

## **American Association of Biological Anthropologists Report of the President, 2022**

I want to begin this year's report by thanking our members for their dedication to the Association. I hope to see everyone at the annual business meeting enjoying the routine business of our association and celebrating the accomplishments of our colleagues in the awards segment of the meeting. The business meeting will be broadcast live and recorded for those who are participating virtually this year.

We pursued numerous initiatives this year to address issues specific to the association as well as more general issues. Several initiatives have been substantial in their scope, involving tremendous commitment and hard work of many members. I thank all for their efforts and dedication to the discipline and to the AABA.

### **Task Force for the Ethical Study of Human Remains**

The most important matter that the Association addressed this year concerns our professional activities involving human materials (anatomical materials, including skeletal remains, as well as other tissues and materials). Just a little less than a year has passed since we became aware of a controversy with a course in our field that included forensics teaching with human skeletal remains representing people killed by lethal police tactics against the MOVE group in Philadelphia in May of 1985. This, and other recent events, illustrate that we must always be vigilant about the ethics of our professional activities.

Our initial response to these circumstances was to consult with our Committee on Community Partnership (CCP), chaired by Ben Auerbach. The CCP has been helping the Association work with a variety of issues over the years, including the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). We saw a need to continue to promote strong ethics in our field. Along with the CCP, we formed the Task Force for the Ethical Study of Human Remains to begin working expeditiously in this area, co-chaired by Ben Auerbach and Fatimah Jackson. The group has made steady and significant progress in addressing a wide range of issues.

The Task Force's first objective was to define parameters of its work, including opting to concentrate on work with African American descendant communities. In addition, the group developed a survey, distributed in mid-February of this year, to help us understand the kinds of professional activities we conduct broadly in the discipline of biological anthropology, including work with descendant communities. The survey simultaneously assesses our activities broadly while generating information on descendant communities and our practices with such communities. By calibrating professional activities in our field, we are poised to continue our important work foregrounding ethical issues. We see the Task Force's work as a first step. In the coming months, we will be building from their efforts to accomplish concrete advances in how we conduct our work, including policies, guidelines, and best practices. This will involve additional input from Association members and others.

Association leadership has been involved in discussions with other organizations that share interests in these areas. Specifically, we have held discussions with the American Association for Anatomy (President Valerie DeLeon) the American Anthropological Association (Executive Director, Ed Liebow), and several members of Society for American Archaeology, including President Deborah L. Nichols. We will be engaged in further communications as our organizations each complete various phases of their work in this area, sharing the information we gather and analyze to advance to next steps.

The first phase of the AABA's work will be presented and discussed at a Presidential Plenary Panel during our 2022 annual conference by Task Force co-chairs, Fatimah Jackson and Ben Auerbach. The panel will provide members with details on the work of the Task Force. It will help the Association develop a roadmap for the future, while setting the stage for further work in this area. Importantly, the panel will offer members opportunities to share feedback, ideas, and suggestions directly and through dialogue. Next phases will be planned once we have a chance to consider both the survey results and discussions that emerge from the Presidential Plenary Panel.

In addition to the Task Force's important work, the Association has drafted comments on a US National Park Service proposal to amend the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). We have solicited and followed guidance from the CCP and Executive Committee on these issues in developing positions and statements.

### **Name Change**

We are nearing the completion of our first year as the American Association of *Biological Anthropologists*. Our new name became official on 1 June 2021. This was accomplished over the last few years through the persistence and hard work of several former presidents, including Susan Antón, Leslie Aiello and Anne Grauer. In addition to changing the Association's name, we have obtained a new domain name ([www.bioanth.org](http://www.bioanth.org), donated by Kevin Kelley). The mechanics of the transition involved major efforts by our webmaster, Ed Hagen, and AABA Secretary, Sheela Athreya. We also thank our partners at Burk and Associates, who worked directly with state agencies in Kansas (our corporate location of record) to change the name. The group at Burk also assisted with new AABA logos (with input from members Graciela Cabana and Susan Antón).

In conjunction with the change in the Association's name, we worked with our journal publisher, Wiley, to change the names of our journals to the *American Journal of Biological Anthropology* and the *Yearbook of Biological Anthropology*. Editors, Trudy Turner (*AJBA*) and Lyle Konigsberg (*YBA*), worked closely with our Wiley partners, Paul-Andre Genest and Olivia Barry, to accomplish this relatively quickly and in time for the new names to be applied as of January, 2022.

### **2022 Annual Conference Planning**

The routine activities of the Association, particularly planning our annual conference, acquired special significance this year. We spent the last year closely monitoring both local and global situations with COVID-19, working to plan meetings with health and safety as top priorities. It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge the efforts of the AABA Executive Committee in leading our efforts. In particular, the Vice President and Program Chair, Leslea Hlusko, has worked tirelessly since our call for symposium proposals last summer to find paths to productive, collegial, and high-impact in-person and virtual conferences. An important step involved substantially increasing the size of our Program Committee, primarily charged with abstract review, to aid in the several phases of this complex planning process. Much more effort than usual was needed to plan our conferences, especially with the decision to host both in-person and virtual conferences. We owe thanks to the Program Committee for their work in several areas.

Vice President Hlusko and the webinar committee also continued the AABA webinar series, initiated in 2020. We have sponsored several webinars this year, covering a range of topics, and have learned new ways to present our ideas and findings, along with new ways to interact as colleagues. The webinar committee and participants have enriched our field. We also thank our partners at Burk and Associates for providing the infrastructure to host these important events.

### ***Yearbook of Biological Anthropology***

The Association has appointed new editorial leadership for the *Yearbook of Biological Anthropology* to replace Lyle Konigsberg upon completion of his term next year. We have undertaken and completed a search for new leadership, appointing Sheela Athreya and Graciela Cabana as co-editors. Please join me in welcoming them to this important position. The search was conducted by our Publications Committee (Jeremy DeSilva, Clark Larsen, Ripan Malhi, Robin Nelson, Lauren Schroeder, Tiffany Tung, and Trudy Turner (chair)). We thank the committee for its work and we thank Lyle Konigsberg for guidance of the journal during his term.

### **AABA Committees**

Our Executive Committee will be joined by new members in the coming year, with 5 newly elected members. I am pleased to announce that members voted for Leslea Hlusko as President-Elect, Kristi Lewton as Vice President and Program Chair, Amy Rector as Secretary, Stephanie Meredith as Membership Committee Chair, and Lauren Schroeder as Professional Development Committee Chair. We are fortunate to be joined by this excellent group of colleagues. Our newly elected members will be joined by Early Career Liaison, Katherine Kinkopf, and Student Liaison, Dori Kenessey. Please join me in congratulating and welcoming our new members.

The excitement of new Association leadership is balanced by the loss of experience and wisdom of previous leadership. I want to first acknowledge the remarkable efforts and accomplishments of Past President, Anne Grauer, who has either served on the Executive Committee as a committee chair or as an AAPA/AABA officer for nearly 20 years. Her institutional knowledge has benefitted us all. She was faced with some of the most difficult decisions in our Association's history. These included, with only days

of lead time, the decision to cancel our 2020 meetings because of the pandemic and the decision to schedule an all-virtual meeting in 2021. In each case, the Association faced financial perils stemming from penalty clauses in standard contracts between the Association and conference hotels. We remain at some financial risk with existing contracts as the pandemic lingers and have continued to work with hotels to adapt to the situation in Denver and future venues. This has involved renegotiating contracts signed prior to 2019.

Additional Executive Committee members who have completed their terms with distinction include Vice President and Program Chair, Leslea Hlusko. In addition to the arduous work of planning this year's in-person and virtual conferences, she has consistently innovated. Importantly, her initiation of the AABA webinar series yielded remarkable opportunities for our members during some of the most difficult periods of the pandemic. Vice President Hlusko has added new scientific infrastructure to the Association, benefitting us well into the future.

A total of three additional Executive Committee members completed their terms this year. Secretary and Social Media Committee Chair, Sheela Athreya, has brought important strategic dimensions to our Association, along with handling extensive secretarial responsibilities. A novel set of responsibilities came with our name change, which she deftly handled. She also increased our social media presence and will continue to serve as chair of the Social Media Committee. Kristi Lewton, the Chair of the Membership Committee, conducted reviews of scores of new membership applications, and helped prospective members with applications, broadening our Association's impact. As noted, we will have the benefits of Dr. Lewton's experience and wisdom in her new capacity as Vice President and Program Chair. Shara Bailey, Chair of the Professional Development Committee, guided the committee through Cobb Professional Development Grant reviews and has organized this year's auction, greatly benefitting our junior colleagues. Her group selected remarkable Executive Committee Early Career Liaisons through her term. Please join me in thanking these colleagues for their efforts over the last (and quite difficult) several years. Finally, I would like to thank our outgoing Early Career Liaison, Jeanelle Uy and Student Liaison, Sharon Toth, for their work in conjunction with the Executive Committee.

Most current committee chairs will continue their service to the AABA following this year's conference. However, Education Committee Chair, Briana Pobiner, will leave this position. We thank her for tireless work on behalf of the Association and our students. She and her committee have greatly enriched educational resources available to our discipline, with lasting benefits for our members and students.

Our Task Force for the Ethical Study of Human Remains, co-chaired by Ben Auerbach and Fatimah Jackson has worked very hard through the year, including numerous meetings, development of a survey instrument, and conducting a Presidential Panel to relate and discuss their work and findings to our members. I thank committee members for their efforts as well (Sheela Athreya, Shamsi Barry, Michael Blakey, Alan Goodman, Joseph Graves, Lance Gravlee, Ellen Lofaro, Ripan Malhi, Charlotte Roberts).

### **AABA Awards**

As always, celebrating the accomplishments of our colleagues is a true highlight for the year and for our conference. This year, John Mitani received the Charles Darwin Lifetime Achievement Award. Our Gabriel Lasker Service Award goes to Leslea Hlusko, and Katie Hinde has been awarded the AABA and Leakey Foundation Communication and Outreach Award in Honor of Camilla M. Smith. Once again, we are awarding a remarkable set of scholars who continue to make contributions to the discipline.

This year's Cobb Professional Development Awards have been awarded to Maria Nieves-Colon, Julieta Gomez Garcia-Donas, Gina McFarlane, Stephanie Poindexter, and Cody Prang. Our junior colleagues have developed an exciting and wide-ranging set of research projects. The AABA is pleased to support these efforts.

### **Acknowledgment and Appreciation**

We have the benefits of several Executive Committee members continuing in their positions. Graciela Cabana, our Treasurer, effectively handled our finances, and contributed to important discussions throughout the year. As she will step into the *Yearbook* co-editorship, we will be holding an election for a new treasurer. History and Honors Committee Chair, Julienne Rutherford handled an extraordinary number of excellent applications for Darwin Lifetime Achievement Award, the Gabriel Lasker Service Award, and the AABA and Leakey Foundation Communication and Outreach Award. Chelsey Juarez and the Student Programs Committee have been able to resume evaluating Pollitzer Student Travel Grant applications and judge student presentations at our meetings. We welcomed Elizabeth DiGangi and Rachel Watkins as Ethics co-chairs this year, replacing Bob Anemone.

Our journals continue to flourish through the leadership of Trudy Turner, Editor-in-Chief of the *American Journal of Biological Anthropology* and Lyle Konigsberg, Editor of *Yearbook of Biological Anthropology*. We look forward to our new co-editors of the *Yearbook*, Sheela Athreya and Graciela Cabana. Our former publisher, Paul-Andre Genest (who recently took a new position with another business) was a strong partner with our journals and editors. We welcome our new Wiley publisher, Gillian Greenough.

I want to acknowledge and thank our business partners at Burk and Associates (Brett Burk, Lori Strong, Heide Rohland, Mary-Lou Robinson, and others). They have aided the Association in many ways, including re-negotiating hotel contracts, hosting webinars, and helping to plan our multi-format meetings. In particular, Lori Strong has been a wonderful partner for us working throughout the last few years, helping us adapt to rapidly changing circumstances.

Finally, I want to thank our members for continuing to advance the discipline in so many ways. Hopefully, our 2022 meetings will give us opportunities to renew our scholarship and friendships in ways we have not had for a long, long time. It is truly an honor to

work with this amazing association. I hope that everyone thoroughly enjoys both of our 2022 meetings!