

## **GMAC Anti-Racism Workshop**

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GMAC Anti-Racism Sub-committee

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The Anti-Racism (A-R) Sub-committee of the Gender and Minority Affairs Committee was active at the recent conference in Seattle, WA. In an effort to identify racism in our organization and profession, develop strategies to transform our society, and strive towards a more diverse archaeological community, we sponsored a poster, hosted a workshop, and organized a session. Many in the SHA recognize that a lack of diversity within our organization has a negative impact on every member; therefore, it should be a central concern for all of us.

The poster that presented by Michael Nassaney and Cheryl LaRoche was aimed to raise issues regarding institutional racism and the SHA. While we recognize that historical archaeologists have a long history of studying the specific structures of race and racism in the past, many of us remain satisfied with the status quo. Yet, the values, attitudes, conditions, and worldviews that privilege whiteness compromise both our humanity and our ethics in ways that make us intellectually and emotionally less whole. The A-R subcommittee has conducted preliminary research in order to understand how racism and white privilege are manifested in our organization. This research has provided some insights into how some of our institutional structures are currently perceived, and has suggested questions that merit further research.

The Sub-committee collaborated with Crossroads, an organization that has been organizing, training, and consulting with institutions striving to dismantle racism since 1986, to

sponsor the first GMAC Anti-Racism workshop to show SHA members how to develop a systemic analysis of racism. The workshop, which was free to the membership, was nearly filled to capacity in advance, though some travel issues precluded all registrants from attending. One goal of the workshop was to assist us (both as individuals and as a society) in beginning and strengthening our *institutional* interventions against racism. Trainers from Crossroads taught participants how to develop and use a common language about racism, as well as a shared definition. They also discussed how to understand racism as a systemic issue in the United States—and not only as an issue of individual attitudes and actions. They made significant efforts to apply their lessons specifically to understanding the racialization of our profession and organization, both historically and in our contemporary practices of pedagogy and scholarship. The result was that participants were encouraged to think about how our work as archaeologists and members of the SHA has played a role in the construction of barriers to an all-inclusive SHA.

Another major goal of the workshop was to understand how racism and other policies act as barriers specifically to an all-inclusive SHA. We began to explore approaches to dismantling racism that can provide the foundation for institutional interventions against systemic racism, specifically in our association and profession. An important outcome of the workshop was the recognition that transformation is only possible if it becomes a priority of the membership as a whole.

Many of the workshop attendees were moved by the compassion of the facilitators and the power of their message. One remarked that the workshop was “life changing” and subsequently joined the Sub-committee. Another commented that the facilitators were “magic” and were truly able to gear their remarks to our organization with its distinctive historical

understanding of racial structures. All the remarks we heard suggest that the training was a very successful and meaningful way to kick-off the conference. It is clear that the A-R journey has just begun and the A-R subcommittee is exploring ways to broaden the impact of their work. We hope to see a similar workshop offered at our next meeting in Washington, DC where we will reflect on the golden anniversary of the National Park Service, monumental events in conservation and preservation work, and how the engagement between SHA members and similar organizations has resulted in the reproduction of whiteness or the preservation of minority representatives in our profession, organization, work, and throughout American history.