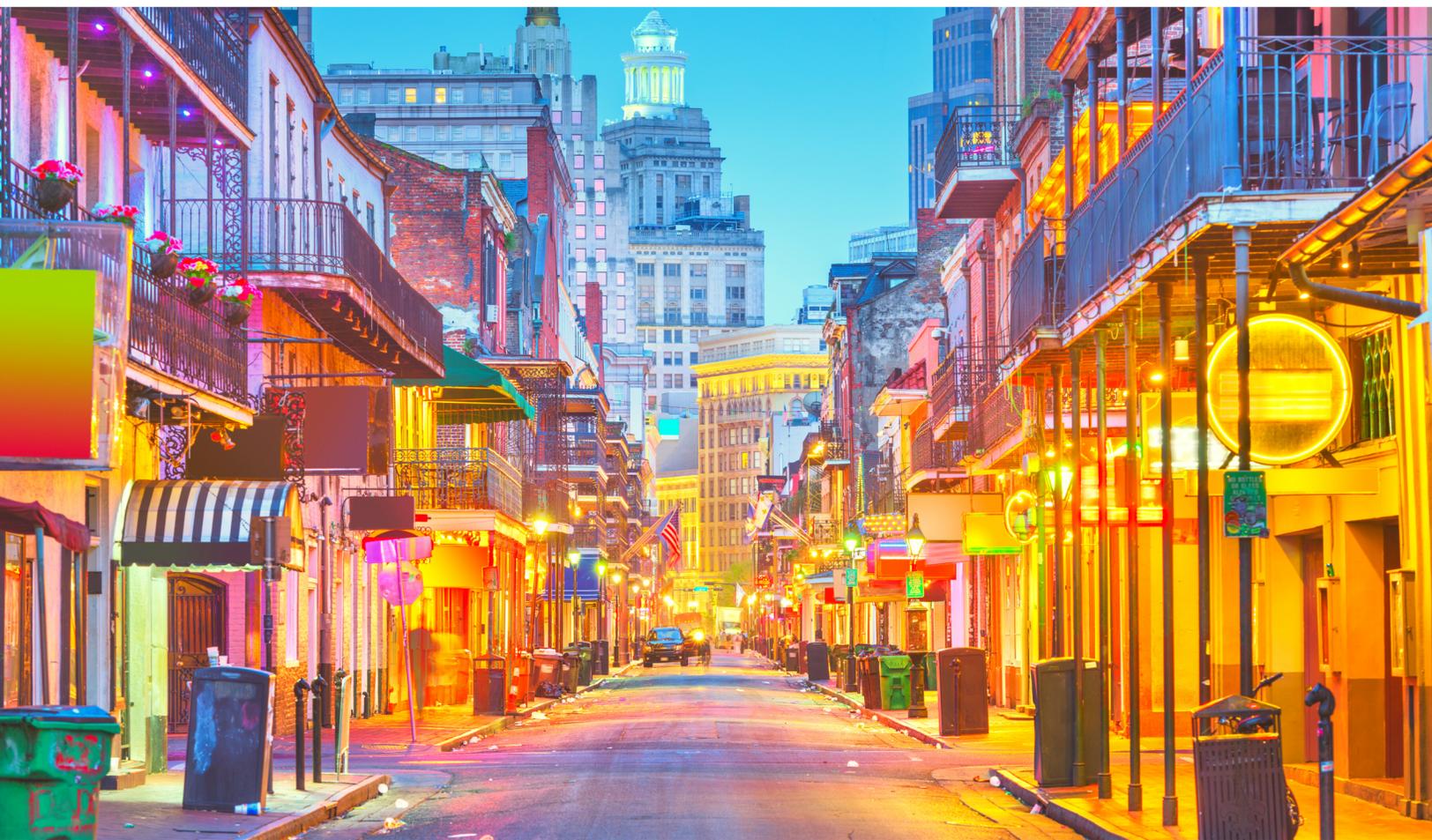


*89th Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology
New Orleans, Louisiana*

CASE STUDIES IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ETHICS

*for the Nineteenth Annual Intercollegiate
Ethics Bowl Competition
April 18, 2024*



PREPARED BY

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, APRIL 18



FIRST ROUND A/B (6:30 AM-8:00 AM)

First Round A

Jackson (5th Floor, Marriott)

Indiana University of Pennsylvania vs. University of California, Berkeley

First Round B

Galvez (5th Floor, Marriott)

University of Texas at Austin vs. University of Central Florida



FIRST ROUND C/D (8:00-9:30 AM)

First Round C

Jackson (5th Floor, Marriott)

University of California, Davis vs. Northern Illinois University

First Round D

Galvez (5th Floor, Marriott)

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee vs. Youngstown State University



SEMI-FINAL (9:30-11:00 AM)

Semi-Final A

Jackson (5th Floor, Marriott)

Winner of First Round A vs. Winner of First Round B

Semi-Final B

Galvez (5th Floor, Marriott)

Winner of First Round C vs. Winner of First Round D



FINAL (1:00-3:00 PM)

Mardi Gras Ballroom (Salon E, 3rd Floor, Marriott)

Winner of Semi-Final A vs. Winner of Semi-Final B

CASE ONE



Redacted for sensitivity reasons.

CASE TWO



Dr. Emily Tantamount, a respected archaeologist, prominent public figure employed by the National Archaeology Museum, and advocate for public science education, faces an unprecedented challenge that strikes at the core of her professional integrity and commitment to truth.

Known for her work debunking pseudoscientific claims, Emily is unwittingly thrust into the spotlight of controversy when she discovers that her interview for a seemingly reputable documentary series has been manipulated to endorse Norbert Jackson's speculative theories about an ancient super-civilization. The series, "Echoes of the Ancients," initially presented to Emily as an educational exploration of human history through archaeological discoveries, turns out to be Norbert's platform for promoting his unfounded claims. Emily's interview, intended to provide a scientific counterpoint, is cleverly edited to give the impression of her agreement with Norbert's fringe theories, lending an air of legitimacy to the entire project.

Realizing the potential damage to her reputation and the field of archaeology, Tan confronts the production team, demanding a retraction or an edit to clarify her actual stance. However, the series has already gained significant traction online, with Harwood's followers and devotees hailing Emily's supposed "support" as a victory against mainstream archaeology and the academics who seek to conceal Norbert's truths. Feeling betrayed and manipulated, Emily reaches out to Dr. Simon Reyes, a close colleague, for advice, saying "Simon, they've twisted my words. This isn't just about me; it's about the credibility of our entire field. What can we possibly do to rectify this?" Simon replies, "Emily, this is a nightmare. But we might have a chance to turn this around if we act quickly. Let's think about reaching out to other platforms to set the record straight. Maybe an open letter disseminated via social media or a video response?"

Emily is torn. On the one hand, addressing the situation publicly could draw even more attention to Norbert's theories and inadvertently amplify the misinformation. Moreover, Norbert's many followers have been known to embark on campaigns to harass and intimidate his "enemies." On the other, remaining silent might allow the deception to solidify, potentially misleading the public and undermining scientific research. As Emily weighs her options, she becomes increasingly aware of the complex web of consequences her decision entails. Engaging directly with Norbert's narrative risks validating it further, yet ignoring it could erode public trust in archaeology and science. The dilemma is not just about combating misinformation; it's about navigating the treacherous landscape of media, where the lines between truth and fiction are easily blurred.

Caught between the desire to defend the integrity of her work and the fear of fueling the fire of pseudoscience, Emily stands at a crossroads. How can she disentangle herself from this unwanted association without lending more credence to Harwood's claims? The challenge before her is not only to clear her name but to do so in a way that reinforces the value of legitimate scientific inquiry in an era increasingly dominated by sensationalism and conspiracy.

CASE THREE



In the face of Clearwater University's budget cuts and strategic reprioritization brought on by fears over the looming demographic cliffs impacts on regional universities and colleges, the Archaeology Department, led by Department Chair Dr. Maya Lin, finds itself at a critical juncture. The administration, emphasizing financial sustainability, student demand measured in credit-hour production, overhead-generating research activities, direct pathways to employment, and alumni gifts, considers discontinuing departments that seemingly fall short of these criteria.

Maya is thus compelled to articulate a compelling defense and strategic plan for the survival and relevance of archaeology within the university's evolving landscape. Maya acknowledges the challenge ahead, recognizing the administration's shift towards a more business-like approach in higher education. She understands that to safeguard her department's future, she must demonstrate archaeology's alignment with the university's priorities: employability, interdisciplinary research, community engagement, and innovation.

Focusing first on employability, Maya proposes a curriculum revamp emphasizing practical skills in CRM, given its growing market. She outlines plans for partnerships with local firms, offering internships and hands-on experiences that would enhance students' job readiness. However, the suggestion is met with skepticism by some faculty members, who fear it might dilute the academic rigor of the program. Her colleague Georgiana Rivers asks, "Are we now just a vocational school? What about the scholarly pursuit of knowledge for its own sake?" Next, Maya highlights archaeology's potential to secure substantial research grants, citing recent projects that have attracted significant funding. She envisions collaborative ventures with other departments, leveraging archaeology's interdisciplinary nature to tap into diverse and more lucrative funding sources. This, however, enrages some of her colleagues whose work does not involve "hot topics" such as climate change, artificial intelligence/machine learning, and energy that draw federal dollars.

As she delves into community engagement and public archaeology initiatives, Maya faces the reality of the administration's demands. The expectation to quantify the department's impact in terms of direct financial returns and job placements feels at odds with the intrinsic values of archaeological research and education. The most daunting task lies in re-conceptualizing archaeology as a beacon of innovation through in-demand skills such as archaeological informatics and remote sensing. Maya argues that these areas not only represent the future of archaeology but also offer valuable, transferrable skills to students.

As the day of the crucial presentation to the university administration dawns, Maya meticulously prepares her case, armed with data, success stories, and a vision for a modernized archaeology program that despite some of her colleagues' misgivings, aligns well with the university's strategic goals. Yet, an underlying tension remains: Can archaeology truly reconcile its core academic and scholarly values with the pressing demands of a higher education system increasingly driven by market forces and immediate employability? And at what point does the adaptation compromise the essence of the discipline?

CASE FOUR



While conducting fieldwork during the winter field season in Lake Azura, Dr. Emma Clarke, an independent archaeologist with years of experience in the northern reaches of the Zephyrian Highlands, encounters a troubling situation. Emma, who has dedicated her career to unearthing and preserving the artifacts of ancient complex societies that inhabited the region surrounding Lake Azura, receives an unsettling gift right around Christmas—a paper detailing new findings in a region she knows intimately, authored by some of her former colleagues.

As Emma reads through the paper, a chilling realization sets in. "These artifacts... I've seen them before, in my own work," she murmurs to herself, recognizing items she had discovered during her excavations in 2015. The paper not only fails to mention her contributions but also inaccurately claims these objects were excavated rather than found on the surface, a significant misrepresentation of their origin. Emma had initiated archaeological research in the area surrounding Lake Azura, uncovering items dating back to a culture predating the known history of the Zephyrian Highlands. Besides her scientific endeavors as an independent scholar, Clarke leads a nonprofit aimed at protecting the lake's watershed, emphasizing her deep connection and commitment to the area.

The publication of the paper, titled "Shepherds of the High Zephyrian Highlands: An Analysis of Prehistoric Dwellings and Climate," in the *Journal of Archaeological Discovery* without any citation to her prior work, comes as a shock. "How could they not reach out, given my extensive history here?" Emma wonders, troubled by the oversight and the potential ethical implications. She sits down to write an email to Christine Walker, the journal editor, to express her concerns.

The journal eventually retracts the article following Emma's persistent complaints, citing "fundamental errors" in the research—a decision that Emma feels does not fully address the gravity of the situation. Her initial outreach to Christina and subsequent interactions with the Office of Research Integrity at Northern University (the institution of the lead author, Dr. George Mayfield) highlight a complex web of academic and ethical considerations. Despite the retraction, Emma is left pondering the broader implications of the incident for archaeological ethics and the integrity of academic research. "Once excavations are done, they can't be duplicated... It's imperative for us to be thorough," advises Patricia Reynolds, a seasoned archaeology professor Emma consults to gauge the seriousness of her concerns.

Now, standing at the edge of Lake Azura, Emma reflects on her next steps. "How do we safeguard "our" data, maintaining proper attribution, while fostering a culture of respect and collaboration among researchers?" she contemplates, the serene waters of the lake mirroring the depth of the ethical quandary before her. "Moreover, how do we ensure that scholars accurately report on data, especially given the destructive nature of our discipline and the lack of replicability and difficulties surrounding access?"

CASE FIVE



Samira Khan, a second-year undergraduate student at Mountain State University, is excited to finally get the opportunity to do some hands-on training in archaeological field methods at a summer field school run by the National University of Dothan that will involve a large number of archaeology students from around the world. It's her first time traveling outside of the country. To pay for the field school, Samira took on a few odd jobs in the Spring semester to cobble together the funds to cover the required \$8,000 USD in tuition, fees, travel costs, and meal expenses.

A few weeks in, however, her experience at the Eldoria Archaeological Field School not only brings her face-to-face with the past but also with the stark realities of the present. Coming from a working-class family in an underserved community, she confronts barriers not just of socioeconomic class but of race and ethnicity as well. She finds solace and comfort in Luca Gonzales, a fellow student who is similarly interested in using archaeology to bridge divides and tell the stories of those long silenced by mainstream narratives.

Throughout the course of the field school, Samira and Luca are starkly reminded of their outsider status through daily interactions and observations. Many of their peers casually discuss travel experiences, from visiting the pyramids of Omashu to the ancient temples of Ba Sing Se, showcasing a level of financial flexibility and worldliness that Samira and Luca can only dream of. These conversations often unfold over the latest models of archaeological equipment, personal gear far superior to the basic tools provided by the school, highlighting a tangible divide in preparedness and access to resources. During a group outing to a local museum, some students nonchalantly purchase expensive souvenirs and books, while Samira carefully counts her coins, debating whether she can afford a small keepsake. Luca overhears a peer joking about the "exotic" experience of staying in Eldoria's modest accommodations, a stark contrast to their descriptions of luxurious summer homes and travel escapades.

These moments of disconnect are further exacerbated in discussions about careers. While many students express a preference for prestigious academic positions or high-profile museum roles, Samira and Luca focus on the practicalities of securing any job that would allow them to apply their passion while supporting their families. The casual assumption by some peers that everyone has a financial safety net to fall back on leaves Samira and Luca feeling even more isolated.

Eager to relay their thoughts, the pair brainstorm ideas for increasing accessibility in archaeology, from scholarship funds specifically aimed at underrepresented students to mentorship programs connecting aspiring archaeologists with professionals from similar backgrounds. They propose these ideas in a presentation to the field school faculty, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable approach to archaeological education. The response is mixed, with some faculty members expressing support and others cautioning against the challenges of implementing such changes. "You have to put in your time," Dr. Dorian Grant, says. "After all, that's what we all did. If you want it badly enough, you'll have to give it your all and risk everything."

Samira and Luca leave feeling somewhat demoralized and question whether they should continue with their archaeological training.

CASE SIX



In the vibrant yet contested landscape of Varlandia, a groundbreaking project emerges at the intersection of ancient DNA research and artificial intelligence (AI). Dr. Danny Nguyen, an emerging talent in the cutting-edge field of archaeogenetics employed by the Manderson Institute for the Study of Human Origins, finds themselves at the helm of this ambitious endeavor. The project aims to use machine learning algorithms and leverage high-performance computing to analyze and interpret vast, openly available datasets of ancient DNA, unlocking secrets of Indigenous Varlandian ancestry that have remained elusive for centuries. The potential of AI to revolutionize humanity's understanding of ancient populations is immense, offering insights into migration patterns, genetic diseases, and the interconnectedness of ancient societies.

However, as the project progresses, Danny encounters a series of ethical quandaries that challenge their convictions and the very foundations of their work. As the algorithms begin to yield results, they reveal complex narratives of Varlandia's pre-colonial past that blur the lines between prehistoric communities, suggesting a far more interrelated world than previously thought. These revelations, while academically thrilling, carry significant implications for contemporary Varlandian society, where ethnic and national identities remain highly sensitive topics.

News of Danny's work soon attracts the attention of various interest groups. Some see the project as a means to foster a more inclusive understanding of Indigenous Varlandian identity, while others view it as a threat to their historical narratives and legal claims to the land. The latter group pressures Danny to halt their research or even massage the data to align with their agendas. One group, the Sansa Tribe, asserts that this research should never have been done in the first place and that they have ownership of their genetic information, including that of their ancestors.

Furthermore, Danny grapples with AI's capability to predict genetic predispositions to certain diseases within the ancient DNA. This information, while scientifically valuable and potentially helpful to living people, raises concerns about privacy, informed consent, intellectual property, and the potential misuse of genetic data in modern populations, echoing debates around genetic determinism and the ethics of "playing God" with ancestral information. Danny recalls something he learned about at a recent conference, thinking, "Could this constitute a form of 'biocolonialism,' or the commandeering of biological resources from an Indigenous people without compensation?"

Caught between their dedication to scientific integrity and the potential social repercussions of their findings, Danny is feeling very conflicted. As the deadline for publishing their findings to meet the funding requirements of the National Research Council Grant that supported this work looms, Danny must decide whether the pursuit of knowledge justifies the potential disruption of societal beliefs and the ethical implications of using AI to delve into humanity's ancient past. They did, after all, use open data and believe that data access and replicability are extremely important to science. AI, however, is changing the way in which data is used and the scale of analysis.

Should they move forward with publication? Their decision will not only shape their career but also influence how society confronts the intertwined legacies of history, genetics, and technology.

CASE SEVEN



Liam Thompson, an MA student in archaeology at West Davenport University, takes on a summer job as a crew chief at Vista Heritage Group, keen on applying his academic knowledge to real-world cultural resource management (CRM) challenges. Tasked with conducting a survey in Durango Forest, an area characterized by rugged terrain, unpredictable weather, and isolation, the project's significance is underscored by its potential impact on local Indigenous heritage sites and the ecological balance of the area.

Amidst his work, Liam encounters signs of recent looting, a stark reminder of the ongoing struggle and race to protect these invaluable sites. The region suffers from methamphetamine abuse, where poverty-stricken individuals are driven to plunder sites to sustain their addiction. The situation complicates when the team, under the direction of project manager Derek Hanson, is pressed for time due to the client's strict deadlines and limited funding for the development project.

As the summer heat intensifies, reaching historically dangerous levels, Liam recalls the recent tragic incident of a young archaeologist who lost her life to heat-related illness under similar circumstances. Concerned for his team's safety, Liam proposes implementing comprehensive safety measures, including adjusting work hours to cooler times of the day and ensuring regular hydration breaks.

As the project in Durango Forest progresses, the intense heat becomes a menacing adversary. One afternoon, a close call involving Jenna Saltana, a team member overcome by heat exhaustion, crystallizes the danger. Jenna's distress, evident as she collapses, gasping for air, forces the team to halt work. When Liam calls Derek to report the health-related event, he urges them to resume working. "Just prop Jenna up against a tree and give her some water," he says. "She's probably being overly dramatic. She'll recover just fine and we can't afford to stop. You've already delayed us enough and we are behind schedule." The incident sends ripples of concern through the crew, igniting debates over the morality of risking lives for deadlines and menial pay.

Liam, feeling the weight of responsibility for the crew, organizes an impromptu meeting under some shade. "We're not just archaeologists; we're guardians of each other," he passionately argues, urging the team to consider the broader implications of their work and safety while pushing for collective action. We must put on a united front and speak to Derek as a group and urge him to implement stronger safety protocols and protections. "But I can't afford to lose this job!" crewmember Rachel Tanaka exclaims. "And I've heard they blacklist troublemakers. Derek knows a lot of people and could prevent us from getting other CRM gigs."

Despite Rachel's misgivings, the group returns to their lodging and find Derek in his hotel room. While the conversations starts out cordial, things become confrontational with Derek and reach a boiling point when Liam, bolstered by the team's support, demands an emergency review of the project's safety protocols. "You're all replaceable! Every last one of you!" he shouts. "Get out of this room and never bring this up to me again or you'll regret it."

Liam quickly leaves with the group, feeling mortified and ready to quit on the spot.

CASE EIGHT



In the shadow of looming financial collapse caused by fiscal mismanagement, the loss of state funding, and a declining number of visitors, the Lesser Varlandia Museum, an institution located in the country of Zeeland, announces its imminent closure. Due to Zeeland's colonial history and Azara's status as a former colony, many of the most significant Azaran artifacts are located in Zeelandian institutions like the Lesser Varlandia Museum.

Among the materials about to be scattered to the winds and transferred to the hands of private individuals is a collection of 1,000 pre-Oltec artifacts acquired by the Museum before 1970, many of which have not been analyzed or published on, including stone carvings containing rare representations of religious scenes with faint inscriptions that can't be made out in photographs in a language that has yet to be fully deciphered. These artifacts, integral to understanding the depth and diversity of Azara's ancient cultures including the renowned Oltec Empire, face an uncertain future as they are listed for auction at Lumière & Marchand, a prestigious auction house in the country of Ferros.

In his downtime, Dr. Leonard Morgan, an early career archaeologist and assistant professor employed by Darcy College with a deep passion for Azaran antiquities, passively browses auction sites to keep track of what's being put on the market. When he lands on Lumière & Marchand's page on the upcoming auction, he gasps. The pre-Oltec artifacts are set to be sold in just three days, leaving very little time to act. "Does anyone even know about this?" he thinks to himself. "Goodness, I can't believe this is happening!"

Upon learning of the collection's fate, Leonard contacts his close friend Luciana Dara, a wealthy Azaran businesswoman and avocational archaeologist. Luciana offers a solution that is both bold and fraught with ethical implications: to purchase the collection at auction and donate it to the National Museum of Azaran Antiquities, thereby repatriating the artifacts to their country of origin. Taken aback by this bold proposal, Leonard says to Luciana, "This collection is a bridge to our past, but I'm torn. Participating in this auction feels like we're legitimizing the antiquities market." Luciana replies, "I share your concerns, Leonard, but time is against us. This may be our only chance to keep these artifacts from disappearing into private collections, inaccessible to the world."

Leonard is at an impasse. The closure of the Lesser Varlandia Museum and the imminent auction present a rare opportunity to reclaim a significant part of Azara's cultural legacy. Yet, the prospect of engaging in a commercial transaction for artifacts of immense cultural and historical value raises profound ethical questions. Should he and Luciana intervene swiftly in the auction to secure the artifacts for public benefit, or does their participation inadvertently support the very forces that threaten to commodify and disperse Azara's cultural heritage?

Leonard's decision is further complicated by his position within the academic community; as an untenured faculty member, his actions might put his own career aspirations at risk. In fact, even speaking about this case might, in his mind, subject him to judgement. As the deadline looms, Leonard must decide whether to act on this fleeting and extremely time-sensitive opportunity to save the collection or risk of losing a part of Azara's history forever.

CASE NINE



In the dimly lit confines of her cluttered home office, Dr. Maya Thompson, a recent PhD on the academic job market specializing in the Arcadian Classical Period, hesitates before hitting the "Post" button on Cybervox, a social media platform with an active academic community. She had spent hours meticulously crafting her thoughts on a controversial theory regarding the construction of the Pragada Citadel, hoping to spark a thoughtful discussion among her peers.

However, as soon as her post goes live, Maya's excitement turns to trepidation as she watches the responses flood in. Professor Georgiana Orion, a prominent archaeologist with a legion of followers on Cybervox, had reposted her thread, adding a scathing comment dismissing her ideas as "fantastical" and "utter tosh." Maya quickly responds by replying, "Respectfully, agree to disagree."

Chaos ensues. Within moments, Maya finds herself at the epicenter of a virtual maelstrom as hundreds of Cybervox users, emboldened by Georgiana's words, descend upon her with vitriol and contempt. They ridicule her ideas, question her qualifications, and even attack her personally, accusing her of incompetence and ignorance.

Feeling overwhelmed and outnumbered, Maya struggles to defend herself against the onslaught of attacks. She attempts to engage with her critics, presenting evidence to support her position and address their concerns, but her efforts are met with mockery and derision. Meanwhile, Georgiana remains silent, content to let her followers defend her. Georgiana knows that her status as a respected authority in the realm of Arcadian archaeology and 50,000 Cybervox followers carries weight, and she has no qualms about using this platform to silence dissenting voices and maintain her dominance over the discourse.

As the pile-on continues unabated, Maya feels her confidence wane and her resolve falter. She begins to doubt the validity of her research and question whether she belongs in the world of academia at all. The relentless barrage of negativity takes a toll on her mental health, leaving her feeling isolated and vulnerable. In the midst of Maya's despair, Dr. Sophia Nguyen, a fellow archaeologist and mentor, privately reaches out to offer her support and encouragement. Sophia has witnessed firsthand the power dynamics at play on Cybervox and understands the challenges that junior academics like Maya face in navigating the treacherous waters of academic discourse.

Together, Maya and Sophia devise a plan to combat the toxicity of Cybervox's elite. They enlist the help of sympathetic senior colleagues and allies within the academic community who are active on social media, who rally to Maya's defense and speak out against the bullying and harassment. Slowly but surely, the tide began to turn. Maya finds solace in the solidarity of her peers.

But as the dust settles on the virtual battlefield, Maya remains uncertain of how to proceed. The scars of the ordeal run deep, and she can't shake the feeling of disillusionment. Though she has weathered this storm, she wonders about what her experience says about the nature of speech and how she can protect others, especially those who don't occupy positions of power, in online spaces. Furthermore, she worries about how incidents like these might affect her job prospects, especially since employers are known to review social media activity.

CASE TEN



Dr. Nadia Faris, an archaeologist and Assistant Director of the Dukka regional branch of the Ministry of Antiquities in the country of Eldoria, finds herself in a complex ethical labyrinth as she contemplates leading an excavation in the war-torn region of Zemara, rich in the ancient history of the Thessarian civilization but also the heartland of the indigenous Maravi people.

The Eldorian Minister of Antiquities, Dr. Jordan Hara has extended this invitation, citing the imminent threat of destruction to these invaluable sites amidst the ongoing conflict. The urgency is real: recent military actions have already damaged several lesser-known archaeological locations, and the government claims that only immediate excavation can save the remaining sites from obliteration. For Nadia, the chance to salvage and study these sites is not just a professional milestone; it's a race against time to preserve history itself. However, Nadia is acutely aware of the broader context—Eldoria's colonial dominance over Zemara and its oppressive treatment of the Maravi. Her involvement could be seen as an endorsement of Eldoria's policies, compromising her ethical stance against the backdrop of colonialism and conflict.

Facing this dilemma, Nadia seeks the perspective of a trusted mentor, Professor Elias Kouri, hoping for clarity. Nadia states, "Elias, the sites in Zemara are under direct threat. There's so much we could lose, so much history that could be silenced forever. But by accepting this project, am I not lending my voice to that very silence against the Maravi?" Elias responds, "It's a precarious balance, Nadia. Your work has the power to illuminate the past, but under whose banner does that past get revealed? This is not just about archaeology; it's about the narratives we choose to preserve and the voices we decide to amplify." After hearing her concerns, Minister of Antiquities Jordan Hara assures Nadia of autonomy in her research, even suggesting her work could serve as a bridge to understanding and peace. Yet, the irony is not lost on Nadia—the same government responsible for the conflict now positions itself as a preserver of culture.

Torn between the call to protect endangered heritage and the implications of her participation, Nadia contemplates a third path: leveraging her role to advocate for the Maravi people. If she can document and showcase the richness of Zemara's history, perhaps she can also cast a spotlight on the Maravi's plight, challenging the dominant narrative and advocating for their rights and recognition. But the question remains—can she navigate this tightrope without compromising her ethics or becoming an unwitting tool in the colonial machinery? And what are the risks of retaliation, not just to her career but to her personal safety and those of her team, by taking a stand within the context of her work?

As Nadia stands on the precipice of this monumental decision, she realizes that her choice will have far-reaching implications, not just for the archaeological record of Zemara but for the living history and future of the Maravi people. The path she chooses to walk could redefine her understanding of what it means to be an archaeologist, an advocate, and a witness to history in the making.