

## Tribute to Hecky

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I'd like to begin by offering our condolences to Tammy and to the rest of Hecky's family, especially his children, on behalf of all of us students and the whole BARA family.

It's an honor, although a sad honor, to be here to remember Hecky. If you had told me six months ago that we would have an event here to celebrate Hecky, I wouldn't have been surprised. I wouldn't have been surprised if we were here to celebrate his work in the Philippines to support low-income housing, or if we were celebrating his efforts to turn his bamboo bike dream into a real sustainable development success, or if we were celebrating his efforts to encourage or force or nudge the American Anthropological Association to take union organizing seriously, or if we were celebrating his efforts to make anthropology a real public tool, to make anthropology speak to people – speak to their concerns, speak to their issues – and offer real solutions. I am surprised, though, and shocked and saddened, that we are here to remember Hecky in this way.

I think that the response of students, especially students that never met Hecky in person, is a real testament to what he leaves behind. After his passing, several students told me, "Wow, I never knew Hecky, but I always wanted to meet him because I heard so much about his energy and excitement." This type of energy that Mamadou talked about. "I heard so much about what he has tried to do." I did have the benefit of knowing Hecky personally. We wrote a paper together in Tom McGuire's class about how to make anthropology useful by giving it a public voice. I worked with him on Diane Austin's Nogales project looking at alternative, ecologically sustainable technologies. And I shared an office with him on and off for a few years here in the Geronimo building. During all of these collaborations, though, I think what we did best was disagree. In fact, I'm sure the thing we did best was disagree. But we always disagreed with a lot of enthusiasm. We almost always disagreed with very long emails. (Actually, as a little aside, when we first talked about how to remember Hecky, I suggested we create the Annual Hecky Villanueva Award for the Longest and Most Impassioned E-Mails. I think

this memorial was probably a better idea.) And, most importantly, we disagreed in a really passionate and constructive way that was built on respect. It was always easy to disagree with Hecky respectfully because he so clearly embodied a desire to work for justice. He so clearly embodied a desire to work for the common good. And so, with that foundation, we could disagree over how that would happen, we could disagree over what worked best, but we were always disagreeing from this place of fundamental agreement and shared commitment.

Now, with Hecky's passing, we lose not just his presence, but we lose some of that energy. We lose some of that enthusiasm, some of that fight for justice. And I think that one of the most important things that we lose as anthropologists, as applied anthropologists, is his questioning, his insistence that we can do better, that we can strive for more.

I think that the decision to create a computer lab in his name – and I really thank BARA for dedicating this lab to him – is especially appropriate for a guy who claims to have blogged his way to a dissertation. Hecky had tremendous faith in the power of technology to serve as a tool for justice, to help address some of our shortcomings as applied anthropologists. I hope that all of us who knew him, and those of us who didn't know him, can really use this lab to realize his vision. I hope that we can use this lab, and when we walk in here say, "This isn't just a computer," right? "This is a tool for making anthropology count. This is a tool for promoting something that's going to make a difference in peoples' lives. This is a tool for bringing some of those hopes that Hecky had into reality."

So, again, I want to share our support for Tammy and the family. And I want to just use this time and this space to remember Hecky, and to remember what he stood for, and what he brought and shared with us... including those productive disagreements.