Catherine Benoît, Professor of Anthropology, Connecticut College. Transcript of video message sent from Marseille.

Tribute to Sally and Richard Price

I first met Sally and Rich at Berkeley in 1990. At the time, I was a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of African American Studies while Sally and Richard were visiting fellows at the Stanford Humanities Center.

I could not have anticipated that this first meeting would mark the beginning of a long-lasting friendship, with follow-up encounters taking place on several continents: the United States, where I ended up teaching, but also Paris, Martinique, and French Guiana where university meetings and friendly visits alternated, often taking place around a Saamaka or Creole meal. Another shared space was Saint-Martin where Sally and Richard spent time for their book on Romare Bearden. This earned me a formal interview with Richard at their house in Anses d' Arlet about cockfighting and vodou on S-M. At these multi-sited gatherings I had a chance to re-connect with Sally and Richard, as well as other mutual friends and got to know many of their students, former students, and colleagues.

The initial encounter in California reassured me about the directions of my research interests. The theoretical framework of my doctoral work was the concept of creolization and I was unaware at the time of the debates it had sparked across the Americas. In the 1980s and early 1990s, French Caribbean anthropology, which at the time was essentially devoted to the French overseas departments, was obsessed with the concepts of acculturation and assimilation, if not the absence of any original Caribbean culture. Because of the political status of "départementalisation," most of research emphasized the mechanisms of cultural alienation. The legacy of slavery, colonialism, and post-colonial context were approached as a kind of dispossession. Either slavery was perceived as a period of no cultural production, emancipation marking the emergence of a Creole culture yet to be defined, or, on the contrary, the plantation, by virtue of the institutional framework it offered, was seen as having enabled the development of a culture that emancipation, and then the law of departmentalization, had wiped out, to the point where there was no longer any "cultural hinterland." Cultural facts were then described in terms of popular traditions, regional folklore. There was no room for Native American or African heritages or precolonial American or African history. This was the period when Édouard Glissant

published *Le Discours antillais*, a discourse on assimilation, dispossession, alienation, and wandering.

Besides all the texts dealing with the processes on creolization published by Sally and Richard at the time, such as *Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rain Forest* and *Caribbean Contours*, Richard's graduate student seminar at Stanford was a transformative experience for me. We would read and comment on the fundamental texts of American and British Caribbean anthropology. This seminar introduced us to the intellectual history of the field and the personalities who made it up, and enabled me to develop an analytical framework that I could not have discovered on my own, since the field of Caribbean studies was not taught in France in those years. Without this seminar, I would never have written the theoretical chapter of my first book *Corps, Jardins, Mémoires. Anthropologie du corps et de l'espace à la Guadeloupe*, published ten years later. Nor would I have taught the history of the field or trained students who are now professors or researchers in France.

During their time at Stanford, Sally published *Primitive Arts in Civilized Places,* which she presented during a lecture at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. A memorable one, which made me aware of the anthropological stakes involved in the development of museography and triggered subsequent work. Twenty-five years later, André Delpuech and I published a series of papers on the statues of contemporary Haitian art, those of the *bizango*, exhibited in major American and European museums as "authentic" vodou secret societies artefact. Our understanding of the "primitivization" of Haitian art in post-colonial ethnographic museums owed a lot to Sally's seminal lecture.

I would like to emphasize the impact of those early meetings with Sally and Richard, and those that followed. They were all occasions, whether in an institutional context or one of friendship, to discuss the progress of their writings, and the epistemological questions they raised. I remember numerous discussions on most of their publications such as *Alabi's World*, *Two Evenings in Saramaka, The Convict and the Colonel*, *Romare Bearden: The Caribbean Dimension*, and *Travels with Tooy*. These encounters and exchanges have enabled me to hold my ground between two intellectual national traditions that have ignored each other for too long.

Writing this sober and all-too-brief tribute has enabled me to resolve a dilemma I have been wrestling with for months. For the past four years, I have worked in the Indian Ocean, more

specifically the Comoros, including Mayotte, which became a French overseas department in 2011. Since last summer, I have oscillated between writing a fiction — a choral tale, a polyphonic narrative — or an ethnography, a voice narrative to give an account of the transformation of the Mozambique Channel into a marine cemetery where tens of thousands of Comorian nationals died as a result of the colonial occupation of Mayotte. I have finally opted for a voice narrative. Indeed, while writing this tribute, I realized how much I was influenced by Rich's *Rainforest Warriors* as I am using my anthropological perspective to fight on a legal terrain the deterritorialization and massacre of a people. From creolization to political and legal commitment, I owe Sally and Richard my personal commitment to the people I work with for this manuscript.