committed to their research that they actually visited them in the field—especially not when the "field" was a garbage dump! My memories of you in Jardim Gramacho—stepping over the sewage in front of the house I rented, riding the truck up to the dump in the early morning, sitting in the mud and chatting with people in Portunhol while I tried my best to record an interview, and later that evening sharing a beer with folks at Deca's bar—all stand out as clear examples of just how dedicated you have been as a teacher and mentor. And then there was the time before that visit, when I met you in Caxambu for the 2008 ANPOCs meetings. I remember us sitting out on a patio table, smoking a cigarette, and you asking me if I was being diligent about writing field notes. I was so engrossed at that time in the early months of fieldwork with doing every single thing possible that my mornings began at 5 AM and ended when I crashed, often past midnight. I was jotting things down here and there but I was also so incredibly exhausted every day. You told me in response, "If you don't write about it, it didn't happen." That was the best fieldwork advice I ever got. To write, write, write. To never forget to write.

In many ways, it's not surprising that you went to all that effort to visit me when in Brazil. You have been so committed to my education and projects from the very beginning, when I first showed up at Brown as a

prospective student. I remember mostly finishing my visit, maybe it was the second day on the morning I was going to go. And you saw me in the hallway of Giddings and even though we had already had a meeting, you asked me to stop by your office before I left. I don't remember the specifics of our conversation but I do remember coming away with the sense that you would be an incredibly dedicated mentor. And I wasn't wrong. I'm very grateful for all your support in big and small ways—supporting me when I wanted to take a year to explore intellectual tangents before coming back to my dissertation topic, bringing me into the CLACS family when I returned from fieldwork, breaking out that bottle of whisky from your desk drawer as a joke when I was panicking about prelims, being there for me in those times of struggles...

As the cliché often goes, it's often been years later that I have realized how much your teaching has influenced me and shaped my intellectual trajectory. You always asked me such big theoretical questions. I was a second-year grad student and you were telling me I had to completely rethink the informal economy. At the time, the question seemed too much to comprehend. But in the end, that's much of what I tried to do in my book. I'm so grateful for the ways you pushed me to see the full potential of my ethnography. My book has your mark all over it.

Most of all, I cherish the many, many conversations we have had over the years—including when we bopped around Vancouver a few years ago when you visited after giving a talk at UBC and all our

breakfasts/lunches/coffees during AAA meetings with Jen. I hope those continue post-retirement! I also hope you know how grateful I am for your steadfast mentorship and care across 17 years.

Big hugs,  
Kathleen



Dear Matt,

I can still remember very clearly the emails that you sent to me when I was applying to Brown and still living in Chile. You promised me that the weather wouldn't be too bad, and that there was a great community of people interested in Latin American Studies. I remember being excited about returning to the US to study, but also terrified. Your emails convinced me that I could do it and that you would be there to help me through it. And you were. And I'm so grateful for that.

Along the way you were always the one to ask us to look up from the minutiae and think about the bigger picture. I hear your voice all the time in my head when I ask my students to do the same. I think it's only now that I'm starting to figure out how to respond to some of those big questions that you used to ask me about my research back then.

One of my favorite memories has to be when we met Kathleen in Brazil. It was really fun seeing you in Jardim Gramacho joking with everyone in Portuñol and imagining what you must be like in the field. The conversations we had over dinner that night were probably more useful than any seminar in helping us to figure out our own ethnographer selves.



Thank you, Matt, for assuring me that you would always be there to help - whether it was by calming me down when I thought I wouldn't get through prelims, giving me a place to stay in the summer when money was tight, writing me far too many recommendation letters, or assuring me over breakfast at the AAAs that I would someday get a job. I'm so grateful for all your advice and support.

Enjoy your retirement and all the adventures that await you!

Abrazos,  
Jen

Dear Matt,

Congratulations on such a productive  
and inspirational career in anthropology!  
It's my honor to have you on my  
committee. I've always looked at  
you as an academic role model  
I aspire to become in the future.  
I vividly remember reading your books  
and told myself: "I must write a  
book like this in five years." I  
look forward to finishing the rest  
of my PhD journey with you. Wish I  
could say this in person. Again,  
congratulations!

Warmly,  
Troy 蔡一峰  
April 8, 2022

I vividly recall the first time I met Matt, for my Brown admission interview on Skype - remember there was that thing before Covid and Zoom. I was extremely nervous and over prepared for a thousand questions I had conjured up in my mind over many nights, ready to rapid fire at the first signal what I thought were smart answers to land me a spot. Then Matt appeared on the screen with a smile and asked what soccer team I am a fan of. Then he asked a few more questions which cut to the essence of my research, and virtually disappeared from my life until I got to Providence.

He is still very much the same person I knew from that days; a great human being with a sense of humor and calming presence; and a great mentor with an uncanny knack for dissipating tension, making someone feel at home, untangling convoluted thoughts, and cutting to the core. Always understanding, accessible, sagacious, and good-humored, his physical presence on the campus will be missed, but what is retirement but a chapter in human relations in which you make other people come to your place so that they can talk with you about their stuff over better food and drinks - perhaps with the Besiktas game on?



Congratulations on your retirement!

*From Kendra Fehrer*

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