



## SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

### **Society for American Archaeology Statement on the Launching of Fossilized Human Remains into Space**

September 28, 2023

On September 8, 2023, several fossils of two species of human ancestors were carried into low Earth orbit on a Virgin Galactic Spaceflight. The fossils originated from a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and this action was approved by the South African Heritage Resources Agency, which has legal authority to do so. Nevertheless, risking these irreplaceable samples violated ethical principles of many scientific and cultural organizations around the world regarding both the treatment of human remains and archaeological resources. It exposed irreplaceable cultural and biological resources to potential damage or destruction for publicity's sake with no discernible scientific merit. The SAA strongly endorses the positions of the Association of Southern African Professional Archaeologists, the Eastern Africa Association for Palaeoanthropology and Palaeontology, and the American Association of Biological Anthropologists (among others) in opposition to this act. We call on all professional scientific organizations, their members, and the appropriate government policymakers to preserve and protect objects of great scientific and cultural significance, and to treat such articles only in such a fashion that expands our scientific and historical knowledge.