Empowerment, Ecology, and Evidence

The Relevance of Mortuary Archaeology to the Public

Thomas A. J. Crist

In October 1992, the skeletonized face of the “Iceman,” a Neolithic hunter found in the ice in the Alps, beckoned readers from magazine racks across the country. Gazing at us across 5,000 years, from the cover of Time, the Iceman was about to reveal to an eager public his secrets and those of his ancient counterparts. So intriguing was this mountain wanderer’s story to millions of Americans that the October 26 edition of Time became one of the best-selling issues in the magazine’s history.

At about the same time in New York City, an eighteenth-century cemetery in lower Manhattan was also becoming the focus of international attention. Excavated under historic preservation law prior to the construction of a federal office building, the African Burial Ground sparked a highly charged public debate that focused in part on the choice of scientists who would analyze the remains of close to 400 formerly enslaved individuals. In numerous public hearings and other meetings, members of New York City’s descendant African-American community forcefully demanded that an African-American anthropologist direct the laboratory investigation of the excavated bones and artifacts. They further insisted that they be given a significant voice not only in the disposition of the human remains but in the treatment and preservation of the burial ground site itself. A congressional subcommittee hearing was convened to review the matter and a federal steering committee was appointed to act as a liaison between the community and the General Services Administration, the federal agency responsible for the project. The site evolved into a national symbol of African-American pride and empowerment (LaRoche and Blakey 1997); indeed, plans for the portion of the site that would not be
part of the new building’s footprint now include a memorial, not yet built, to commemorate the lives of the early African Americans buried there.

As the Iceman and the African Burial Ground both made headlines, thousands of Muslims and Serbs were dying in the war in Bosnia. Four years later a team of forensic investigators from the United Nations War Crimes Commission sifted through hundreds of human remains buried in mass graves to document the vicious atrocities committed during the Balkan war. These scientists, including two forensic physical anthropologists from the United States, carefully excavated and analyzed the bones to gather unimpeachable skeletal evidence against the military commanders who allegedly ordered the genocidal executions of thousands of civilians.

Each of these seemingly disconnected events involved the analysis of human skeletal remains, whether to learn about health and disease in the past or to incarcerate military leaders guilty of crimes against humanity. For centuries the effects of discovering and studying skeletal remains have reverberated throughout society, establishing international borders, supporting racial inequality and justifying slavery, validating religious doctrines and biblical passages, and identifying missing persons. Yet in these days of budgetary shortfalls and government cutbacks, archaeologists often find it difficult to justify spending public funds on the archaeological excavation and analysis, even the forensic analysis, of human remains. Because of this, many archaeologists consider proactive engagement with the public an essential component of good practice (Osborn 1994: 15). Archaeologists now more than ever seek to make their research relevant to current events.

In this chapter I explore both the substantive and the intangible benefits the public receives when federal and state funds are spent to excavate historical burial grounds. Examples of these wide-ranging benefits are outlined and discussed, specifically focusing on how the results of these projects are relevant to our own society.

Social Uses and Abuses of Human Remains

History and archaeology can both be used to serve different interests. The same event or site can be interpreted by different groups to support their respective political agendas, financial goals, or religious traditions. In much the same way, human remains and burial grounds can be manipulated to serve opposing views, to legitimize claims to power, or to accommodate the dominant group’s moral and economic positions. Some scholars argue that mortuary ren...
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mortuary remains, particularly gravestones, can be studied as part of social
ideology, an active component in the struggle between the powerful and
the powerless (McGuire 1988; Pearson 1982). In this view, funerary
memorials emphasize an idealized expression of the social relations of power
in an attempt by the dominant group to maintain the social order. Human
remains can likewise be interpreted by scientists representing the domin-
ant group to promulgate racist beliefs and other agendas by offering al-
legedly objective evidence to support their predetermined conclusions—
whether the scientists are professionally trained or self-appointed.

Examples of the social uses and abuses of human remains abound. Be-
tween about 1820 and his death in 1851, prominent Philadelphia physician
and scientist Samuel George Morton, building on the typological founda-
tions Linnaeus had created in the previous century, collected more than a
thousand skulls from around the world to test his hypothesis that the vari-
ous human races could be ranked objectively using calculable criteria such
as brain size (Gould 1981: 51). To collect data on brain size, Morton mea-
sured the cranial capacities of the skulls in his collection. By statistically
manipulating his data he concluded that Europeans were the most superior
of the human races, with Native Americans in the middle, and people of
African descent at the bottom (Morton 1849). He and his colleagues also
believed that innate criminality was reflected by the morphology of the
body and that “born criminals” could be identified even as children (e.g.,
Lombroso 1911). As Gould (1981: 54–69) demonstrates after reviewing
the original data, Morton committed several scientific blunders that reduce his
famous findings to meaningless statistics. Yet American proponents of slav-
ery hailed his work, claiming that Morton’s results “scientifically” sup-
ported their assertion that African Americans represented an inferior hu-
man species. Morton’s work laid the foundation for the rise of eugenics
(the field of human genetic engineering) in both Europe and the United
States, the most devastating effect of which was the horrendous Nazi cam-
paign during World War II to cleanse Europe of those peoples the German
“scientists” deemed inferior. Most Americans of the postwar period know
little about the eugenics movement and its association with the infant dis-
cipline of physical anthropology during the late nineteenth century
(Stocking 1987). Even fewer realize that American immigration law in the
1920s was largely based on the concepts of eugenics and the pseudosci-
tific ranking of various ethnic groups’ mental abilities (Haller 1984; Larson
1995; Selden 1999). Building on the work of Morton and his nineteenth-
century colleagues in the field of craniometry, a group of mathematicians
and psychologists devised a series of intelligence tests designed to identify individuals and ethnic groups who exhibited reduced mental capacity (e.g., Yerkes 1917). Once identified, these “feeble-minded” individuals were barred from entering the United States. Those who were already American citizens were severely limited in their constitutional freedoms and were subject to federal sterilization programs (Gould 1981: 335).

Among the most onerous results of the mental testing (and racial ranking) movement in the United States was the federal Immigration Restriction Act of 1924. The hallmark of this law was the imposition of severely restrictive quotas against people of “inferior” mental ability, identified by American eugenicists as immigrants from eastern and southern Europe and the Mediterranean nations. It is particularly stunning to realize that a national policy on immigration that was passed into law by the world’s most democratic country arose from the comparative study of skulls by a small cadre of Victorian scientists interested in ranking the mental abilities of the human species.

Social policies like immigration law are often based directly on “scientific” research, but other components of everyday modern life have been more indirectly influenced by this research, even decades after the results were published. Apart from its early practitioners’ attempts to quantify racial differences (e.g., Hrdlicka 1899, 1919), the fledgling field of physical anthropology supplied a scientific foundation for the eugenics movement in the early part of the twentieth century. When it was founded in 1918 the American Journal of Physical Anthropology included a section on War Anthropology (Blakey 1987: 23), a practical application of the discipline to the perceived needs of the United States Army during World War I. This section described the physical and psychological criteria that American army recruits were required to meet in order to be accepted into the service, and it was supplemented by an extensive series of mental tests administered to over 1.75 million men during World War I (Yerkes 1921, 1941; Gould 1981: 194). The results of these tests were used in part to formulate American immigration law in the 1920s, as already discussed, and have been further used not so much to prop up the discredited field of eugenics as to support racial segregation after World War II (Molnar 1992: 269–70). Modern cousins related to these early mental tests include the intelligence quotient (IQ) test developed in 1912, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the American College Test (ACT), and the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), now used as part of the admissions criteria upon which thousands of American universities depend. As recently as 1994 the controversy raged over the determinants of race and intelligence.
The Relevance of Mortuary Archaeology

In the controversial book *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein and Murray 1994) reigned the nineteenth-century contention that race or ethnicity somehow determines the intelligence and potential of an individual (e.g., Fraser 1995). Currently, researchers are seeking genes that determine behavioral traits like aggressive personality and the propensity for criminal behavior, rekindling memories of the Victorian scientists who sought morphological features to indicate mental aptitude and criminal thought.

Undoubtedly, the major sustained source of conflict between archaeologists and non-archaeologists is the treatment of Native American human remains. Beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing as recently as the 1960s, archaeologists and physical anthropologists conducted widespread, systematic excavations of pre-Columbian burial grounds seeking skeletal remains to send back to their institutions for examination and analyses. Often sponsored by government-funded museums, including the Smithsonian Institution, these expeditions unearthed the remains of thousands of Native Americans and their associated burial goods. In retrospect, many view this anthropological research as supporting, if not perpetuating, the repression of Native Americans (see Thomas 2000 for an archaeologist's sympathetic view of this position).

Although rekindled in 1990 when President George Bush signed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) into law, tensions between physical anthropologists and Native Americans reached a crescendo of national proportions in 1996 when a well-preserved male skeleton more than 9,000 years old was discovered eroding from the banks of the Columbia River in Washington State. The skeleton was found on federal land administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and came to be called "Kennewick Man" by the media. Five Northwest Native American tribes claimed the individual under the provisions of NAGPRA, with the sole intention of reburying his remains without any scientific study. Eight prominent physical anthropologists representing several universities and the Smithsonian Institution sued the federal government to release the remains for examination, setting the stage for a series of acrimonious public debates regarding the appropriate treatment of these and other Native American remains. After five years the case is still in adjudication. Regardless of its outcome, the case of Kennewick Man dramatically illustrates the chronically antagonistic relationship that has existed between Native Americans and archaeologists and physical anthropologists for more than a century and a half. The heated debates that have followed the skeleton's discovery, often engaging commentators who are neither
Native Americans nor anthropologists, underscore both the public's serious interest in the origins of New World peoples and the long-unresolved issues that continue to divide science from Native American religions. Other uses of human remains include the legitimization of biblical references and religious traditions. One of the most notable instances in which skeletal remains were used as evidence to support a religious doctrine centers on a discovery made by construction workers under St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Among the central tenets of the Roman Catholic Church is that the apostle Peter, who was crucified between about 64 and 68 A.D., was the first pope. In 1968, Pope Paul VI announced that the skeletal remains of St. Peter had been found and satisfactorily identified after almost three decades of scientific analysis (Walsh 1982). During renovations under the basilica in 1939, workers discovered human remains in a vault that bore the partial inscription of "Petros Eni," Greek for "Peter is within." Studied in the early 1960s by Venerando Correnti, an anthropologist at Palermo University, the fragmented skeletal remains were identified as those of a powerfully built male about 65-70 years old who stood about 5 feet, 7 inches tall (Guarducci 1965). Based on this osteological information and in conjunction with historical evidence, the Catholic Church declared conclusively that the bones were those of St. Peter, noting that the evidence supported traditional versions of the Church's founding and early activities. In this case human remains were employed to validate and support the ideology of the Roman Catholic Church, furnishing powerful testimony regarding its history and giving credence to its ecclesiastical positions.

Forensic Anthropology, Human Rights, and War Criminals

Of more immediate value to the American public, the information provided by the skeleton allows forensic anthropologists to determine the personal identification of decomposed remains and to document perimortem trauma that may be related to the cause of death. In a larger context, this type of analysis can be directed toward gathering evidence of war crimes and human rights abuses.

Forensic physical anthropologists have long relied on studies of historical and prehistoric skeletal remains to help them analyze the remains of missing persons and to reconstruct the events that occurred around the time of death. Analysis of remains from archaeological sites has allowed researchers to document age-related changes that affect the human skeleton, to develop methods for determining the sex and ancestry of un-

known individuals and postmortem forensic analysis. The full implications of this discovery are still being explored, and the techniques for recognizing and analyzing remains remain an active area of research.

Coincident with the benefits of archaeology and forensic science in ancient and modern contexts, the development of archaeological field schools and training programs continues to expand. These programs provide hands-on experience for students and contribute to the advancement of archaeological research and practice. The University of Michigan, for example, has a long history of training students in archaeological techniques and theory. The university's archaeological field programs have been instrumental in training hundreds of students in the field of archaeology, providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to the study of human history and culture.
known individuals, and to establish criteria for distinguishing perimortem and postmortem trauma to the bones. All of the roughly 150 practicing forensic anthropologists in the United States have learned their skills by working with human remains from archaeological sites and have successfully applied their knowledge to solving hundreds of modern crimes throughout the country.

Coincidentally enough, at the end of the first day of the "Public Benefits of Archaeology" conference in Santa Fe in 1995, municipal workers performing sewer repairs discovered fragmented human remains under a street adjacent to San Miguel Mission, a church built in 1819 over the remains of a 1598 mission. Located just blocks from the conference setting, this discovery prompted a request to me from the New Mexico state historic preservation officer to examine the remains. I conducted an examination in the mission's back office that evening and determined that the remains represented historical period burials and did not require a police investigation. Similar accounts of such anthropological true-crime mysteries are described in four popular books recently published by forensic anthropologists (Joyce and Stover 1991; Ubelaker and Scannell 1992; Maples 1994; Manhein 1999) and one written especially for children (Jackson 1996). Aimed at a public audience, these books describe in clear, nontechnical language how physical anthropologists apply the methods and theories of their field to solving questions of medicolegal significance.

Studies of human remains are also essential to investigations of war crimes and human rights abuses (Burns 1991, 1995). After World War II, British anthropologists studied the human remains at former Nazi concentration camps to collect evidence for the War Crimes Tribunal. In 1994, several archaeologists from the National Park Service visited the former Yugoslavia under the auspices of the United Nations War Crimes Commission to confirm reports of mass graves and to document atrocities recounted by Croats in Serb-dominated territory (Calabrese 1994: 9). The United Nations estimates that more than 28,000 people are missing in Croatia, their remains buried in more than a hundred mass graves. Forensic archaeologists and anthropologists apply skills "learned over a lifetime of studying past cultures to a very real and dramatic modern context...[giving us] the chance to resolve the disappearance of many families' loved ones" (Calabrese 1994: 9).

One war criminal in particular was the focus of an unusually intense anthropological investigation. In 1985, skeletal remains purported to be those of Josef Mengele, the notorious Auschwitz concentration camp doc-
tor, were unearthed in Brazil. Mengele had reportedly drowned in 1979 and was buried in a small village cemetery outside São Paulo. Three teams of physical anthropologists from West Germany and the United States were sent to Brazil to confirm the identity of the remains. The bones recovered by the Brazilian police were ultimately identified based on the osteological examination, comparisons of writing samples, and an anthropological technique called video superimposition whereby an antemortem photograph of Mengele from his Nazi party file was superimposed over the image of the recovered skull for comparison of facial features (Posner and Ware 1986; Joyce and Stover 1991). Dental records later provided positive identification of the remains, confirming that Mengele had indeed escaped prosecution after almost thirty-five years of hiding in South America.

Ecosystems and the History of Disease

Analysis of past human remains provides unique information about how modern people respond to pollution and disease. Analyzing archaeological bone samples allows modern researchers to document past environments and their effects on human health. Archaeological sites can be considered “scientific monitoring stations” for the study of past ecosystems (McManamon 1995: 2). Historic and prehistoric human remains likewise act as recorders of past environments, and through bone chemistry analysis the toxic materials to which past peoples were exposed can be ascertained. This information provides baseline levels against which current chemical concentrations in human tissue can be assessed and allows environmental scientists to document the effects of industrialization on people around the world (Ericson and Coughlin 1981). Such studies have documented the effects of lead poisoning among colonial American populations (Auderheide et al. 1985) and enslaved individuals in Barbados (Corruccini et al. 1987). Archaeological toxicology promises to yield information about the pollutants common in the past and the physiological and genetic effects of such materials on modern populations.

During the course of history, nearly every population was affected at some time by plague and pestilence. Some epidemics have altered the course of history itself, decimating peoples, halting settlements in new lands, and forcing changes in economic and social conditions. Epidemics of formerly common diseases, like bubonic plague, syphilis, cholera, tuberculosis, and smallpox, have exerted their influence over vast numbers of people; more recent infectious diseases in dry and humid environments in dry regions and such as tuberculosis (Crist 1997), nutritional deficiencies are common in numerous tropical and temperate regions, and many other nutritional deficiencies are widespread in the world. However, nutritional deficiencies are not limited to developing countries; they also affect people in developed countries, particularly the elderly, women, and children.
people; more recently, diseases like polio, influenza, and AIDS have continued to remodel our social and cultural views. Learning how past peoples responded socially and politically to disease epidemics is important if we are to address the needs of infected individuals in our society effectively and humanely. In this regard paleopathology, the study of abnormal lesions in dry bone, provides medical personnel with long-term case studies in the progression and outcome of certain diseases. Disorders like tuberculosis and scurvy, once thought of as almost eradicated, are being found in increasing numbers of patients, particularly those from urban areas and in institutions like nursing homes and prisons. For instance, scurvy, although commonly considered an antique disease, has been documented among numerous types of patients, including otherwise healthy individuals with poorly balanced diets, athletes, food faddists, and those on fixed incomes (Crist 1997). Documenting the lesions associated with scurvy and other nutritional disorders in past human remains allows modern physicians to distinguish these conditions from other types of diseases and often to make simple changes in the patient’s diet that lead to quick and total recovery.

Racism, Empowerment, and Historical Cemeteries

Of more intangible but no less important value than the practical applications already noted, the archaeological excavation of a historical burial ground often provides compelling links to the past for the site’s descended community, especially when the remains represent a minority group. A group’s social past, ancestral history, and national appreciation constitute much of how that group’s members view themselves and how they are perceived by others in modern society (Blakey 1990: 38; Fraser and Butler 1986). From our heritage we draw a sense of social worth and meaning, and biases in the historical record often obscure or dismiss the pasts of disenfranchised minorities whose real contributions are unrecognized and underappreciated. Archaeology may serve to fill many of these gaps in American history. But both archaeology and physical anthropology also shape this group ideology and historical knowledge, generating far-reaching social implications that have included such nefarious political theories as eugenics and social Darwinism. In recent years, the descendants of socially oppressed and economically disadvantaged groups have begun pressing to have traditional historical events reinterpreted from other perspectives. For example, New York City’s African Burial Ground has been
described “not only as an icon for the struggle of African Americans but as a symbol of their direct involvement in the recovery and preservation of their past” (Barbour 1994: 13). The archaeological excavation of historical burial grounds thus can enable disenfranchised groups to reclaim their past. These projects also encourage the public to reassess traditional notions regarding the obscured history of such groups.

Most of the archaeological excavations of historical cemeteries in the United States over the last two decades have been performed to comply with federal preservation legislation, including section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), as amended. These laws and their implementing regulations make cultural resource management a regular component of the land-planning process. In general, projects supported by state or federal funds and those licensed or approved by federal agencies require environmental assessments that document the impacts of such projects on a variety of natural and historical resources. In cases where archaeological resources that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (including historical burial grounds; see Potter and Boland 1992) will be adversely affected, data recovery excavations of the site become the principal means of mitigating the impacts. The costs of excavating, analyzing, and reporting on the resource are typically the responsibility of the sponsoring agency or developer. Since many of these projects are associated with government-sponsored construction, public funds are expended whenever these particular sites undergo the section 106 review process.

Because of these legislative requirements, the number of historical cemeteries relocated by archaeologists has increased significantly since the 1970s. In many cases the effects of undertaking these projects extend far beyond simple compliance with federal and state preservation laws.

A recent focus on “descendant community partnering,” as well as new revisions to NHPA regulations (36 CFR 800) requiring public involvement, have begun to engage the public in the decision-making processes surrounding discoveries of historical cemeteries. Among the results of these initiatives is enhanced communication between anthropologists and the public. Rather than involvement after the project is under way, community partnering refers to the proactive participation of the affected community from the earliest phases of the project, so that the resultant course of action addresses both the scientific and the sociocultural concerns of all interested parties (Roberts and McCarthy 1995). Marked community dissatisfaction with the original course of the African Burial

Ground projec-
Ground project in New York City (Cook 1993; Harrington 1993; Parrington 1993; LaRoche and Blakey 1997) has emphatically reinforced the role of descendant communities in projects that arouse sufficient spiritual and social interest; true community involvement is another method through which archaeologists and physical anthropologists make their research relevant to the public. When properly planned, compliance-based excavation of a historical burial ground has the potential to contribute much toward the amelioration of racist ideas and other public misperceptions and historical fallacies. Anthropologists occupy a unique position as an educational force within the public sphere due to their specialized understanding of the biological basis for human variation and behavior. The archaeological excavation of a historical burial ground provides a natural educational forum through which the public can be introduced to the anthropological concepts of human variability and adaptation. Physical anthropologists must, and do, reinforce the notions of racial equality by seizing each opportunity offered through the public exposure associated with the excavation of a historical cemetery.

Community Involvement and Philadelphia’s First African Baptist Church Cemeteries

The number of African-American cemeteries excavated in the United States has increased over the last decade, particularly in urban areas undergoing redevelopment. This is because African-American cemeteries were often relegated, commonly unmarked, to the margins of early American cities. In Philadelphia, the First African Baptist Church Cemetery projects allowed archaeologists and physical anthropologists to engage the public early on in the planning phases for both cemetery relocations. The resulting projects effectively focused public attention on the urban experience of free African Americans during the early years of the Industrial Revolution.

The First African Baptist Church was founded in 1809 and split into two congregations in 1816. The splinter group relocated to Eighth and Vine streets by 1824 and remained on the property owned by Pastor Henry Simmons until about 1842. The original group worshipped at Tenth and Vine streets, using their property as a burial ground between about 1810 and 1822. The Tenth Street church relocated to a building in south Philadelphia in 1906, where the congregation currently meets.

The Eighth Street cemetery, in use between about 1823 and 1841, was
discovered during archaeological monitoring activities associated with the construction of a commuter rail tunnel in 1980 (Parrington et al. 1989; Parrington and Roberts 1990). Excavated by archaeologists from John Milner Associates (JMA) in 1983 and 1984, the remains of 140 individuals and associated funerary artifacts were discovered at the site. The human remains were analyzed at the Smithsonian Institution and reinterred in 1987 at the cemetery used by the modern First African Baptist Church congregation. Community involvement from the beginning of the project was essential to its successful completion (Roberts 1984). In recognition of the keen public interest in the cemetery, a wooden platform was erected at the site so that visitors could safely view the archaeological proceedings in a panorama-like setting. Staff members from the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum, located three blocks from the former cemetery, were available to provide organized tours from the platform's vantage point as the site was excavated. More than 2,600 people took advantage of these tours over the two field seasons, connecting Philadelphia's current citizens with those from the city's antebellum past.

An effective plan to bring the public into the archaeology laboratory was mounted by JMA during the analysis of the Tenth Street First African Baptist Church cemetery, excavated three years after the remains from the Eighth Street cemetery were reinterred. The Tenth Street site was discovered during construction of the Vine Expressway through center-city Philadelphia and was funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration (Crist et al. 1996). The skeletal remains of eighty-nine individuals were excavated and transferred to the JMA Osteology Laboratory, located four blocks from the site; numerous funerary artifacts, including well-preserved coffin hardware and clothing, were likewise moved to the lab. During the course of the subsequent five-year study, the firm hosted over fifty school groups and tours in the lab. These groups ranged from first graders to graduate students, with a particular emphasis on children from the inner-city schools, who rarely are exposed to archaeology. Groups from the Phil-A-Kids program sponsored by the local Atwater Kent Museum also toured the laboratory each summer during this phase of the project. Here they were given the opportunity to handle bones and artifacts selected for their educational value and durability. Unlike most museum displays, which are accompanied by "do not touch" signs, these tours provided hundreds of children with tangible links to the heritage of a social group not commonly discussed in traditional history textbooks.

The group conducted by the scientific producer, a church member, led the tours. Members told of the history and significance of the remains, and a ceremony was conducted in which the entire congregation participated. Thus, the circle of interest has expanded beyond the circle of those interested in archaeology.

Neither first forceful involvement in the excavation of the site had any part, nor were extended demonstrations given at the site. An awareness of the diversity and richness of the remains among the descendants of the First African Baptist Church members has increased with the discovery of the remains, and the site has been a source of knowledge about the city's African American history. Both Philadelphia's African Americans and the city at large have been enriched by the discovery of the remains and the knowledge that they represent.
The group tours culminated in an ancestral homecoming ceremony conducted by the project's cultural anthropologist, bringing together the scientific project team and the current members of the First African Baptist Church congregation in June 1993. In the months following the ceremony, church leaders actively planned the reinterment of the human remains from the Tenth Street site at Eden Cemetery, adjacent to the burial plot in which the Eighth Street remains had been reburied in 1987. The reburial ceremony took place in May 1995 and was attended by more than forty members of the current church. At the congregation's request, the mortuary artifacts from the Tenth Street site have been curated at the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum in Philadelphia, completing the circle of involvement that had begun with the excavation of the Eighth Street cemetery twelve years earlier.

Neither First African Baptist Church Cemetery project elicited the forceful involvement of the descendant community, as happened with excavation of the African Burial Ground in lower Manhattan. The reason, in part, involved the relationship that began during the first cemetery project and extended through the second. This interactive partnership demonstrated the great potential that exists for mutually beneficial cooperation between the scientists who excavate and analyze historical cemeteries and the descendant communities affected by such projects. The publicly funded First African Baptist Church Cemetery projects served to heighten awareness among church members and the larger Philadelphia community about the scientific value of studying ancestral remains while enhancing knowledge about the African-American role in shaping early American society. Both projects fostered a sense of cultural pride among Philadelphia's African-American community and introduced thousands of people to an important part of American history that the buildings at Independence National Historic Park and other major tourist attractions do not reflect. The scope of the public forum created by the seminars and presentations made by the project team members encompassed archaeology, physical anthropology, history, and religion, attracting the public to the wide range of information learned from the archaeological excavation of these and other forgotten burial grounds.

The Public Has a Vested Interest

The November 1994 cover of Discover magazine posed the rhetorical question "Race: What Is It Good For?" Archaeologists and physical an-
thropologists are uniquely qualified to address this and other public issues that affect our national community. From the celebration of a past group’s achievements to the resolution of a missing persons case, mortuary archaeology and forensic anthropology provide benefits to the public that are often unrecognized but never unutilized.

Informing the public about the significance of historical cemeteries and the value of skeletal studies is often not difficult. Many people, it seems, already intuitively accept this position and are willing to support the expenditure of public funds on the appropriate treatment of such remains. However, too often people equate archaeology with fieldwork because they never see the results of research conducted in the laboratory. This is probably due to the technical nature of osteological research, which involves specialized knowledge that the public may feel is too overwhelming to understand. Yet, as the Iceman stories and the media attention given the African Burial Ground indicate, not only are people interested in these types of projects but they want to play an active role in how the work is conducted and reported.

Given examples of the past uses and abuses of human skeletal remains, the question of whether the public should support mortuary archaeology is easily answered. The public maintains a vested interest in the future of our biological and cultural past, a heritage entrusted to archaeologists and physical anthropologists. By engaging people in the excitement of archaeology, historical cemetery projects will continue to benefit our society by portraying the past through its relevance to the present.

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