

## The Sudanese Struggle for Girls' and Women's Education

As a cultural anthropologist, Ellen Gruenbaum lived, worked, and conducted research in the large, mostly Muslim, African country of Sudan in the 1970s. She and her late husband, Jay O'Brien, lived there for 5 years during the 1970s. In the years since, she has returned several times for research and teaching.

Historically, education in Sudan was mostly for boys. In villages she visited, boys learned the Qur'an by rote memorization, reciting verses from wooden tablets in the firelight. When secular schools were introduced, it took dedicated reformers to establish ways for girls to be included. Now embroiled in a disastrous civil war that has closed all the universities and schools, Sudanese educators are struggling again, often from exile, to find ways to keep women's education alive over the Internet. Ellen's talk will focus on the past and present struggles, describe her own experiences working with Sudanese students and educators, and share the current efforts of the Ahfad University for Women.

Ellen Gruenbaum is Professor Emerita of Anthropology from Purdue University in Indiana, where she served as department head for a decade. Earlier in her career she taught at Cal State, San Bernardino for 11 years and served as Dean of Social Sciences at Fresno State for another 11 years. She has written a book (*The Female Circumcision Controversy*, UPenn Press, 2001) and numerous academic articles about her work in Sudan.



