

Society for American Archaeology  
1111 14th Street NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005-5622

Dear Dr. Watkins, Ms. Schmid, and SAA Board Members and staff,

On June 4th, 2020, SAA released the statement to its members titled “The SAA Responds to George Floyd Tragedy.” In this statement, SAA asserts that archaeologists play a role in providing a historical and deep context for understanding the systems of racism today. SAA also states that it actively promotes anti-racist practices and that archaeologists have an obligation to elevate the voices of Black and Brown scholars. While we agree with these statements, we believe SAA’s response to George Floyd’s murder and the ensuing protests against police brutality is inadequate.

As one of the largest professional archaeological organizations, with more than 6,000 members of all walks of life, SAA has a responsibility to do more than pay lip service to anti-racism. The SAA should understand its own contextualized position of power and influence, and actively work to use that power to be an example and arbiter of positive change for its members and the overall discipline.

In order to embody anti-racism practices, SAA needs to take a reflective stance and acknowledge that there is a great deal of work to do internally to ensure positive, long-lasting change within its organization. We, as the undersigned archaeology and preservation professionals, think the SAA should also promote organizations that are doing archaeology for and with Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities. There is also a need for critical reflection of how our profession is still largely dominated by White scholars, educators, and professionals, and we need to consider the ways in which we as professionals can take action to ensure our discipline is overall more inclusive across all sectors- academia, museums, cultural resource management, etc. We would like to see the SAA partner with other archaeology and anthropology organizations to address these issues and present a united front amongst Archaeologists and Anthropologists to decolonize our discipline. Below is a list of action items that we think SAA should take to address these needs.

In a profession that has historically caused harm to Indigenous peoples, communities, cultures, and has promoted harmful racist ideologies, it is not enough in this time to make a statement without actions. We urge SAA to consider following up on the June 4th statement with a Call to Action that demonstrates what concrete steps the SAA will take to be part of positive, long-lasting change as well as what steps SAA encourages its members and organizations to commit to in their scholarship, research, institutions, and personal lives. Please seize on this

moment of international reflection and action, to take a definitive leadership stance on the movement for anti-racism.

Please see the below list of action items that we hope can be expanded on, endorsed, and distributed by SAA leadership. We have also compiled a list of members and potential members who would like to help the SAA take action.

### **Action Items:**

- Edit SAA Ethics Statement to include a strong position on anti-racism and xenophobia.
- Fundamentally address bias internal to the organization by providing anti-racism training for all SAA leadership and staff. Conduct a survey to better understand race, diversity, and equity in the SAA.
- Establish anti-racism policies for the SAA Annual Meeting. Prominently highlight papers and sessions which discuss anti-racism during conferences and workshops.
- Prioritize anti-racism education for your members. Incorporate topics related to anti-racism and archaeology of/within BIPOC communities into your webinar series. Create a reading list featuring BIPOC scholars for members to read, cite, and learn from. Compensate any BIPOC educators for the content they create for the organization's members and staff. Ex: Training, writing policies, presentations, editing statements, etc. Encourage members to educate themselves with literature on being an ally and being anti-racist. Ex: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>
- Create awards to recognize outstanding research by BIPOC Scholars in all areas of archaeology including CRM, government, K-12 education, and museums. Expand and actively promote scholarships for research, field schools, curriculum, and conferences to make them more accessible to BIPOC students.
- Develop relationships with organizations that focus on uplifting or sharing archaeology with BIPOC communities in order to amplify their initiatives. Ex: Society of Black Archaeologists, Archaeology in the Community, Association of Black Anthropologists, National Museum of African American History and Culture, Museum Hue, etc.

Action Items to encourage members to take:

- Donate to organizations committed to uplifting BIPOC scholars within and outside of the SAA (Ex: the SAA's Historically Underrepresented Groups Scholarship fund, Native American Scholarships fund).
- Prioritize anti-racism at your institution. Urge your departments to take steps towards recruiting, retaining, and providing resources for minority faculty and students to succeed in the profession. Create courses that focus on the archaeology of the African Diaspora, Black movements, and frameworks like Black feminist theory and Critical Race Theory.

#DecolonizeTheCanon by creating syllabi that fully and meaningfully include contributions of Black and Indigenous scholars that do not silo their writings and ideas to a single week of the course.

- Be mindful of your citation practices and assigned readings in a way that #citeblackwomen and other scholars of color. (Ex: Including but not limited to syllabi, journal articles, dissertation papers, technical reports for CRM, museum panels, social media, outreach materials, etc.).
- Make your activism an integral part of the institution or CRM company and engage with descendant communities on more than just the results of your research – join their struggles for justice, donate to their causes, create a positive impact in BIPOC communities.

Sincerely,

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