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In Memoriam: Troy Johnson

Duane Champagne, University of California, Los Angeles

Troy Johnson came to study at the UCLA American Indian Studies Center and academic program in the middle 1980s. He had recently retired from the US Navy with the rank of Lieutenant Commander, and he had seen active duty on ships and aircraft carriers. As is often the case with returning older students, he was very focused and knew what he wanted to do as a scholar. His great passion was the history of the western United States; he also had some distant American Indian ancestry. As a UCLA graduate student, Troy carried on his studies and worked on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) under the guidance of the director of the American Indian Studies Center, John Red Horse. After helping to organize several ICWA-focused conferences, Troy then edited several book collections gathered from the ICWA conference panels. The ICWA books were welcome and important contributions to the American Indian Studies Center's publications.

Troy graduated from the MA program in 1988, writing a thesis on ICWA, and then entered the UCLA doctoral program in history. While pursuing his doctorate, Troy continued actively working in the American Indians Studies Center, contributing to the production and editing of several book projects about contemporary American Indian issues. His dissertation concentrated on the Indian takeover of Alcatraz Island in 1969–71, and he commented on how Alcatraz Island facilitated emergent Native American political activism during the 1970s.

A few years after completing the doctorate in 1993, Troy published a book on the Indian activist occupation of Alcatraz Island. The book became widely read and internationally known. He once told me that the book had been a great career-builder for him; he was often invited to give presentations on the significance of Indian protests at Alcatraz Island and Indian

political activism throughout the 1970s, with invitations from as far away as the United Kingdom. During his academic career Troy continued to publish books and articles on activism, minority issues, and the history of Texas and western states. In the late 1990s Troy became an editor of a book series, "Contemporary Native American Communities." Over the years the series produced about twenty-five volumes addressing a variety of concerns about the policies and issues confronting tribal nations.

After receiving his PhD in history at UCLA, Troy quickly found employment as an assistant professor at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). There he was active in the American Indian Studies program as well as Indian issues, research, and education. His scholarly work and seasoned administrative skills enabled Troy to advance quickly through the ranks to full professor at CSULB. He served as chair of both the American Indian Studies program and the anthropology department, and was entrusted with several special administrative assignments. He loved both UCLA and CSULB, and served both institutions with distinction and credit. Students that Troy mentored often pursued graduate studies within the UCLA American Indian Studies program.

As a person, Troy was humble, dedicated, and driven. He worked easily and warmly with students, faculty, family, and community members. He was fun to work with, and a dedicated friend. A person who did not get discouraged or shy away from difficult challenges or assignments, he was willing to learn and contribute his own views and creative thoughts. He was an outstanding teacher, and was recognized as an outstanding scholar and administrator. We are all better for the work he left to us and for his companionship, guidance, and leadership. We will miss him.