



An Open Letter from the President of the Ohio Archaeological Council about Racial Injustice

I, with the unanimous support of the Board of Directors of the Ohio Archaeological Council (OAC), stand in support of the nationwide protests against racial injustice sparked by the murder of George Floyd. The OAC recognizes this is a symptom of a wider problem of injustice and inequity for our BIPOC (black, indigenous, and people of color) colleagues, friends, family members, and fellow citizens. We recognize that racial inequity and unequal access to opportunities are widespread and systemic problems, even in our own field where they have deep historical roots. We must do better acknowledging this history and the biases in the systems we participate in. We must actively work to reduce and eradicate barriers to equity in the systems we participate in. In other words, we must be antiracist.

With these recognitions come three responsibilities. First, we must move beyond solidarity to action within our workplaces. We must identify and push for changes in or elimination of policies that re-enforce and create new barriers that further burden marginalized communities, or otherwise affect discrimination against any of our colleagues, and potential colleagues. Second, as scholars that study the past – including power structures and abuses of power – with a unique access to the consequences of past and present systems, we have a responsibility to ensure that accurate, inclusive, and balanced information about history is available in the public discourse. We should combat the misuse of history and the distortion of history to justify past, current, and future policies. **Third, we must listen.** Archaeology is a majority white profession, and we must seek out and respectfully engage the voices of BIPOC community members and colleagues. Only through listening can we calibrate our efforts to actively engage BIPOC communities and collaboratively build spaces for their voices, their experiences, and their expertise. Such active engagement is necessary to obtain an authentic and balanced view of the past.

The Board of the OAC views taking these steps as entailed within our [Code of Ethics](#). Specifically, we call our members “to take responsibility for creating and upholding a safe, open, and professional environment for learning, conducting, and communicating science with integrity, respect, fairness, trustworthiness, and transparency. Our members are asked to not engage in discrimination or harassment based on ethnic or national origin, race, religion, citizenship, language, political or other opinion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, age, or economic class.”

To embody our ethics and operationalize the above responsibilities, I am proposing the following actions to the Board and relevant committees:

1. increase our recruitment of and engagement with BIPOC archaeologists and other interested parties to fully participate in OAC governance and hold us accountable (Membership, Nomination);
2. increase our engagement with BIPOC youth to make archaeology and history visible as career paths (Education, President-Elect);
3. encourage framing of current research and analyses to explore the history of power structures that have framed our current moment (Grants, Publications, President-Elect); and
4. compile and maintain a [list](#) of resources that provide balanced historical perspectives on racial injustice in the present, including BIPOC perspectives on archaeology, the role archaeology can play in learning about and publicizing past racial injustice, and detailed analyses that refute common arguments against the acknowledgment of systemic racism (Board).

Finally, we are listening. We are working to be actively antiracist. If we are not doing it well enough, we invite members, the public, and especially BIPOC individuals to communicate ways we can improve. To be clear, we are not asking the BIPOC community to do our work for us. As a Board, and as individuals, we are striving to become more aware of the issues and the potential solutions. The burden for identifying and fixing the problems does not lay on those who are harmed by the system. We all have a responsibility – especially if we have not felt the infringement of the systems on our lives – to work for a better system. If you have concerns or suggestion about how the OAC can be better, please contact [me](#) or one of our [Officers or Trustees](#).

I encourage everyone to consult the [list](#) of resources and let us know if you think we should add anything to it.

Sincerely,

Kevin C. Nolan, PhD, RPA
President
Ohio Archaeological Council