

RECOVERING VOICES

Seminar Series in Endangered Languages and Indigenous Knowledge



Dr. Javier Carrera Rubio
Research Associate
Department of Anthropology
National Museum of Natural History

presents:

The blood of Opossum: Quoted Speech, Agency and Subjectivity in a Yanomami Myth

Wednesday June 14, 2017 12:00pm, Rose Room, NMNH

Abstract: The aim of this presentation is to show some preliminary results of using a dialogical approach (Bakhtin 1981) to the study of the Yanomami art of storytelling. Using a myth narration of the Yanomami Film Project produced by Timothy Asch and anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon in 1971 -- now at the Smithsonian's Human Studies Film Archives -- I want to demonstrate the extent to which the multiplicity of voices and points of view contained in Yanomami myth narratives (e.g., its polyphonic nature) can be seen as fundamental expressions and reenactments of their highly valued sociality and social philosophy. By looking at storytelling arts and their intimate relationship with what Overing (2003) has called "the arts of social living" -- the ethics and aesthetics of everyday community life -- and based on an understanding of language as an eminently social phenomenon (Voloshinov 1973; Bakhtin 1981), I will explore Yanomami myth narrations from an ethnographic perspective that combines an ethnopoetic and a dialogical approach in order to elucidate the fundamental importance that dialogues play in their narrative artistry as encodings of sociality, agency and subjectivity.

BIO: Javier Carrera Rubio received his PhD in Anthropology (2005) from the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Since 1990, he has been working among the Yanomami in Venezuela, serving as an anthropology advisor to the Yanomami association, SUYAO (Shaponos Unidos Yanomami del Alto Orinoco), the E.U. Upper Orinoco Biosphere Reserve Project, and the Yanomami Health Plan for the Venezuelan Ministry of Health. From 2007 to 2013 he taught social anthropology at the Universidad de Extremadura, Spain. Most recently, he worked as a visiting research collaborator in the Center of Anthropology at the IVIC (Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research), carrying out fieldwork among the Yanomami in the Upper Orinoco in 2014. Dr. Carrera Rubio has been affiliated to the Department of Anthropology at the University of Maryland since April 2015. During the last year, he was a Post-doctoral Research Fellow at the Smithsonian, and as of May 2017 he is Research Associate at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH).

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An initiative by the National Museum of Natural History,
in collaboration with the National Museum of the American Indian
and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

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