

FORUM

## Moving beyond Weiss and Springer's *Repatriation and Erasing the Past*: Indigenous values, relationships, and research

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### Abstract

This commentary debunks the poor scholarship in *Repatriation and Erasing the Past* by Elizabeth Weiss and James Springer. We show that modern bioarchaeological practice with Indigenous remains places ethics, partnership, and collaboration at the fore and that the authors' misconstrued dichotomous fallacy between "objective science" and Indigenous knowledge and repatriation hinders the very argument they are espousing. We demonstrate that bioarchaeology, when conducted in collaboration with stakeholders, enriches research, with concepts and methodologies brought forward to address common questions, and builds a richer historical and archaeological context. As anthropologists, we need to acknowledge anti-Indigenous (and anti-Black) ideology and the insidious trauma and civil rights violations that have been afflicted and re-afflicted through Indigenous remains being illegally or unethically obtained, curated, transferred, and used for research and teaching in museums and universities. If we could go so far as to say that anything good has come out of this book, it has been the stimulation in countering these beliefs and developing and strengthening ethical approaches and standards in our field.

**Keywords:** repatriation; Indigenous; bioarchaeology; racism

When I am dead, cry for me a little. Think of me sometimes, but not too much. It is not good for you to allow your thoughts to dwell too long on the dead. Think of me now and again as I was in life. At some moment it is pleasant to recall. But not for long. Leave me in peace and I shall leave you too, in peace. While you live, let your thoughts be with the living.

– Traditional Native American burial prayer, from Evelyn Wahkinney Voelker, Executive Director, American Indian Center of Mid-America<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Harris 1991, 195.

The plundering of Indigenous peoples' skeletal remains from gravesites for scientific analysis and sale was a widespread phenomenon in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The skeletons of Indigenous peoples, along with those of Africans and Asians, were seen as curiosities, representing “the other” for the West to purchase, collect, and store in personal collections or public museums as they pleased. The analysis of non-white human remains in the nineteenth century was grounded in cranial morphometrics and pioneered by US physician and physical anthropologist Samuel G. Morton,<sup>2</sup> which provided a basis for racist theories linking morphometrics to intelligence, ability, and criminality.<sup>3</sup>

The use and misuse of skeletons also has a central place in the history of the American civil rights movement, which catalyzed social and legal changes toward ensuring that all people are treated similarly, regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Emboldened by this rising tide of legal rights, Maria Pearson, a Yankton Dakota activist, began fighting in the 1970s for the equal treatment of Native Americans, after finding out that skeletons of white Americans recovered in archaeological excavations were reburied, while skeletons of Indigenous people were stored in museums and laboratories.<sup>4</sup> Protective burial acts soon began cropping up in states like Iowa, and by 1990, this movement culminated in the passing of the federal-level Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which ensures that skeletal remains and objects of Indigenous peoples belong to their descendants.<sup>5</sup> NAGPRA provides a “process for the repatriation of Native American human remains, funerary objects, cultural patrimony and sacred objects” and legislates the need for consultation between Indigenous groups, museums, and researchers through a continuing dialogue between museums, and the Native tribes of North America and Native Hawaiian organizations.<sup>6</sup>

The passage of this landmark legislation and the acknowledgment of tribal sovereignty initiated a cultural shift in archaeology to increasingly afford Indigenous skeletons the same level of care given to other groups' remains in the United States. It is acknowledged worldwide that repatriation of human remains to descendent communities is a central and growing part of museology.<sup>7</sup> Many archaeologists are increasingly placing ethics at the forefront of our practice, with growing emphasis on the importance of Indigenous consultation and research partnership.<sup>8</sup> Although we acknowledge that there is still an epistemological gap between Western scientific and Indigenous or Native American perspectives,<sup>9</sup> we feel encouraged that this gap is increasingly being bridged by collaborative work.<sup>10</sup>

Elizabeth Weiss and James Springer's book *Repatriation and Erasing the Past* stands in stark contrast with contemporary anthropological practice, scorning decades of the complex navigations undertaken to repair and revitalize relationships between bioarchaeologists and traditionally oppressed people.<sup>11</sup> These authors explicitly refer to a nineteenth-century “traditional” definition of anthropology as the guiding framework for their book:

<sup>2</sup> Morton 1839.

<sup>3</sup> Gould 1981.

<sup>4</sup> Colwell 2017; Marek-Martinez 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), 16 November 1990, 104 Stat. 3048, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210729164704/https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/101/hr5237>.

<sup>6</sup> S. Rep. no. 101-473, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Simpson 2009; Aranui 2020; Fforde, McKeown and Keeler 2020; Nash and Colwell 2020.

<sup>8</sup> See Tayles and Halcrow 2011; Kakaliouras 2012; Watkins 2017; Gilmore, Aranui and Halcrow 2019; Squires, Erickson and Márquez-Grant 2019; Aranui 2020; Meloche, Spake and Nichols 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Kakaliouras 2012.

<sup>10</sup> See Fox, Rallapalli and Komor 2020; Hudson *et al.* 2020; Tsosie *et al.* 2020; Meloche, Spake and Nichols 2021; Oliver 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Weiss and Springer 2020.

It was the traditional belief of anthropologists, with which we agree, that it is possible to do these sorts of studies [of biological and cultural differences] within a comparative, objective, and rigorous framework.... Traditional anthropologists believed that they could produce an objective and universally valid body of knowledge, which is a perspective that we share.

Anthropology ... flourished in the twentieth century. As part of that flourishing, there were established museums of anthropology or, more commonly, of natural history, that served as repositories for human biological and cultural remains. These museums, often associated with colleges and universities, dedicated themselves to the collection, conservation, preservation, study, and display of human biological and cultural remains.... These collections were traditionally regarded as an essential part of anthropology itself and continue to be essential to anthropological studies today.<sup>12</sup>

These words are not reflective of the current perspectives of most practitioners in the fields of bioarchaeology and archaeology. They stand in direct opposition to progressive relations with a number of groups, including traditionally oppressed people (some of whom are anthropologists) who have been consistently and repeatedly harmed by individual and institutional behavior as well as by racist beliefs that are hegemonic in our discipline. We do not intend to amplify Weiss and Springer's book; instead, we write this article to publicly reject the racist views that they espouse, as it is essential to recognize that there are still proponents of these antiquated and unethical views. Rather than being swept under the proverbial rug, these views must be addressed and, in particular, be rejected by white anthropologists.

*Repatriation and Erasing the Past* is a racist book and is violent toward Indigenous people. Some readers may take umbrage with this claim, preferring gentler language such as disrespectful or problematic, but consider, for example, that Weiss and Springer intentionally define "race" in a way that best suits their arguments, writing that "we recognize that the term "race" has become problematic for some, but we believe its use to refer to the biological relationships and continuities among the prehistoric and historic peoples of North America is appropriate."<sup>13</sup> Conflating "race" and "people" repeatedly "in a way that would not pass muster on an introductory-level social science test" facilitates Weiss and Springer's violence toward Indigenous people.<sup>14</sup> The authors claim that Indigenous people who argue for reburial have attributed many Indigenous societal issues, such as poverty, substance abuse, and domestic violence, to the lack of buried ancestors,<sup>15</sup> with no acknowledgment of the historical trauma that Indigenous people have suffered and continue to face. Many Indigenous communities today are still grappling with the long-term effects of colonization and reclaiming their identity, culture, language, and ancestors. Weiss and Springer's book sets these efforts back in deep and serious ways and reinforces the trepidation that many Indigenous people have, and are right to have, about anthropologists as a whole, given the history of the field.

Weiss and Springer additionally argue that repatriation is an "ideology of victimization";<sup>16</sup> that laws such as NAGPRA mean "deference to Native American perspective" that "creates unfair advantage";<sup>17</sup> and incorrectly assert that "the courts have

<sup>12</sup> Weiss and Springer 2020, 1–2.

<sup>13</sup> Weiss and Springer 2020, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Bondura 2020, 148.

<sup>15</sup> Weiss and Springer 2020, 51–52.

<sup>16</sup> Weiss and Springer 2020, 3–4.

<sup>17</sup> Weiss and Springer 2020, 94.

practiced religious discrimination and racial discrimination in their admission and weighing of evidence”<sup>18</sup> related to oral traditions of Indigenous groups. There is no legal or ethical merit to Weiss and Springer’s argument of racial or religious discrimination. NAGPRA has been described as important human-rights legislation developed to redress past inequities of collecting practices of human remains and the disregard for Native cultural beliefs and burial practices, and, importantly, it “extends the same burial protections to indigenous people over their dead that is afforded to all US citizens.”<sup>19</sup> NAGPRA and the recognition of tribal sovereignty over their archaeological human remains does not mean that there is “discrimination” or “unfair advantage” when it enables parts of society to achieve equality. As Gordon Puller of the Woody Island Tribal Council puts it, “[r]epatriation is unfinished business. It’s something we have a moral obligation to do. It’s not the most critical issue facing our people, but it’s not an either or. Since there was such a violation against our people, it needs to be taken care of. Repatriation ties into lots of things: pride in us and our culture. If we accept that museums can own our people, it makes us second-class.”<sup>20</sup>

Further, the language and arguments in *Repatriation and Erasing the Past* inaccurately portray relations between bioarchaeologists and Indigenous communities and are therefore offensive and harmful to those who have spent years, in their own research and through participation in organizations,<sup>21</sup> trying to combat the anti-Indigenous ideology that these authors have openly displayed. Weiss and Springer argue that “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.”<sup>22</sup> Repatriation is a complex and challenging process,<sup>23</sup> and there will be times when collaborations go wrong. However, this hoary argument plucked from the early twentieth century works to erase the voices of Indigenous scholars and fails to recognize what fruitful, mutually beneficial research collaboration looks like.<sup>24</sup> In the twenty-first century, bioarchaeologists and archaeologists aim to work in collaboration with stakeholder communities, considering first and foremost what Indigenous communities would want out of the research, if they wanted research done in the first place; what questions these stakeholders are interested in answering; what archaeologists can learn from Indigenous communities; and how true collaborative research approaches can be driven by multiple parties.<sup>25</sup>

Examples of successful collaborative research work that has been carried out at the request of the descendent communities prior to repatriation abound in recent anthropological literature.<sup>26</sup> Rather than surveying modern practice in bioarchaeology, Weiss and

<sup>18</sup> Weiss and Springer 2020, 183.

<sup>19</sup> Daehnke and Lonetree 2011, 95 (lack of capitalization of Indigenous in original text).

<sup>20</sup> Gordon Puller Jr, personal communication with Norma Johnson, 21 April 2021 (used with permission).

<sup>21</sup> See British Association for Biological Anthropology and Bioarchaeology, “Open Letter to University of Florida Press,” 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210729164834/>; [https://twitter.com/BABAO\\_info/status/1341499575098613761](https://twitter.com/BABAO_info/status/1341499575098613761) (accessed 1 May 2021); Bioarchaeology Interest Group of the Society for American Archaeology, “BIG Chairs and Ethics Subcommittee Statement on Recent Publication,” 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210729164829/>; <https://twitter.com/jriveraprince/status/1341059691846103040> (accessed 1 May 2021); Society for American Anthropology, “Statement from the SAA Board of Directors Concerning the 86th Annual Meeting,” 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210729164847/>; <https://www.saa.org/quick-nav/saa-media-room/news-article/2021/04/28/statement-concerning-the-86th-annual-meeting> (accessed 1 May 2021).

<sup>22</sup> Weiss and Springer 2020, 194.

<sup>23</sup> O’Hara 2012.

<sup>24</sup> See Wendy Teeter, Desiree Martinez, and Dorothy Lippert, “Creating a New Future: Redeveloping the Tribal-Museum Relationship in the time of NAGPRA,” in this issue.

<sup>25</sup> Kakaliouras 2017.

<sup>26</sup> See O’Hara 2012; Ruckstuhl *et al.* 2016; Tsosie *et al.* 2020.

Springer instead knowingly choose to present a false dichotomy between Indigenous people's and bioarchaeologists' interests, research, and repatriation goals. This is the same false dichotomy that they have presented time (for example, "[repatriationism] would reduce scholarship to propaganda and apologetics"),<sup>27</sup> and time (for example, "scientific freedom is lost when tribal consultation or supervision is required"),<sup>28</sup> and time again (for example, "such sensitivity is to undermine the whole concept of objective knowledge and, indeed, of science itself"),<sup>29</sup> without any additional evidence to suggest their claims are true. The argument that "objective science" is incompatible with Indigenous knowledge and repatriation is strongly refuted by work on collaborative practice in bioarchaeology.<sup>30</sup> Collaboration between stakeholders enriches research, with unique concepts and methodologies brought forward to address common questions, building a deeper historical and archaeological context than can be achieved with the kind of "objective science" praised by Weiss and Springer.<sup>31</sup>

*Repatriation and Erasing the Past* is not the first time that Weiss and Springer have made similar arguments. In a 2006 presentation at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Weiss argued that "the ideology surrounding repatriation and reburial can be perceived as a threat to freedom of scientific inquiry."<sup>32</sup> Two years later, Weiss published *Reburying the Past: The Effects of Repatriation and Reburial on Scientific Inquiry*, expanding the anti-repatriation stance she presented in 2006.<sup>33</sup> This book was sternly criticized in print by fellow anthropologists. For example, Tamara L. Bray's review in *Museum Anthropology* starts: "This book is, without doubt, the most shallow, poorly written, and deliberately insulting piece of work I have ever read by a fellow academic."<sup>34</sup> Bray also notes that the content of the book is "uniformly facile and derogatory" and "a self-absorbed diatribe about repatriation."<sup>35</sup> A review by biological and forensic anthropologist Soren Blau in the *Journal of Archaeological Science* similarly notes Weiss's "naive and derogatory manner" and finds that "Weiss demonstrates a significant lack of rigour in attempting to discuss the effects of repatriation and reburial on scientific inquiry."<sup>36</sup> Blau concludes by suggesting that Weiss's book does a disservice to partnerships between Native Americans and anthropologists. We could quote these entire reviews wholesale for *Repatriation and Erasing the Past*, as Weiss has put forth no new ideas since her 2006 AAAS presentation and seemingly has doubled down on her anti-Indigenous stance.

While Elizabeth Weiss so far has been the focus of this piece as the anthropologist co-author, it is important to note that attorney James Springer has also built a publication record from an anti-Indigenous stance. In 2006, Springer described what he referred to as "repatriationism," an ideology that "living North American Indians should have the right to demand that all prehistoric human remains that are racially or culturally Indian, be turned over to them."<sup>37</sup> Claiming that repatriation hinders scientific studies, Springer ultimately argued that "the repatriationists' hostility ... is a logical consequence of their ideology and, as a result of the passage of [the National Museum of the American Indian Act and NAGPRA],

<sup>27</sup> Springer 2006, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Weiss 2009, 42.

<sup>29</sup> Weiss and Springer 2020, 218.

<sup>30</sup> Wylie 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Wylie 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Weiss 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Weiss 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Bray 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Bray 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Blau 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Springer 2006, 6–7.

it is a threat to all such scholarship.”<sup>38</sup> The following year, in a citation-less paper posted to the right-leaning Friends of America’s Past website, Springer and emeritus anthropology professor Kenneth Smail published what can only be described as an anti-Indigenous, paranoid diatribe purporting that the “repatriation movement” works to “cover up” the truth and distort the claims of Native Americans.<sup>39</sup> Springer and Smail presented an oversimplified argument of two diametrically opposed philosophical positions toward bioarchaeology of Native American remains:

On the one hand [bioarchaeology] is an approach characterized by objective and scholarly study which, despite its many mistakes and imperfections, has given us an increasingly accurate record of the past, a record which is available to any interested scholar or member of the general public, regardless of racial or ethnic background. On the other hand [repatriation ideology] is a biased and almost completely unsubstantiated racial and political ideology which demands that objectively derived information about the past be suppressed or distorted to support the questionable claims of those who purport to speak for contemporary Indian tribes.<sup>40</sup>

We unequivocally disagree with Weiss and Springer that NAGPRA is a tool to “hinder scientific research through the loss of collections, the inhibition of freedom of inquiry, and censorship.”<sup>41</sup> Rather, NAGPRA is a law and set of procedures with a limited scope that seeks to affirm tribal sovereignty and to ensure that the ancestors of Native people are treated with the same level of care and protection under the law that has historically been afforded to other human remains in the United States. Weiss and Springer have cherry-picked scholarly work in the field of bioarchaeology<sup>42</sup> and have misinterpreted federal US law in order to make the point that science has more right than do Indigenous people over the disposition of their dead, making *Repatriation and Erasing the Past* a work of poor scholarship. Their attempts to play devil’s advocate, however, are not simply an academic exercise. They are well aware of the harm that “traditional” anthropology has done to Indigenous people and have chosen to specifically align themselves with the past wrongs of our discipline rather than progress with other scholars into a more inclusive future. Moving beyond Weiss and Springer’s book brings us to a crossroads at which Indigenous values, community relationships, and academic research meet.

Over the past few decades, Indigenous people have been central to the discussions about how heritage is defined as well as its importance for the affirmation of cultural identity.<sup>43</sup> Storing and conducting research on ancestors of Indigenous peoples in the United States without consultation and collaboration is both a civil rights violation, renewing deeply traumatic relations and structural violence toward Indigenous people, and, in many cases, illegal. The repatriation of cultural heritage and human remains has been argued to “be an important part of this [healing] process and linked to strategies to aid recovery from postcolonial trauma, and, as such, it has the capacity to contribute to Indigenous health and well-being.”<sup>44</sup> Melany Johnson, tribal historic preservation officer / NAGPRA coordinator, Yamani Maidu and Pit River, who is employed by Susanville Indian Ranchería, has summarized the experience of working with her colleagues on repatriation: “When we

<sup>38</sup> Springer 2006, 28.

<sup>39</sup> Springer and Smail 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Springer and Smail 2007, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Weiss and Springer 2020, 194.

<sup>42</sup> Kakaliouras 2021.

<sup>43</sup> Simpson 2009; Fforde, McKeown and Keeler 2020.

<sup>44</sup> Simpson 2009, 122.

perform a reburial ceremony, our relatives are happy; they are happy to go back in the ground. So we are happy for them, too. But the ones who are still in museums want to come home, and that is heartbreaking.”<sup>45</sup> Museum specialist Moira Simpson further argues that there is growing evidence from a number of sources that greater self-governance and self-determination can have a positive effect on the lives of Indigenous peoples who have been enduring the effects of historic or postcolonial trauma.<sup>46</sup> A 2010 survey of tribal repatriation workers in the United States, for example, showed that 37 percent of respondents indicated that NAGPRA has led to new and positive collaborations with museums; however, most respondents also agreed that NAGPRA needs to change to become more efficient and effective.<sup>47</sup>

It is also imperative to recognize that the discourse about Indigenous rights and structural violence is not restricted to native North American remains. Māori scholar and repatriation researcher Brenda Tipene-Hook recounts the trauma that she experienced with discovering her ancestors’ burial chests from her *iwi* (tribe) at a major New Zealand museum in the 2000s:

Inexplicably compelled to visit the Auckland War Memorial Museum, I was drawn to a dark corner of the newly revamped Māori collection display area [where] I slipped behind a screen and came face-to-face with the burial chests of my *tūpuna* [ancestors]. They were arrayed before me, in glass cases. At that stage I still had no idea of the origin of these exquisite *taonga* [treasured possessions] but I was swiftly coming to the realisation that they were probably closely connected to me in some way. That assumption was to prove painfully accurate. Before my conscious mind realised what it had encountered, my *wairua* [spirit, soul] had already reacted. I stood before my ancestors and I wept. This was not a silent weeping; it was instead a very loud and mournful wail. Disconcerted by my newfound ability to produce such sound and self-conscious of my inability to make it stop, I fled the museum. However, it has not been as easy to escape the grief, anger, frustration, and sense of helplessness that this traumatic incident has left me with.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, as outlined in a joint statement by the Association of Black Anthropologists, the Society of Black Archaeologists, and the Black in Biological Anthropology Collective, the remains of African Americans, Black people, and other people of color have been, and continue to be, misused by anthropologists.<sup>49</sup> In some cases, these remains have been illegally or unethically obtained, curated, transferred, and used for research and teaching by museum and university faculty and staff, such as the unauthorized use of adolescent remains from the MOVE bombing in Philadelphia.<sup>50</sup> In other cases, institutions may be storing remains obtained through the excavation of historically Black communities and

<sup>45</sup> As quoted in Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2012, 281.

<sup>46</sup> Simpson 2009; see also Chandler and Lalonde 1998.

<sup>47</sup> Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2012.

<sup>48</sup> Tipene-Hook 2011, 1.

<sup>49</sup> See “Concerning the Possession and Unethical Use of the Remains of the Children of MOVE and the Africa Family: A Collective Statement from the Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA), the Society of Black Archaeologists (SBA), and the Black in Bioanthropology Collective (BiBA),” 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210729165030/https://aba.americananthro.org/> (accessed 4 May 2021).

<sup>50</sup> Ed Pilkington, “The Day Police Bombed a City Street: Can Scars of 1985 Move Atrocity Be Healed?” *The Guardian*, 10 May 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210729165000/https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/may/10/move-1985-bombing-reconciliation-philadelphia> (accessed 10 May 2021).

cemeteries without the knowledge or consent of the descendants of those individuals, such as the Samuel G. Morton collection at the University of Pennsylvania. This practice is a related ethical issue with which our discipline has begun to reckon.<sup>51</sup>

Given anthropologists' and archaeologists' commitments to ethical practice and collaborative work with Indigenous communities over the past three decades and our current interests in rectifying past wrongs, it is imperative we not ignore the antiquated thesis put forth in *Repatriation and Erasing the Past*, especially considering "the authors' hope that anthropologists will use [the book] for teaching."<sup>52</sup> As Valerie Bondura points out, "colonial ideology continues to find a place in anthropology, indicating that it is very much a part of what anthropology is."<sup>53</sup> Our professional and personal ethics demand that we confront this book, including the explicitly racist ideology espoused by Weiss and Springer and their lack of engagement with Indigenous communities, which is at the core of NAGPRA and archaeological practice worldwide. We agree with Bondura that we all must be prepared to "confront anti-Indigenous ideology in yourself, on your projects, in your professional organizations, in your classrooms and in your offices."<sup>54</sup> Books that fulfill this progressive promise include *Working with and for Ancestors*, edited by anthropologists Chelsea Meloche, Laure Spake, and Katherine Nichols.<sup>55</sup> This volume is filled with ethical and constructive approaches to repatriation and research on Indigenous remains and serves as a model for collaborative discourse between bioarchaeologists, archaeologists, and Indigenous descendant communities. Case studies in this volume show the mutual, respectful collaboration between parties, the creation of new models for the care of ancestors, and the importance of culturally sensitive museum policies. There are decades' worth of research into repatriation best practices, including important critiques of NAGPRA from Indigenous people and scientists.<sup>56</sup>

Papers like our own cannot be the end of this confrontation. In recognizing the ways in which anthropologists and archaeologists participate in ongoing colonial practices of these research fields, we must take responsibility for our complicity in a system that allows for books like Weiss and Springer's to be published, and this includes becoming accomplices, not allies,<sup>57</sup> in the push for profound structural change within these disciplines.

Given the recent rise of the revanchist American conservative movement, which derides critical race theory and social justice, it is no surprise that Weiss and Springer's antiquated take on repatriation promotes racist ideologies and fails to reflect the ethics of the vast majority of professional anthropologists. As bioarchaeologists, Indigenous archaeologists, and museum scholars, we of course welcome debate and discussion about issues of repatriation, and acknowledge that NAGPRA is far from perfect. However, *Repatriation and Erasing the Past* in fact erases the existence of Indigenous communities, which are wholly neglected and dismissed in the book. The ideas espoused by Weiss and Springer are extraordinarily harmful to Indigenous communities, anthropology scholars, and the general public. In the end, Weiss and Springer's argument for bioarchaeological research and non-repatriation of Indigenous ancestral remains ironically fails in a catastrophic manner because of their anti-

<sup>51</sup> See "Penn Museum Announces the Repatriation of the Morton Cranial Collection," *Penn Today*, 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210729165024/https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/penn-museum-announces-repatriation-morton-cranial-collection> (accessed 9 May 2021).

<sup>52</sup> Bondura 2020, 146.

<sup>53</sup> Bondura 2020, 152 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>54</sup> Bondura 2020, 154.

<sup>55</sup> Meloche, Spake and Nichols 2021.

<sup>56</sup> See Marek-Martinez 2008; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2012; Ruckstuhl *et al.* 2016; Aranui 2020; Fforde, McKeown and Keeler 2020.

<sup>57</sup> Bondura 2020, 152–54.



Indigenous stance and their guileless contempt for cultural relativism, the benchmark ethical perspective of the discipline of anthropology.

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