

Princeton University

Honors Faculty Members
Receiving Emeritus Status



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Kwame Anthony Appiah



Kwame Anthony Akroma-Ampim Kusi Appiah was born in 1954 in London, but grew up in Ghana. The society wedding of his parents, Joseph Emmanuel Appiah, a lawyer, politician, and diplomat from Ghana, and the novelist and children's writer Peggy Cripps, whose father had been Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, had been widely covered in the international press a year earlier, and is said to have been one of the inspirations for the film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. To say that Anthony was born into an unusual family would be an understatement.

Educated in both Ghana and England, Anthony earned his B.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge, and then went on to teach at Yale, Cornell, Duke, and Harvard universities before moving to Princeton in 2002. At Princeton, he held appointments in the Department of Philosophy and the University Center for Human Values, as well as being associated with the Center for African American Studies, the Programs in African Studies and Translation and Intercultural Communication, and the Departments of Comparative Literature and Politics. Though Anthony retired from Princeton in February 2014, and immediately took up an appointment as professor of philosophy and law at New York University, he and his spouse Henry Finder, editorial director of *The New Yorker*, continue to divide their time between New York City and their farm in Pennington, New Jersey.

Anthony's early publications include two books in philosophy of language, the area of his dissertation at Cambridge—*Assertion and Conditionals* (1985) and *For Truth in Semantics* (1986)—and an introduction to philosophy, *Necessary Questions* (1989). In the 1990s, he turned his attention to African studies, publishing the much-acclaimed *In My Father's House* (1992), an exploration of the role of

African and African American intellectuals in shaping contemporary African cultural life. *In My Father's House* won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and the Herskovitz Award of the African Studies Association for “the most important scholarly work in African studies published in English.” This was followed by *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race* (1996), which he coauthored with Amy Gutmann, who at the time was a professor in the Department of Politics at Princeton.

Anthony's move to Princeton in 2002 began a period of extraordinary productivity for him. He published *Bu Me Bé: Proverbs of the Akan* (2003), an annotated edition of 7,500 proverbs in Twi, the language of Asante, a book he coauthored with his mother; *Thinking It Through* (2004), an introduction to the different areas of philosophy; *The Ethics of Identity* (2005); *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006); *Experiments in Ethics* (2008); and *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (2010). The impact of Anthony's work—his books have been translated into many languages, including Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Indonesian, Italian, Korean, Portuguese and Spanish—is difficult to overstate. In December 2010, *Foreign Policy* named him one of the top 100 global thinkers, and in 2012 U.S. President Barack Obama presented him with the National Humanities Medal.

The recipient of numerous honors and awards, including election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society, and induction into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Anthony holds honorary degrees from Bard College, Berea College, Colby College, Colgate University, Columbia University, Dickinson College, the University of Edinburgh, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Harvard University, the New School, the University of Richmond, and Swarthmore College. In 2008, he was awarded the first Joseph B. and Toby Gittler Prize by Brandeis University for “outstanding and lasting scholarly contributions to racial, ethnic and/or religious relations.”

Interviewed about his retirement from Princeton and move to NYU in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Anthony said, “You don't

make a move away from a great university like Princeton unless there's a really attractive offer." As he told the *Chronicle*, it wasn't money that drew him. He said, "NYU has offered me the chance to pursue a new intellectual challenge and to finally have a job in the same town as my spouse." His colleagues and friends at Princeton could hardly begrudge him that.