

“They came from people. They came from people that came from people.

- [Mike Africa Jr.](#)

A collective statement from anthropologists at Haverford College in support of MOVE’s demands concerning the unethical use of human remains

As anthropologists affiliated with Haverford’s Department of Anthropology, a majority BIPOC department, we are heartbroken by the denigration of Black life and ashamed of the inhumane actions perpetrated by anthropologists that have caused pain and retraumatization for the grieving Africa family. Recent reporting by a [number](#) of [outlets](#) has brought to light that the remains of one, and perhaps two, of the child victims of the bombing were held by two forensic anthropologists, Alan Mann and Janet Monge, without family knowledge or consent since the Philadelphia police bombing of the MOVE organization in 1985 that took the lives of 11 people (including 5 children). Family members learned only recently that the remains they thought had been laid to rest were still being used as part of a “case study” in Janet Monge’s online course titled, “Real Bones: Adventures in Forensic Anthropology.”

As anthropologists working in a predominantly white elite institution, this moment could not make starker our complicity in a discipline marred by a colonial legacy predicated on the dehumanization of Black life, indigenous life, and the colonial “other.” The discipline of anthropology in all its four branches has long been complicit in racism, white supremacy, and colonialism. Physical anthropology, in particular, played a significant role in perpetuating spurious notions of race that offered pseudo-scientific support abetting prevailing racism in society. Cultural anthropology once offered its services to colonial and settler colonial governments that directly caused the separation of children from indigenous parents.

While we commit ourselves to decolonization and racial justice in our teaching and research practices, intention and goodwill do not acquit us of structural complicity. The two forensic anthropologists who were once involved in identifying the remains kept the bones in their possession for almost four decades without the knowledge of the Africa family. Thirty-six years of privileging research over the rights of the Africa family is less an incidental oversight than an indication of a persistent structure of white supremacist values and practices that transcends the actions of one individual or academic institution. Given Janet Monge and Alan Mann’s affiliation with the University of Pennsylvania, Janet Monge’s decades of teaching at Bryn Mawr, and the ongoing ties between our institutions as part of the Quaker Consortium and Bi-College Consortium, as anthropologists at Haverford College, we must admit complicity in the violent dehumanization and objectification of human life.

We express our support for, and are republishing the demands of, the MOVE organization as articulated by Mike Africa, Jr., and currently circulated in the [following online petition](#):

1. The immediate return of the remains of Delisha Africa and Tree Africa to The MOVE Family.
2. An immediate apology by the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, the Penn Museum, and Coursera to The MOVE Family and the Black community of Philadelphia for this racist and abhorrent behavior.
3. Financial reparations to The MOVE Family for the continued harm and trauma caused by Princeton University, the University of Pennsylvania, the Penn Museum, and Coursera, for the profits made by the use of our relatives as teaching tools and research objects.
4. The immediate removal of all online content in which these remains are used, including the online course Real Bones taught by Janet Monge.
5. The termination of Janet Monge from her role as curator at the Penn Museum and faculty in the department of anthropology.
6. The creation of a transparent, public investigation led by a MOVE-approved investigator and funded by the Universities, into how these remains ended up in the Museum's possession over the past 35 years.

In consideration of our position as part of the Bi-Co and Quaker consortium, and in the spirit of demand 6, we commit to taking actions in the following areas:

- In collaboration with the Bryn Mawr Department, conduct a comprehensive review of what has been taught in Bi-Co Anthropology spaces with respect to biological/physical anthropology (content, ethics, use of human remains and “artifacts”) and ways the history of the discipline is taught.
- Engage with our anthropologist colleagues in the broader Quaker Consortium (University of Pennsylvania, Swarthmore College, Bryn Mawr College) to reflect on our institutional complicities and use our power to support the MOVE organization demands. We invite Haverford colleagues and students to join us in participating in an open forum on May 5th organized by UPENN's Center for Experimental Ethnography and facilitated by Krystal Strong (GSE, Black Lives Matter Philly), [“What is Our Responsibility to the Dead and to the Living?”](#)
- Support the Haverford College Libraries in their review and research of the cultural objects mentioned in the 2020 [Open Letter](#) from Black Students Refusing Further Inaction (p.5., p. 14), advocating for repatriation wherever appropriate and possible, as well as in their ongoing examination and review of library policies, with a view to decolonizing practices on collecting, language usage, and library pedagogy.

We want to recognize the work of our students, including our anthropology seniors, who have been organizing in solidarity with the MOVE community, and who have expressed their outrage and profound disappointment in the complicity of anthropology including within the Bi-Co. We also want to speak directly to our BIPOC and particularly Black students that, in these recent weeks of pain and outrage, you are not alone. From body cam footage of the last moments of life to the cavalier handling of human remains, these images can and will have a lasting impact on our mental as well as physical well-being. While some argue for the necessary evil of circulating such images to prompt widespread white empathy, for BIPOC faculty and students, who are reminded of our own families and communities, these images can be retraumatizing. Please take good care of yourselves and each other and know that we remain available as a community and as individuals, and committed to the continued struggle against anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and settler colonialism.

Signed,

Anthropologists at Haverford College

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Emily Hong, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Visual Studies

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Zolani Ngwane, Associate Professor of Anthropology

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