

ANNOUNCEMENT

DIVERSITY AND THE SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

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“SAA believes that the study and preservation of the archaeological record can enrich our appreciation for diverse communities, foster respect for difference, and encourage the celebration of individual and collective achievement. SAA is committed to promoting diversity in our membership, in our practice, and in the audiences we seek to reach through the dissemination of our research. Moreover, SAA aims to cultivate an inclusive environment that promotes understanding and values diversity in ethnic origin, national origin, gender, race, age, economic status, lifestyle, physical and/or cognitive abilities, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, work background, family structure, and other perceived differences.”

This Statement on Diversity was approved by the SAA Board of Directors at our meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on April 26, 2006. It will be posted on the SAA website soon, and is the first product of the Subcommittee on Diversity Initiatives of the SAA Board of Directors. During our discussions (in person and over email), we struggled with issues of sexism, racism, heterosexism, and white privilege that affect our

profession. As individuals, we have inherited institutions plagued by these problems; as an organization, we must work toward fixing them. In and of itself, a statement does little to address the deeper issues. To help demonstrate the Board's commitment to increasing diversity, the Board of Directors established the Subcommittee on Diversity Initiatives during its November 2005 meeting in Albuquerque.

We are indebted to two SAA task forces that worked to address the lack of diversity in the SAA. L. Antonio Curet was the Chair of the first task force, which included Elisabeth A. Bacus, Fumiko Ikawa-Smith, Chapurukha Kusimba, Jian Leng, Robin L. Sewell, and Board Liaison Susan Bender. The task force report (January 2002) addressed reasons for the lack of diversity in archaeology and the SAA and recommended a number of possible actions to remedy the situation. J. Daniel Rogers chaired the second task force, which involved Anna S. Agbe-Davies, Frances M. Hayashida, Lisa J. Lucero, Desireé René Martínez, and Board Liaison, Joe Watkins. This task force report (September 2005) presented even more recommendations for

the Board to consider. Many other professional organizations are taking up the challenge of increasing diversity and we hope to borrow some of their most successful ideas. Yet we believe that our profession can promote diversity in ways that no other field can because of the unique characteristics of archaeology and the archaeological record.

The hard work of these two task forces, for which the SAA membership is indebted, has inspired the current effort. We wanted to revisit the issue of diversity and make it central to the mission of the SAA, hence the statement quoted above. The next step is to prioritize the many recommendations supplied by the two task forces and to implement them in such a manner that we can measure progress toward the goal of increasing diversity in SAA. This work will be spearheaded by the new chair of the Subcommittee on Diversity Initiatives of SAA Board of Directors, Miriam Stark, with her committee, Christopher Dore, Dorothy Lippert, and Tobi Brimsek (ex-officio). The Board welcomes input from the membership on this important initiative.