

to the societies that surround them. To conclude, this edited volume will be a very interesting and meaningful read to area specialists, advanced students, and scholars who are involved in the field of museums, archaeology, culture, and the heritage sector, illustrating the ways in which universal methodologies of public engagement are applied in specific contexts, and communicating the diverse intersections between museum and heritage experts and the public.

REFERENCES

Anagnostopoulos, A., Kyriakidis, E., & Stefanou, E. forthcoming. *Making Heritage Together: Archaeological Ethnography and*

Community Engagement in Rural Places. London: Routledge.

Golding, V., & Modest, W., eds. 2013. *Museums and Communities: Curators, Collections and Collaboration*. Bloomsbury: London & New York.

Stylianou-Lambert, Th. 2010. Re-conceptualizing Museum Audiences: Power, Activity, Responsibility. *Visitor Studies*, 13(2): 130–144. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10645578.2010.509693>

ELENI STEFANO

Hellenic Open University,

*The Heritage Management Organization,
Greece*

doi:10.1017/ea.2021.41

Elizabeth Weiss and James W. Springer. *Repatriation and Erasing the Past* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2020, xii and 265pp., 24 figs, 5 tables, hbk, ISBN 9781683401575, pdf ISBN 9781683401858)

On December 18, 2020, the University of Florida Press sent a memorandum in an email to its publishing partners, including authors (such as I) who have published in the Press. The memo was an apology for ‘the pain this publication has caused. It was not our intent to publish a book that uses arguments and terminology associated with scientific racism’ (Gutierrez, 2020: 1). However, the Press noted that ‘to withdraw the publication at this point, as some have called for on social media and in other forums, is to attempt to hide it and to hope that simply retracting the book will cause the viewpoint to cease to exist.’

What is the furor about? The title of Weiss and Springer’s volume gives an immediate indication of their perspective—that the act of repatriating Native American human remains to Native

American groups as required by federal law is ‘erasing’ an undefined ‘past’ from an amorphous temporality. This is not Weiss’ first anti-repatriation book (see Weiss, 2008), and those readers who are aware of Weiss’ anti-repatriation focus will not be surprised with this new volume.

The first six pages of the book (seven pages if one reads the footnotes) serve as an expanded outline of everything that follows. The volume is full of arguments about the evils of repatriation, defined by the authors as ‘any ideology, political movement, or law that attempts to control anthropological research by giving control over that research to contemporary American Indian communities’ (p. 6). The authors show deference to the scientific method at the expense of all things ‘not-science’, and seem more concerned that

American Indians might be getting away with exercising their 'religion' where no one else would be given the freedom to do so.

Essentially, the volume is a primer of all things that bioarchaeologists do with and to human remains and, in many ways, it is reminiscent of the refrain of archaeologists in the 1970s when faced with criticism from the American Indian Movement about archaeological excavations—'If they only *knew* what we did, they'd be glad for us to help them tell their history.' Weiss and Springer appear to hope that, if the previously uninformed reader *knows* what bioarchaeologists do, everyone will be glad to have the bioarchaeologists give us the *real* history of North America. The audience for this book is not archaeologists and scientists, although some of the arguments are complex enough to make it appear so; the book appears to be aimed at students early in their academic careers who may uncritically accept what they read. Perhaps this is the danger of the book—the arguments are shallow, but they appear as complex as the issues they present.

Part I of the book, the first four chapters, provides the reader background information on the 'Science of Human Remains'. Politics enters the fray in the first chapter as the authors discuss the study of Paleoindian human remains. The authors overly simplify Native American reasons for repatriation as

'a desire to prevent the study of some of our earliest Americans. Perhaps Native Americans are concerned that their position as the first on this continent will be removed; perhaps they are concerned that it will come to light that they replaced earlier peoples' (p. 38).

The implications of this statement are immense, not only in its simplicity but also in the implications it carries about the

authors' perspectives. First, the authors imply that the tribal intent to rebury human remains is *only* because they are opposed to science and totally dismisses any other reasons. Second, the authors' word choice of 'our earliest Americans' implies that 'Americans' (and by extension 'America') existed 15,000 years ago. Third, there is no evidence that 'Native Americans' (a simplistic lumping of thousands of years of social development on this continent alone) *replaced* anyone, nor is there proof that they did not. Because archaeologists know very little about the people who they name 'Paleoindian' (an archaeological construct, not a cultural one), we don't know if the people represented by the skeletons died off without issue, or whether they changed over time as a result of gene flow, gene drift, intermarriage (or any of the other reasons Weiss and Springer give us for differences in human skeletal structure) into the groups that developed in what is now the United States and were first encountered by 'Europeans'. We could form any number of hypotheses about their fate, but we will never know 'the truth'.

In the next chapter, Weiss and Springer focus on the utility of mummified Native American human remains as scientific specimens but also as learning tools. They mention that some mummies were 'employed to stoke people's curiosity and encourage a desire to learn more about the region and its past' (p. 51), that mummies from a roadside attraction 'may have been better used for continuous display in a manner that can educate people' (p. 53), and finally that 'mummies ignite curiosity with their humanity, and they can foster a healthy understanding of human biology and culture when they are displayed with dignity' (p. 57). The authors' ability to view human remains as curiosities rather than once-living humans is what perhaps sets them apart as 'objective scientists' in a humanistic world.

In their chapter on 'Biological Relationships: Missing Links', the authors continue their assault on American Indian history as they discuss 'tribal affiliations, Paleoindian ancestry, and the peopling of the Americas' (p. 58). The authors believe that '(t)he first people to arrive were possibly from many locations—Siberia, Japan, Russia, maybe even Europe and Australia—and they therefore belong to the world and not just to a specific people' (p. 93). This statement is misleading in that its subtext is that the early migrants somehow carried with them passports from contemporary countries and, therefore, created the American 'melting pot' more than 15,000 years ago. Those 'immigrants' didn't come from 'Japan or Russia' since *no such countries existed* at that time. The political boundaries of those countries have been drawn and redrawn many times in the history of humankind, but they did not exist 20,000 years ago. But the use of those contemporary geopolitical units makes it easier to claim the history of the Americas for science and to erase any claim of ownership American Indians might have.

Chapter 4 aims to correct the 'fallacies' many people have about American Indians 'which have been supported by repatriation-ists' (p. 94). 'Without data', the authors lament, 'we cannot come to the correct answers, and our answers will be driven by beliefs such as religion, oral histories, and political tenets'. With data, however, they believe that 'anthropologists can tell their real stories, although this becomes increasingly difficult as remains are repatriated and reburied as a consequence of NAGPRA' (p. 121), the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.

Part II gives the reader insights into 'Human Remains and the Law', and consists of two chapters. Chapter 5 discusses NAGPRA and other repatriation issues in the US and provides a good background on Indian law in the United States. Chapter 6

looks at other repatriation movements in the United States. These two chapters taken together form the crux of the authors' structure of the 'repatriationist ideology', and an introduction for Part III, their 'Critique of the Repatriation Movement'.

Part III is what the authors have built up to over the previous 165 pages. Chapter 7

'reviews the constitutional protections against religious and racial preferences. The question arises whether non-Native Americans, both in NAGPRA cases and other cases, have been restricted more so than Native Americans' (p. 165).

In Chapter 8, on oral tradition as evidence for repatriation, the authors state

'(i)n accepting oral traditions as evidence, it is apparent that the courts have practiced religious discrimination and racial discrimination in their admission and weighing of evidence [...] is a further manifestation of the undesirable consequences of the repatriation ideology'.

Chapter 9, on Indian treatment of the body, notes that 'actual attitudes toward the dead are highly variable among American Indian societies' and that '(t) here is no reason to believe that the deceased individuals whose remains are at issue shared the attitudes toward the dead that are urged by repatriationists' (p. 192).

Chapter 10, 'Repatriation and the End of Scientific Freedom', continues the authors' lament:

'repatriation hinders scientific research through the loss of collections, the inhibition of freedom of inquiry, and censorship. Collaboration and consultation restrain researchers and promote repatriation ideology and religious perspectives' (p. 194).

'Collaboration can be considered harmful to the pursuit of the truth' according to Weiss and Springer (p. 199). To them,

‘collaborative efforts—whether required by law or voluntary—have contributed to subjective and biased influences, many of which are based on religious sentiments, in anthropological research’.

The authors’ concluding chapter pushes their preferred alternative: ‘instead of collaboration and consultation, we may need to return to an emphasis on objective knowledge’ (p. 213), arguing that scientists are ‘drifting back toward a system of censorship and prepublication licensing that our civilization had to escape from to establish the world of objective knowledge’ (p. 217). Perhaps most illustrative of the authors’ viewpoint is this: ‘Science is neutral; it does not take sides and is utterly without prejudice. And that is the beauty of science’ (p. 218).

Science may be neutral, but the questions scientists pursue, and the manner they conduct that pursuit, is anything but neutral. As a profession, science has already self-censored certain data—the information gathered by Nazi scientists on the responses of the human body to extreme cold could be beneficial in terms of hypothermia research, but scientists have agreed that the way that data was gathered, and the subjects who gave their lives to produce the data, preclude its use. The same can be said for the information gained from the US government’s Tuskegee Study regarding the effects of unchecked syphilis on Afro-Americans in the American South.

This volume argues for the freedom to ‘do’ science without constraint and without consideration of anyone other than the individual scientist. It argues that

religion has no real place within human society, and that scientists know enough that they do not need to be fettered by non-scientists. And it argues that religion has no place within science. But that is not its utility. It will be useful as part of the ongoing discussion of ethics and the place of science within humanity. Do scientists have the luxury to practice science free and clear from the society of which they are a part? Should they have that right? Is our science at a place where Dr. Frankenstein would be a welcome member of the National Academy, or would he still be considered an outcast?

I won’t read this book again, but I do believe it must remain available for others to read. It bothers me that the authors will benefit from its sale, but it does need to be read. The authors’ perspective is one shared by many, although most of them will not publicly proclaim their support for the book. Those who believe that science must operate within moral and ethical limits imposed by society must be prepared to continue that fight.

REFERENCES

- Weiss, E. 2008. *Reburying the Past: The Effects of Repatriation and Reburial on Scientific Inquiry*. New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc.

JOE WATKINS
*Archaeological and Cultural Education
Consultants, Tucson, Arizona, USA*

doi:10.1017/ea.2021.42