

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH

b. May 8, 1954

PHILOSOPHER & AUTHOR

“Having an identity doesn’t, by itself, authorize you to speak on behalf of everyone of that identity.”

Kwame Anthony Appiah, Ph.D., is a distinguished philosopher, author and professor who specializes in the philosophy of mind and language and the intellectual history of Africa and African-Americans.

Born in London, England, Appiah grew up in Ghana. His father, a native Ghanaian, was a well-known lawyer and politician. His mother, the daughter of a British statesman, was an author and scholar. Their widely publicized marriage was one of the first interracial “society weddings” in Britain. It is thought to have inspired the 1967 film, “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner.”

He is a renowned philosopher best known for his scholarship on personal identity.

Appiah received much of his education in England. He completed his bachelor’s degree in philosophy 1975 from Cambridge University. After teaching at the University of Ghana, he returned to Cambridge for his doctorate, graduating in 1982. He speaks five languages.

Appiah writes about ethics for The New York Times. He has published three novels, short fiction and numerous academic books. He is acclaimed for his groundbreaking scholarship, particularly on the philosophy and politics of personal identity. His work has been translated into more than 15 languages.

His early book “In My Father’s House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture” (1992), received an Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and a Herskovits Award for “the most important scholarly work in African studies published in English.” His book “Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race” (1996), coauthored by Amy Gutman, presents his critique of the concept of biological race and how individuals frequently overemphasize it as part of their identity. In the “The Ethics of Identity” (2004), he explains how ideas around “group identities,” such as race and gender, can add to or detract from notions of individual freedom.

Appiah has lectured worldwide and taught at leading universities, including Yale, Cornell, Duke and Harvard. As an openly gay scholar, he served for 13 years on the editorial board of GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, published by Duke University Press.

In 2002 Appiah joined the faculty of Princeton University, where he held appointments in the Philosophy Department and the University Center for Human Values, before becoming a professor emeritus. In 2014 he went on to New York University, where he teaches law and philosophy.



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