

***“A Tribute to Anthony J. Marsella:
Honoring the Legacy of a Man Larger than Life.”***

By Naji Abi-Hashem, PhD

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Anthony Marsella (1947–2024), endearingly called “Tony,” was a beloved friend and colleague, a deep thinker, and an activist as well as a prolific writer and a fluent speaker. He was full of life with a contagious inspiration, calling those around him to act creatively and decisively, to make broad contributions, and to move forward with a bold mission of scholarship, caring, and peace-making.

Marsella was an Emeritus professor of psychology at the University of Hawaii’s Manoa campus in Honolulu, a past president of Psychologists for Social Responsibility, a past director of the World Health Organization Psychiatric Research Center in Honolulu, and a member of the Transcend Network for Peace Development.

He was known internationally as a pioneer in the study of culture and psychopathology. He challenged the ethnocentrism and racial biases of many assumptions, methods, theories, and practices in psychiatry, psychology, and social sciences. In more recent years, he had been writing and lecturing on peace and social justice, fighting misconduct and corruption at large. He published over 20 books (authored or edited) and more than 300 articles, book-chapters, monographs, book-reviews, and technical reports, as well as countless essays and popular media commentaries.

Anthony Joseph Marsella died on November 10, 2024, in his home in Atlanta, Georgia, which he cherished, surrounded by his loved ones, books, office, library, and artifacts that he collected from around the world. He passed away peacefully, at age 84, after a long illness and many health struggles and challenges.

Tony was born on September 12, 1940, to immigrant Sicilian-American parents in Cleveland, Ohio. He enjoyed and rather celebrated his cultural background as he shared good Italian food and frequent gatherings with many of his inner circle of friends.

He studied for a B.A. at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, on a 4-year General Motors Scholarship, where he received his degree with honors in psychology. There he met his wife, Joy. He used to volunteer at local mental hospitals and interact with severely disturbed persons, resulting in a lifelong interest in mood disorders, schizophrenia, and traumatic disturbances. That became the topic of his PhD dissertation in clinical psychology (1968) at Pennsylvania State University, where he also minored in cultural anthropology and the philosophy of science. Later, he received an appointment as a Fulbright Research Scholar to a university in the Philippines, where he taught and did research on social stress and psychopathology in urban Manila.

Subsequently, Marsella conducted international research for three decades, including being a project director for a psychiatric epidemiological study in Borneo and a National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Culture and Mental Health Fellow at the East-West Center in Honolulu. Therefore, he was a pioneer in the study of cultural determinants of psychopathology and psychotherapy, and a leader in cross-cultural psychology as part of his broad emphasis on global and international sociology/psychology. Many of his publications are considered classic-readings for scholars and students alike in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and social sciences. During his long career he challenged the *ethnocentricity* and inherent cultural/racial *biases* of Western psychology and mental health professions.

Tony served on the editorial boards of many journals, and scientific and professional advisory committees. He was a respected and popular professor at the University of Hawaii, Mānoa for 35 years before retiring and relocating to Atlanta to pursue his many passions from there. One of his landmarks is that he has been serving as the Senior Editor for the well-known *International & Cultural Psychology Series* (ICUP) at Springer Publishing in New York. ICUP has already produced over 50 volumes on a wide range of topics.

Among the many honors and awards he received, were the following: In 1996, the American Psychological Association (APA) selected Dr. Anthony Marsella for the Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology Award. In 1999, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate degree by the University of Copenhagen, Denmark at a ceremony presided over by Queen Margritte. In 2003, Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) created the Annual Anthony J. Marsella Prize for Peace and Social Justice. In 2009, the International Academy of Intercultural Research bestowed on him its Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2012, he received The Columbia University Teachers' College Counselors Award for Distinguished Contributions to Peace and Social Justice. In June, 2013, he was selected as one of twelve Pioneers in the field of multicultural counseling and psychology.

Tony was highly motivated, exhibiting a lot of energy. He was a remarkable catalyst and visionary, who was able to articulate his passions in a very crystal-clear manner. Interpersonally, he was very engaging and genuinely interested in people's lives and journeys. Virtually, he made a lot of friends and admirers, as well as aggravating a lot of other people, due to his bold style in speaking out his mind, criticizing what he believed to be unfair-unjust, and presenting alternative solutions to the problems of discrepancies that, in his opinion, abound in every sphere of our society.

Thus, Tony was not only a clinical psychologist, per se, but also a social thinker, an anthropologist, an ethicist, and a philosopher at heart. His many ideas and emphases nicely embodied what it means to be *integrationist* and *interdisciplinary*. In his later years, he moved from being solely a professor and psychologist to become a global thinker and more poignantly a "social reformer." He was willing again to confront the disruptive inconsistencies and destructive injustices, as well as to pay the price for being unconventional, undiplomatic, and politically incorrect.

While he was very bold in sharing his views, challenging the status-quo, eventually he was not too radical or aggressive. Indeed, he was critical but not conflictual, inspiring but not intimidating, insisting but not insulting, and motivating but not manipulating his audiences or followers. Actually, Tony was like a "psychological prophet" who was very passionate to correct the wrong and improve the well-being of other people everywhere -- promoting a sensible-humane scholarship and proclaiming goodness, justice, and welfare, all the while condemning wrongdoing, oppression, and hypocrisy.

Frequently, Tony would alternate between addressing the local issues (or minute details and procedures) and the grand-global-geopolitical issues. In some ways, he was restless and always seemed on the move, trying to figure out what to focus on and address next, keeping our profession and our world cleaner, clearer, safer, and healthier. His recommendations were at times precise and surgical, calling for adjusting-modifying some matters, upgrading-improving other matters, yet removing-omitting some other matters

altogether. He was involved in so many spheres and working on many fronts on the cutting-edge, all of which were overlapping and demanding. So, in this way, Anthony Marsella was truly a “*Man Larger than Life.*”

Tony had a marvelous way of affirming others and seeing their potential. I am grateful to have known him personally and collaborated with him on a number of writing projects and social occasions. He followed my progress with interest and wanted me to even make a broader contribution. Tony and I shared similar Mediterranean background, temperament, and appreciation for warm communal relationships and certain types of food and seasoning. We became friends sharing parts of our journeys together and reflecting on the world affairs. He wanted me to move to Atlanta to be closer to him so he could introduce me to his wider circles, and we could enjoy face-to-face relationship and comradery. I remember, we first met at one of his APA seminars on international psychology in San Francisco in 2001. The assigned room for his talk was quite small and people quickly filled it to capacity, with some standing at the door. Tony commented about the poor APA planning in assigning large rooms for less important topics while assigning small rooms for timely, more essential global topics. He said that actually showed APA’s wrong priorities and he was clearly unhappy with the arrangement. Then, I looked at the gentleman sitting beside me, and he was Dr. Paul Pedersen, another colleague and a cross-cultural scholar. So, afterwards I introduced myself to both of them and Tony immediately affirmed my international background and service and quickly declared, “Let us be ambassadors of good psychology and real peace and together let us change the world.”

Soon after that meeting, Tony and I established contact and exchanged notes as we remained in touch. He later invited me to contribute a chapter for his landmark edited book on *Understanding Terrorism* (2004) and again for another book on *Ethnocultural Perspectives on Disasters & Trauma* (2008). Both turned out to be long chapters and he often commented positively on how insightful and comprehensive they were and how he used their contents during his lectures in the US, Europe, and further abroad. Through the years, Tony would send me reminders to submit a book-proposal or two for his ICUP

series. I am grateful that he was very fond of my friendship, background, and scholarship that he almost gave me a *carte blanche* to “write on any subject, any length, at any time” and he would publish it. At times, he would suggest topics like, *Culture, Religion, and Radicalism; Arab Middle Eastern Psychology; or Peace Making in Troubled Areas; Globalization, Ideology, and Worldview* -- to name a few! Unfortunately, I could not commit to any volume during his lifetime, but now the time is right and together with his longtime colleague and executive editor at ICUP Springer, Sharon Panulla, we are developing a couple of titles. When they materialize, I will definitely dedicate them to Tony’s memory.

One of the greatest compliments I received from him was when we usually ended our phone conversations by saying, “Naji, you are man of insight, grace, integrity, and peace. I salute you and commend you!” I hold these words very dearly in my heart. Another fond memory was when we exchanged emails, we often ended by transliterating his family name at the bottom, from Marsella into Masha’allah, which in Arabic implies *Admiration* and is used to mean “Just Marvelous,” “How Wonderful by God’s Name,” or “As God Wills.” At times, he instead wrote, *Inshallah*, which simply means “God Willing!” Pleasant memories indeed!

Tony was very good at mobilizing and imparting his vision to others. He was a true encourager and motivator. He also was an articulate and sought-after speaker, with a high command of the English language, quickly captivating any audience. His mind was very creative and generative--not linear or tunnel-visioned, but rather circular and universal, able to accommodate several spheres and layers simultaneously. Scores of his colleagues, former students, and friends testify about the huge influence he had on them, commenting on his magnetic-gravitational force, which he often manifested to intuitively pull them into his orbit and impart his vision.

If we conduct an average search on *Scholar.Google.Com* we will find page after page listing his remarkable publications through the years. Such a rich record

testifies of his prolific ability and productive mind in making broad contributions to the literature and worldwide body of knowledge.

A touching fact is that one of his latest publications, cited as a chapter in an edited book on *Emotions in Cultural Context* (2024), he eloquently wrote about the emotional virtue of “hope.” How appropriate that his final emphasis in life and the last melody of his soul was the existential theme of Hope.

Finally, Tony used to include a powerful quotation at the bottom of his regular emails or produce one from his own inspirational creativity. But he kept this one below running for many years:

“Show, by your actions, that you choose peace over war, freedom over oppression, voice over silence, service over self-interest, respect over advantage, courage over fear, cooperation over competition, action over passivity, diversity over uniformity, and justice overall.”

Anthony J. Marsella, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, University of Hawaii.

Four Personal Testimonials

“It was my pleasure and privilege to know Tony Marsella for over 20 years. When I first came to Springer, I ‘inherited’ him as the editor of the International and Cultural Psychology series. It was too early then to know what an intellect and a humanitarian scholar he was. But I soon found out. Tony was to me larger than life. A passionate and spirited thinker who so earnestly believed in the best of human beings. I so appreciated the flame that lit him from within. He was inspiring, loving, and by the way, a great cook. We worked so well together, and I was happy to help extend the excellent series in cultural psychology of which he was rightfully proud of. He was always solicitous of me, but also liked to tease me about being a New Yorker. He often enjoined me to go get a pastrami sandwich for lunch, imitating a New York accent, which I’m afraid I do have. Tony was a joy to know and work with, and I will miss him always. He used to ask me to light a candle at the Mother Cabrini shrine which

is near where I live. I plan to go there soon to light a whole flood of candles in his memory.”

*Sharon Panulla, Executive Editor,
Springer Nature Publishing, New York, USA*

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“We miss Tony terribly! For me, he was special in several ways; though I’d shared emails and conversations with him for the past 15 years, I came to know him best in the last five or six years, in the context of the amazing Springer book series on International and Cultural Psychology (ICUP), which he founded. Now, this series has close to fifty volumes! Around 2020, I approached Tony with a rather unique and unusual idea for a book that surveyed psychology both in the Caribbean and Oceania; my coeditor and I were a bit uncertain if the idea would be well received— Incredibly, Tony immediately “got it” and the book proposal was approved in a day, the fastest response I’ve ever received! Then Tony took a great interest in the book, coauthoring a chapter and helping build connections to other potential authors, places, and resources. Upon publication, he promoted the book and its authors and, most of all, its topic— ‘internationalizing psychology with best cultural practices and cultural humility.’ I was grateful at every turn for his humor, speedy replies, insightful commentary on academe, society, peace, and a wide range of topics of global interest or affairs. I count it as a great honor and privilege when he asked me to begin co-editing this ICUP series with him, and entrusted me with such great work. I will always keep his spirit, motivation, and heart for peace close to me.”

*Grant J. Rich, PhD, Juneau , Alaska, USA
Fellow, American Psychological Association*

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“I first met Tony Marsella when I enrolled in his Theories of Personality class; we used Previn's text. Tony was a master teacher and passionately committed to his students. I'm proud to be one of those students. One of my most salient memories of Tony involves a conversation we had when he saw me carrying a copy of Jung's Dreams, Memories and Reflections. I asked if it was safe to be

reading Jung in one of the strongest behavior therapy programs in the country. Tony assured me it was both safe and important, and noted that I could learn a great deal from Jung. When Ray Corsini needed a graduate student to work with him on a new book "Great Cases in Psychotherapy," he asked Tony to recommend his brightest graduate student to help edit the new book . . . and agreeing to work with Corsini that summer changed the trajectory of my life. Tony later worked with Ray Corsini to publish a book on Personality Theory. Some years later, Tony helped me draft an obituary for Corsini for the American Psychologist. The one article that has influenced me the most -- and one of Tony's most cited publications, was 'Toward a Global-Community Psychology,' published in the American Psychologist in 1998."

Danny Wedding, PhD, West Linn, Oregon, USA

Fellow, American Psychological Association

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"Mid-summer 1971, I wandered into the psychology department at the University of Hawai'i, fresh off the plane from San Diego. In the empty halls of the department a young professor emerged from his office, introduced himself, and asked what my interests were. When I said I had a master's scholarship from the Culture Learning Institute of the East-West Center (EWC) and was seeking an advisor, the warmth and enthusiasm of Tony Marsella's reply told me he was the one. Looking back, over 50 years later, Tony clearly had the greatest influence of anyone on my professional and personal life. He supervised my EWC master's fieldwork in Japan testing his theory about sensory evaluation of architectural styles. This became the first environmental psychology research at the university. Later, he sponsored me to return to Hawai'i with a PhD scholarship in clinical psychology, again through the EWC. My studies under Tony's supervision evaluated culture accommodation of psychiatric care in Southeast Asia and led to a book, Third World Challenge to Psychiatry (1984). Tony deepened my understanding of cross-cultural psychology by involving me in a significant conference he organised of the leading scholars in this field. On my way to take up an appointment in psychology at New Zealand's Waikato

University in 1979, Tony met me at a conference in Canberra on Traditional Asian Medicine. There we met Linda Connor, an anthropology PhD student who had just finished fieldwork on Balinese healing. He invited both of us back to his conference and we were married in New Zealand two years later. Linda and I returned to the EWC in 1983, and Tony appointed me to a task force examining Native Hawaiian mental health. I interviewed mental healthcare providers across the state, and a quote from one agency professional was illuminating: “We treat mental illness, we don’t treat Hawaiians.” Our insights from this task force led Tony to initiate a new institution at the University supporting Hawaiian language and culture when he became Vice President of Academic Affairs. I arrived in Australia in 1986 to begin a career in international health. This led to my quest to create a parallel international network to support social scientists engaged in health development—The International Forum for Social Sciences and Health (IFSSH)—supported by The Carnegie Corporation and Ford Foundation. Virtually, my years with Tony Marsella gave me the inspiration and preparation to effectively imagine and take on these important global initiatives.”

*Nick Higginbotham, PhD, Honorary Associate Professor,
The University of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia*

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Some of Anthony Marsella’s Classic Publications:

Leong, F. T. L., Leach, M. M., Marsella, A. J., & Pickren, W. E. (2012). Internationalizing the psychology curriculum in the USA: Meeting the challenges and opportunities of a global era. In F. T. L. Leong, W. E. Pickren, M. M. Leach, & A. J. Marsella (Eds.), *Internationalizing the psychology curriculum in the United States* (pp. 1–9). New York: Springer Science/Business Media.

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White, J., & Marsella, A. (Eds.) (2007). *Fear of persecution: Global human rights, international law, and human well-being*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

More References & Resources

Abi-Hashem, N. (2013). Marsella, Anthony J. (*A Biography*). In K. D. Keith (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 847-848). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. Online version
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Transcend Media Service. (2024). In Memoriam--Anthony J. Marsella. Retrieved from
<https://www.transcend.org/tms/2024/12/in-memoriam-anthony-j-marsella-ph-d-13-dec-1947-2-nov-2024/>

Additional Links

<https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/Anthony-J-Marsella-2001878752>

https://www.amazon.com/Books-Anthony-J-Marsella/s?rh=n%3A283155%2Cp_27%3AAnthony+J.+Marsella

<https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/Anthony-J-Marsella-81929639>

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/roswell-ga/anthony-marsella-12071628>

<https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fh0090684>

<http://kymberleeruff.com/marsella.html>

<http://www.springer.com/series/6089>

<https://psysr.net/awards/>

Author of this Tribute



Naji Abi-Hashem, MDiv, MA, Ph.D., DAAETS, a Lebanese-American Clinical & Cultural Psychologist and a Non-Resident Scholar at Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion: An Interdisciplinary Research Center. Seattle, Washington & Beirut, Lebanon. Email: NajiAbiHashem@gmail.com
