

To: American Association of Biological Anthropologists Executive Committee
From: Benjamin Auerbach, Chair of Committee for Community Partnership
Date: 14 April 2023
Re: Annual report

Dear Steve and Members of the AABA Executive Committee:

The Committee for Community Partnership (CCP) for the AABA has a current membership of four individuals: Drs. Benjamin Auerbach (chair), Shamsi Berry, Ellen Lofaro, Ripan Malhi. Dr. Charlotte Roberts resigned from the Task Force and the CCP in May of 2022. Herein we report our activities over the last year and plans for the upcoming year. In brief, we have been active as part of the Task Force for the Ethical Study of Human Remains, while also serving in our primary role to give advice when requested by the Executive Committee concerning community partnership in research. We ask the EC to consider approaches we outline below about the use of human remains in teaching. In addition, we also have requests concerning the membership and future of this important committee within the AABA.

General activities in 2022-2023:

As noted in the 2022 committee report, after the formation of the Task Force leadership at the request of President Steve Leigh and the Executive Committee, members of the CCP were asked to participate in the Task Force given their broad experience and knowledge as members of the committee. All agreed to serve as members at the time, and all but Charlotte Roberts continue to serve on the Task Force. The Task Force reported its preliminary report in November 2022, and is currently working toward finishing its main goals by the end of 2023.

The CCP was asked in early 2023 to co-sponsor the Presidential Plenary Panel at the Annual Meeting, which the committee members quickly agreed would be a good idea. With the Susan Anton, chair of the Committee on Diversity, Ben Auerbach worked to identify individuals to serve on the plenary panel, which is focused on community partnered and engaged research.

Approaches to advising the AABA community about human remains in instruction:

Concerns about the use of Native American human remains in instruction, as well as continued questions about both research and instruction using remains without consent by donors or communities, have been brought to the attention of members of the committee with regularity. In light of this, members of the committee ask the Executive Committee to be proactive within the AABA community in reminding individuals and institutions about the proper procedures for working with human remains under NAGPRA. We also encourage the Executive Committee to update the public- and member-facing advice on NAGPRA. Until the work of the AABA Task Force and sibling task forces and commissions at other organizations are complete, we also ask

that the AABA highlight examples of research that demonstrate good community partnership. (Such examples would not necessarily endorse this research, and the committee does not want individuals to look at such studies as a series of boxes to check. Rather, these will help researchers see examples of well-considered and engaged approaches to working with communities.) The committee is available to help in all these endeavors and hope we can address them in the near term.

We especially note concerns raised about the use of human remains of unknown provenance in teaching, as well as a desire to have clear consent for the use of human remains by at least some individuals in the AABA professional community. We ask the Executive Committee to consider ways to advise the community about how best to address these concerns when they fall outside of existing repatriation law. One suggestion from the committee is that the AABA consider ways to leverage existing donated collections to become sources of human remains for teaching osteology.

Requests about the future of the committee membership and status:

Given the work on the Task Force and delays brought by the pandemic, Ben Auerbach will stay on, with the Executive Committee's approval, as chair until the annual meeting of the association in 2024. We ask that one of the existing members of the committee be allowed to replace him as the committee chair, with a term to be decided between that individual and the EC, unless the committee is transformed into a standing committee (see below).

With Executive Committee approval, the committee is looking toward finding two new full members to rotate onto the committee as soon as possible year. We would like to recruit two junior scholars with experience in community partnered/engaged research to serve on the committee, potentially asking either individuals who are serving on the Task Force or those who are participating on the 2023 Presidential Plenary Panel in April. The committee would also like to recruit a student member.

Finally, given the growing importance of community partnered research going forward in all work among biological anthropologists, the committee formally requests that the Executive Committee seek an amendment to the AABA Bylaws to change the Committee for Community Partnership into a standing committee.

Thank you all, again, for your continued support of the efforts of our committee. We greatly appreciate the hard work of the members of the Executive Committee.

On Behalf of the Committee for Community Partnership,
Benjamin M. Auerbach