

GUYANESE PROFESSOR AWARDED HIGHEST ACADEMIC HONOR IN THE U.S.A.



Guyanese-American Professor John R. Rickford of Stanford University was recently notified that he had been awarded one of the highest academic honors in the United States: Election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Founded in 1780, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences is one of the oldest and most prestigious learned societies and independent policy research centers in the U.S., convening leaders from the academic, business, and government sectors to respond to the challenges facing—and opportunities available to—the nation and the world. The Academy's work is advanced by its elected members, who are leaders in the academic disciplines, the arts, business, and public affairs from around the world.

Current and former members of the Academy include Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Mead, Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, Georgia O'Keefe, John Hope Franklin, John Updike, Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill, Laurence Olivier, Nelson Mandela, and more than 250 Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners.

Academy research currently focuses on education, the humanities and the arts; science, engineering, and technology policy; global security and international affairs; and American institutions and the public good.

John R. Rickford is the J.E. Wallace Sterling Professor of Linguistics and the Humanities at Stanford University. He is also professor, by courtesy, in Education, and Bass University Fellow in Undergraduate Education. He has been at Stanford since 1980, after teaching Linguistics at the University of Guyana from 1974 to 1984 and serving as Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts there. Prior to leaving Guyana for his university education on a US scholarship in 1968, he attended Sacred Heart RC

elementary school and Queen's College, where he also taught English for a year after completing his GCE "A" levels.

Professor Rickford received his BA with highest honors in Sociolinguistics from the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1971, and his Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania in 1979. He won a Dean's Award for distinguished teaching in 1984 and a Bing Fellowship for excellence in teaching in 1992. He also served as President of the Linguistic Society of America in 2015, and in 2016 won the award for the Best Paper in the journal *Language*—one of the leading journals in his field—for a paper he authored with a graduate student on the systematic vernacular of Rachel Jeantel, a close friend of Trayvon Martin, and the reasons why her testimony was misunderstood and disregarded in the 2013 trial of George Zimmerman for Trayvon's murder.

The primary focus of John's research and teaching is Sociolinguistics: the relation between linguistic variation and change and social structure. He is especially interested in the relation between language and ethnicity, social class and style, language variation and change, pidgin and creole languages, African American Vernacular English, and the applications of linguistics to educational and legal issues.

Professor Rickford is the author of numerous scholarly articles, and author or editor of several books, including *A Festival of Guyanese Words* (ed., 1978); *Dimensions of a Creole Continuum* (1987), *Analyzing Variation in Language* (co-ed., 1987), *Sociolinguistics and Pidgin-Creole Studies* (ed., 1988); *African American English: Structure, History and Use* (co-ed., 1998); *African American Vernacular English: Features, Evolution, Educational Implications* (1999); *Creole Genesis, Attitudes and Discourse* (co-ed., 2000); *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English* (co-authored, 2000, winner of an American Book Award); *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation* (co-ed., 2001); *Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-First Century* (co-ed., 2004); *Language, Culture and Caribbean Identity* (co-ed., 2012); *African American, Creole and Other Vernacular Englishes: A Bibliographic Resource* (co-authored, 2012); and *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas About Race* (co-edited, 2015). A collection of his papers is scheduled for publication in 2018 by Cambridge University Press in a book, entitled *Variation and Change in Sociolinguistics and Creole Studies: Theory and Analysis*.

Professor Rickford stated that he was both exhilarated and humbled that the Academy had bestowed this signature honor on him. Election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences is the pinnacle of his long, distinguished career. He will spend part of this summer at the Rockefeller Foundation's research center in Bellagio, Italy, working to develop new ways to expand linguistic versatility among vernacular speakers while reducing dialect prejudice and discrimination against them in schools, courtrooms, workplaces and other gatekeeping institutions.

John is married to Angela Rickford, née Marshall, who attended Bishops' High School (Guyana), and is now Professor of Education at San Jose State University. They have four children: Shiyama, Russell, Anakela and Luke.

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

April 10, 2017

Professor John R. Rickford
Stanford University
Department of Linguistics
Margaret Jacks Hall
Building 460 Rm. 127
Stanford, CA 94305

Dear Professor Rickford:

On behalf of the Officers and members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, we are pleased to welcome you as a newly elected member of the Academy.

As expressed in our 1780 Charter, the Academy's purpose is "to cultivate every art and science which may tend to advance the interest, honor, dignity, and happiness of a free, independent, and virtuous people." We carry on that tradition through studies, publications, and formal and informal meetings. Our studies have helped set the direction of research and analysis in science and technology policy, global security, social policy, and the humanities.

With your election, you join the company of notable members – from our founders John Adams, James Bowdoin, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Maria Mitchell, and Alexander Graham Bell. Other distinguished members include Margaret Mead, Jonas Salk, Barbara McClintock, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Aaron Copland, Martha Graham, John Updike, Georgia O'Keeffe, and John Hope Franklin. Foreign Members have included Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill, Laurence Olivier, Mary Leakey, John Maynard Keynes, Akira Kurosawa, and Nelson Mandela. Our current members represent today's innovative thinkers in every field and profession, including more than two hundred fifty Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners. (Please see the attached list of current members in your field.)

We invite you to participate, along with the other newly elected members, in the **2017 Induction at the House of the Academy in Cambridge, Massachusetts, beginning on Friday, October 6, with the formal ceremony on Saturday, October 7, 2017.** You will be receiving materials from our Secretary, Geraldine Richmond, providing further details about the Induction weekend and the Academy's work.

Professor John R. Rickford
April 10, 2017
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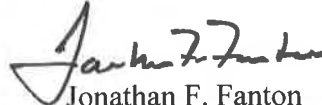
We both remember how pleased and excited we were upon receiving the notice of our election to the Academy. This honor signifies the high regard in which you are held by leaders in your field and members throughout the nation.

Our warmest congratulations on your election.

Yours sincerely,



Don M. Randel
Chair of the Board



Jonathan F. Fanton
President

Please follow a long-standing Academy tradition, begun by our earliest members, and respond with a written letter of acceptance. Copies of some of these wonderful letters from 1780 to the present are on exhibit at the Academy. The favor of your reply is requested by **May 19, 2017**.

CC: Professor Geoffrey Keith Pullum
Professor Penelope Dorothy Eckert

Enclosure

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