PART I
OPERATIONALIZING
MULTIVOCALITY
Introduction to Part I

Operationalizing Multivocality

Chapters in Part I introduce case studies that outline the implications of multivocality for archaeological research design, methodology, and interpretation. Drawing upon critical theory, Michael Blakey (Chapter 2) demonstrates how a multivocal approach constituted an integral part of the archaeological research carried out at the New York African Burial Ground. Through a discussion of this research, he reveals how multivocal collaboration and engagement with the public can lead to richer archaeological interpretations and a more ethical archaeological practice.

Emphasizing similar ideas, Sonya Atalay (Chapter 3) proposes a decolonizing “Indigenous archaeology” that extends the concept of multivocality beyond the confines of archaeological interpretation. Atalay argues that multivocality must be practiced, through collaboration between all interested groups, during all stages of research. The goal of this practice is to create more culturally sensitive forms of archaeological practice and education. Using Ojibwe oral history, epistemology and worldview, she suggests that notions of multivocality are not restricted to Western intellectual thought. She concludes that archaeology has much to gain by engaging with conceptualizations of multivocality found in other cultures.

Matthew Johnson (Chapter 4), in his analysis of the “construction” of the English landscape, emphasizes possible contributions of alternative interpretations of historical archaeological remains. Rosemary Joyce (Chapter 5) outlines the historical context in which an indigenous form of multivocality emerged in Honduran archaeology. She then presents her own interpretation of Honduran archaeology as one of the many voices. Finally, David Kojan (Chapter 6) presents a timely case study from Bolivia, where the creation and manipulation of competing archaeological narratives are inseparably linked to the current political and economic conditions of the country. He argues that all interpretations and narratives of the past must be understood through the power dynamics that shape their creation and use.

Together, these five chapters demonstrate how anthropological archaeologists can use multivocality as an effective tool for enriching our understanding of the past. They also show how the concept of multivocality, which has its origins in
postmodernism/poststructuralism as well as in various social movements, can help archaeologists make their discipline more socially and politically engaged.

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Chapter 2
An Ethical Epistemology of Publicly Engaged Biocultural Research

Michael L. Blakey

The New York African Burial Ground was rediscovered in 1989 during preparations for the construction of a 34 story Federal office building for the United States General Services Administration (GSA) (Ingle et al. 1990). To mitigate the destruction of cultural resources as required by law, a full-scale archaeological excavation conducted by HCI (Historic Conservation and Interpretation) and John Milner Associates preceded the building project. The excavation and construction site on the Burial Ground is located at Foley Square, in the city block bounded by Broadway, Duane, Reade, and Elk streets in Lower Manhattan, one block north of City Hall.

Archaeological excavation and building construction began during the summer of 1991 and ended in the summer of 1992 when the US Congress called for work on the site to cease in response to the public demand to properly memorialize, and, ultimately, learn about the people buried there. A research team was assembled at Howard University beginning in April of 1992. The task of this team was post-exavcation analysis, laboratory work, and interdisciplinary studies. This paper examines the interaction of ethics and theory during the 12 years in which the project’s scientific pursuits interfaced with public interests. The research team of the W. Montague Cobb Biological Anthropology Laboratory at Howard University, and eight other universities affiliated with the project have studied the skeletal remains of 419 individuals representing 18th century African captives and their descendants.

The approach taken to the organization and interpretation of data from the African Burial Ground involves four main elements. How these elements of theory have come to guide our particular research program are discussed in this chapter. These theoretic principles are also generalizable and may be extended to a broader range of research projects than are entailed in our study of the African Burial Ground. The four elements are as follows:

1. Critical theory in the vindicationist vein allows the sociocultural and ideological influences on research interpretations to be scrutinized, while seeking socially empowering factual information through scientific and other scholarly research. The fundamental principle rests upon acknowledging that political and ideological implications are intrinsic to science and history, and that choices about these are unavoidable (Blakey 1996, 1998a; Douglass 1999 [1854]). The pervasive
incorporation of African diasporic intellectual traditions of this kind into the
dialog around New York’s African Burial Ground opened a special opportunity
for applying this long-standing critical view of historical knowledge to a bioar-
chaeological study. Many brands of “critical theory” have emerged in recent
decades, including neo-Marxist and postmodernist thought in American and
European archaeology. The synthesis of criticism that emerges in this case is, in
its mainstream, part of the evolved understandings of the social and political
embeddedness of history and anthropology among African diasporans (see
Drake 1980; Harrison & Harrison 1999). Yet as participants in the intellectual
development of a broader “Western” world, such critical thought connects
with other intellectual traditions whose experience has led to compatible
insights.

2. Public engagement affords the communities, most affected by a research pro-
gram, a key role in the design and use of research results. A respect for pluralism
and the ethics of working with groups of people who historiography puts at risk
of social and psychological harm recommends an acknowledgment of this com-
community’s right to participate in research decisions. Scholars balance accountabil-
ity to such communities with responsibility to standards of evidential proof or
plausibility that defines the role of scholars. The goal of this collaboration is not
simply ethical. By drawing upon broader societal ideas and interests, public
engagement affords opportunities for advancing knowledge and its societal sig-
ificance. The democratization of knowledge involved here is not predicated on
the inclusion of random voices, but on democratic pluralism that allows for a
critical mass of ideas and interests to be developed for a bioarchaeological site
or other research project, based on the ethical rights of descendant or culturally
affiliated communities to determine their own well-being.

3. Multiple data sets (or lines of evidence) provide a crosscheck on the plausibility
of results. Results may be rejected, accepted, or recombined into newly plausible
“stories” about the past based on how diverse results of different methods com-
pete or reconfigure as a complex whole. The required multidisciplinary experts
engage in a “conversation” that produces interdisciplinary interpretations of the
archaeological population. Diverse expertise provides for recognition of a sub-
ject matter that might otherwise go unnoticed by the individuals and in the com-
munities under study. By revealing multiple dimensions of human subjects, this
approach can produce characterizations of even skeletal individuals that more
nearly resemble the complexities of human experience than are possible in simple,
reductionist descriptions.

4. An African diasporic frame of reference was selected as a context for the New
York population. This framework provides a connection both to an Atlantic
world political economy and a transatlantic cultural history that is more reflec-
tive of the causal conditions existing throughout the life cycle of members of
this eighteenth century community than was the local Manhattan context of
enslavement. The broader diasporic context of the New York population’s lives
also adds to an understanding of the population as more fully human than is
afforded by a local context of enslavement. Non-African diasporic research
might also circumscribe, differently, the scope of time and space required to examine a sufficiently large political economic system and social history to begin to explain how, what, and why its subject came to be.

Critical Theory

African diasporic intellectuals have, since late slavery, acknowledged the intrinsically political implications of anthropology and history with which they were confronted. Indeed, the historical record of American physical anthropology has continued to demonstrate that the physical anthropologists with the most emphatic interest in “objectivity” have nonetheless participated in the creation of racial and racist ideology (Blakey 1987, 1996; Gould 1981; Rankin-Hill & Blakey 1994). White supremacist notions are supported when representations of blacks are so shallow and biological as to denude them of human characteristics and motivations. As racialized “black slaves,” African diasporic populations may be removed from culture and history, an objectification that some view as consistent with the ideals of Western science. Here it is both the biological categorization of identity (race) and the omission of history and culture that deny humanity to these historic populations.

While this process dehumanizes the black past, Euro-American history is also transformed to one in which Africans are not recognizable as people. They become instead a category of labor, the instruments or “portmanteau organisms” of whites (see Crosby 1986) that are therefore not readily identified with as the subjects of human rights abuses. These aspects, even of description, transform American history. Douglass, in 1854, asks scholars to simultaneously take sides and be fair to the evidence. This is different from Enlightenment notions of objectivity, because it is accepted that science and history will always be subjective to current biases and interests. How can one take a position and be fair to the evidence? One conceptualization of the purpose of historical research that may not violate either of these goals is the assumption that research into the diasporic past is not simply the pursuit of new knowledge. Indeed, diasporic traditions of critical scholarship have assumed that the search is for the reevaluation of old, politically distorted, and conveniently neglected knowledge about black history.

The research design of the African Burial Ground project asserts that the motivation to correct these distortions and omissions will drive the research effort in part. This understanding of the ideological nature of the construction of history allows our team to scrutinize data more critically than were we to assume ownership of special tools for neutral knowledge. We need to be more circumspect and aware of how our interpretations may be used and influenced by societal interests beyond the academy walls. Our criticism holds, as an assumed goal, the societally useful rectification of a systematically obscured African-American past. The fact that New York’s African Burial Ground should not have existed from the standpoint of the basic education of most Americans supports the need for a critical and corrective approach to archaeology. The history of the northern colonies, of New York, is
characterized as free and largely devoid of blacks. That, of course, is untrue. The history that denies the presence of blacks and of slavery in places where these actually did profoundly exist is not accidental. Such a history must be deliberately debated. Yet societal interests also influence our alternative interpretations and they may influence policy and social action. We are screwing around with other people’s identities. Who are we as individual scientists to decide how to formulate our research plans relative to such potentially powerful societal effects?

**Public Engagement**

While we are responsible for our epistemological choices, it is perhaps inappropriate for researchers to make those choices in isolation. The epistemological choices – i.e., the choice of ways of knowing the past by virtue of the selection of research questions, theories and analytical categories – are also the justifiable responsibility of the broader communities whose lives are most affected by the outcome of research. This recognition of the potential for a democratization of knowledge merges epistemological concerns with ethical ones. The communities with which we work – living descendants or culturally affiliated groups – have an ethical right to be protected from harm resulting from the conduct of research. The American Anthropological Association Statement on Professional Responsibility and Ethics, the World Archaeological Congress Ethical Statement, and the new ethical principals of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, which largely recapitulates the former, are key examples of this ethical standard (see Lynott & Wylie 1995 for an extensive discussion of ethics in American archaeology). Communities have a stake in how research is conducted if it might impact them negatively or positively.

The National Historic Preservation Act of the United States allows the public a say in whether research will be done at all and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) legislation gives federally recognized Native Americans and Pacific Islanders rights to determine the disposition of their ancestral remains and sacred objects. Many archaeologists and physical anthropologists have resisted these ethical and legal obligations, arguing that the autonomous authority of researchers needs to be protected for the sake of objectivity and the proper, expert stewardship of knowledge about our past. That position is based on assumptions that are inconsistent with our critical theoretical observations of intrinsic cultural embeddedness of science that have informed the activist scholarship in the diaspora. If science is subjective to social interests, it seems fair, at least in the American cultural ethos, to democratize the choice of those interests that scientists will pursue. Since the people most affected are also to be protected, it is least patronizing for anthropologists to enter into a research relationship with descendant communities by which those communities protect themselves by participating in the decisions regarding research design. Indeed, a “publicly-engaged” anthropology of this kind has been proposed by a panel of leading anthropologists who have linked the practice to American values of democratic participation and pluralism.
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(Blakey et al. 1994; Forman 1994). Hodder (1999) has considered “multivocality” as representing the value of a plurality of perspectives for the development of archaeological programs, and distinguishes pluralism from relativism. At the African Burial Ground, we found useful and exciting paths of inquiry as well as elevated scrutiny of evidential proof when naive objectivity was replaced by ethics. It is interesting to consider that the idea of objective methods capable of revealing universal truths may have served to obscure the need for ethics or accountability to nonscientific considerations in the pursuit of knowledge.

Our project has conceived two types of clientage: the descendant community most affected by our research (the ethical client) and the GSA that funds the research (the business client). While both clients have rights that should be protected, the ethical requirements of the field privilege the voices of descendants. Descendants have the right to refuse research entirely and the researcher’s obligation is to share what is known about the potential value of bioarchaeological studies. Our project received permission to present a draft research design to African Americans and others interested in the site. Our purpose was to elicit comment, criticism, and new ideas and questions to which the descendant community was most interested in having answers. The result of this public vetting process is, we believe, a stronger research design with more interesting questions than would have likely come from researchers alone. A sense of community empowerment, in contrast to the preexisting sense of desecration, was fostered by our collaboration. Permission to conduct research according to the resulting design was granted by both clients. Public pressure in support of a more comprehensive research scope than usually afforded such projects resulted from the fact that research questions interested them and that they claimed some ownership of the project. Thus research directions, an epistemological concern, were fostered by public involvement, an ethical concern. The queries produced by the engagement process were condensed to four major research topics:

1. The cultural background and origins of the population;
2. The cultural and biological transformations from African to African-American identities;
3. The quality of life brought about by enslavement in the Americas;
4. The modes of resistance to slavery.

In the application of this approach to an “ethical epistemology” (an ethemology?), experience has shown that conflict, social conflict, can be part and parcel of public engagement. When meeting in a state government auditorium in Harlem while vetting the research design in 1993, the panel of researchers was confronted by some African Americans who objected to our references to slavery in Africa, insisting that slavery had never existed there. We were able to convey familiarity with what we considered to be a reflection of the concern of some African Americans that the Euro-American community’s frequent references to African slavery were often meant to suggest that Africans were responsible for the slave trade. That tack gave an apologetic spin that abdicates the responsibility of Europeans and Euro-Americans (the “demand” side of the trade) for American slavery. There was also sensitivity to the all-too-frequent false notion that those brought to the Americas were “slaves” in
Africa rather than free people who had been captured and “enslaved.” With recognition of this understanding and of differences and similarities between chattel and African household slavery, our requirement as scholars was, nonetheless, to indicate that we would refer to slavery in Africa because of the material evidence for its existence there. It was the community’s right to decide whether or not it would encourage scholars to conduct research on the African Burial Ground or to involve only religious practitioners or provide some other treatment. If the project was to be involved, it was to be involved as scholars and that meant standing on evidence. It is significant too that the diasporic scholars on the panel had knowledge of the kinds of critique (not just emotional sensitivity) that had informed the concern over the suggestions of African slavery and could respond that attempts would be made to maintain an awareness, in the course of our work, of previous misuses by other scholars of the fact of slavery in Africa. This we did.

The project leadership was strongly urged to refer to the Africans of colonial New York as “Africans” or “enslaved Africans” rather than slaves. This recommendation upon deliberation and discussion seemed cogent and not inconsistent with material facts. The critical consideration of the community representatives was that “slave” was the objectified role that Europeans and American whites had sought to impose. The Africans themselves, while clearly subject in large part to the conditions of the role of “slave,” had often both previous experience and self-concepts that were as complex human beings “who had their own culture before they came here” and who resisted slavery psychologically, politically, and militarily according to material facts. Thus we agreed that we represented the perspectives of slaveholders by using the dehumanizing definition of the people we were to study as slaves, when “enslaved African” reasonably emphasized the deliberate imposition of a condition upon a people with a culture. Similarily we accepted, as did the State and Federal agencies, the renaming of the “Negroes Burying Ground” to the African Burial Ground for reasons similar to the use of “enslaved Africans.” And Sherrill Wilson found it in the course of background research for the National Historic Landmarks Designation of the site that Africans named their institutions “African” in New York City as soon as they obtained the freedom to put such nomenclature on record in the early nineteenth century.

This case is exemplary of the value of the process of public engagement and the deliberation, potential conflict, and reasonable compromise that were often involved. The purpose was to find a synthesis of scholarship and community interests, if a synthesis could be found. These deliberations rest upon trust which is as much established by a demonstration of the integrity of scholarship as it is by the researcher’s recognition of the community’s ultimate right to determine the disposition of its ancestral remains. Choice of language was one of the most emphatic contributions of the community which did not seem as comfortable with questioning some of the technical aspects of methodology. Invasive methods were discussed and accepted as required to answer the important question of origins that has long been keenly important to African Americans. Family roots and branches were deliberately severed by the economic expediencies and psychological control methods of slavery.
Another community emphasis of importance to the course of the research project was the insistence on including African and Caribbean research in our geographical and cultural scope and on extending the temporal parameters back to the Dutch period when, despite the lack of historical reference, the cemetery might have been used. These ideas helped move the project’s research questions and choice of expertise toward the African and diasporic scope that become immensely important for recognizing the specific artifactual, genetic, and epidemiological effects of the cemetery and its population. Furthermore, our team’s adherence to the observations of African suppliers of a Euro-American driven transatlantic trade in human captives positioned us properly to receive a senior delegation of the Ghanaian National House of Chiefs who regretfully acknowledged the involvement of some past leaders.

An example of conflict with the project’s business client, the GSA, is found in the project’s adherence to agreements that the Federal Agency had made on the scope of research, including DNA and chemical studies, that it would begin to reverse 5 years into the study. There seemed to be other attempts to contain or reduce the project by limiting the scope of newsletter mailing or the project and community input into memorialization projects such as the interpretive center. In each case the project leaders returned to the public forum and were brought as community advisors to legislators in New York and on Capital Hill to make these efforts transparent to the public. Congressmen and community members were able to reiterate their support by letter and verbally to the GSA, which over the course of the project indicated that it was turning the project around and getting it back on track four times, interspersed each time by at least a year of obstruction by a variety of means, usually the elimination of funding. As a partly academically based project, it was possible to continue with alternative funding to meet with the descendant community and government leaders without fear of loss of the next contract, and the often overwhelming evidence of GSA’s inconsistency with its legal requirements to which it had previously agreed would ultimately bring the agency back to the public to restart the project from the point where it had been when the impediments were put into effect. Although many aspects of the research design (Howard University & John Milner Associates 1993) were ultimately not funded, the integrity of the researchers’ relationship to the ethical client was maintained by standing with the community and insisting that the GSA carry through with its commitments. The GSA was not allowed to summarily disregard its legal obligations or promises to the black community once its building had been built, and would have to return to fund aspects of the research and memorialization that it had tabled, sometimes over a period of years. This project’s leadership refused to give our business client anything other than our best and honest advice.

Were this project not linked to community interests there might have been fewer conflicts with the federal agency. On the other hand, community engagement (and to some extent the presence of what Congressman Savage called the “obstinacy” of the governmental agency) defined much of the significance of the project that would represent descendant community empowerment. Part of that empowerment came to be shown by the community’s resolve and effective opposition to desecration by a white leadership of a large federal governmental agency of the United States (see Harrington 1993). On the other hand, the project’s ability to withstand attempts to arbitrarily end
the project is the result of having a strong base of support in the general public and among legislators representing them. Funding, even under these terms, was adequate for a broad scope of work demonstrated in the current report and two others.

Finally, the project was designed to utilize a biocultural and biohistorical approach and rejected race estimation in favor of culturally salient categories of ethnic origin using DNA, craniometry, archaeological artifacts and features, as well as the available historical record. We had no need of reinforcing the concept of race through our research especially when that concept obscures the cultural and historical identity of those who are made subject to its classification. Moreover, new molecular technologies and specialists in African mortuary data could put us on the trail of ethnic groups with discernable histories. Having acquired the project against the competitive efforts of a forensic team that emphasized its customary use of racing methodology, an effort in their defense was successfully solicited in which over 50 physical anthropologists wrote to the GSA, usually supporting the forensic approach to racing (Cook 1993; Epperson 1997, 1999).

Indeed, a number of these letters and comments suggested that the use of DNA, chemistry, and cultural traits such as dental modification could be of no value in determining origins. Without the backing of the descendant community that was far more interested in social and cultural history than racial classification, the project would not have been able to, as it did, say “no” to the vast majority of physical anthropologists who demonstrated a lack of support to the project’s business client.

The essential point here is that the questions and approaches that have driven the research of the New York African Burial Ground Project were produced by a public process of empowerment that involved distinct supporters and detractors. What we have been able to accomplish for present evaluation and future development has been the result of protracted struggle with those who customarily expect to control this kind of contracted research to create a research enterprise that is not repugnant to the African-American community. But it is also a project of unusual epistemological complexity. As a result, the project has had an impact upon both the scientific community and public discussions of human rights and reparations for slavery (see Blakey 1998a,b, 2001; La Roche & Blakey 1997). Six documentary films and frequent and lengthy textbook references to the New York African Burial Ground Project (Johnson 1999; Parker Pearson 1999; Thomas 1998 and others) also suggest that the project has raised interesting issues for a broad range of people.

Multiple Data Sets

Multidisciplinary expertise was repeatedly shown to be essential in our attempts to answer the project’s major questions regarding the origins, transformations, quality of life, and modes of resistance. Examining a question such as the origin of the population with different sets of data such as genetics, anthropometry, material culture, history, and chemistry was valuable because:
1. Verification of the plausibility of findings on the part of a particular specialized method or set of data is provided in the form of complementary or conflicting results from an alternative data set. Contrasting results were at least as useful as complementary data because these would raise new questions and possibilities about interpretation or the need for methodological development. Biological data (such as molecular genetics) have often been privileged over cultural and historical data. We found genetics data, read in isolation of other information, to lead to erroneous conclusions relative to more verifiably accurate cultural and historical evidence. We do not privilege the biological data, but are benefited from the discussion among the differing results that led us to mutually plausible conclusions. Metaphorically, one voice allowing the floor with impunity can easily make false representations without there being any means of evaluation or accountability. Where there are several voices in a dialogue about facts, the standards of plausibility are elevated by the accountability that the facts generated by each method have to one another. This sort of “discussion” among different data sets become a means, if not of objectivity, of raising standards of plausibility and of fostering a dialectical process by which new research directions would emerge.

2. Multidisciplinary research allows us to recognize more diverse dimensions of the individual biographies and community histories than any one discipline could allow us to “see” in the data. By assessing layers of origins data, for example, we construct the population in terms of its demography, pathology, genetics, cultural influences on burial practices, environmental exposures in teeth, religious history, and art that allow the construction of a more complex human identity at the site. A fraction of these disciplines would have produced a fraction of the richer human qualities we worked to understand because observations are largely limited to the specialized knowledge and research tools required to make them.

3. This disciplinary breadth, inclusive of biology, culture, and history, makes possible the kind of political economic analysis in which we are interested as biocultural anthropologists. The biological data are interpreted in relation to the population’s social, political, and economic history. Yet some studies will rely on evolutionary theory while remaining historical in their attempt to discover cultural origins with biological evidence. There needs to be a “tool kit” of theories for purposes of different research questions. The break with tradition here is that such an approach is not in search of a unifying theory that physical anthropology and human evolution are not synonymous.

**Diasporic Scope**

The descendant community had been forceful in its insistence upon our examination of the African backgrounds for the New York population. Their idea was that these were people with a culture and history that preceded their enslavement and which
continued to influence them even in captivity. We found the African and Caribbean connections important for understanding the site in many ways. We would require archaeologists, historians, and biologists with expertise and experience in research in all three areas.

Similar to the value of multidisciplinary resources of the project, the diasporic scope of expertise allowed us to find meaningful evidence where narrower expertise could not have “seen” it. The use of quartz crystals as funerary objects required an African archaeological background whereas Americanist archaeologists might have assigned them no meaning (see Perry 1999); the heart-shaped symbol, believed to be of Akan origin and meaning (see Ansa 1995), was assumed to have a European, Christian meaning in the absence of anyone who could recognize an Akan adinkra symbol. Thus the geographical and cultural connections to the site are enlarged by the diasporic scope of the researchers.

Bioarchaeological projects are often limited to very localized special and temporal contexts of interpretation. Were this project to have limited its scope of interpretation to New York City’s history (or to the cemetery itself) the African Burial Ground would have revealed a New York population understood for the immediate conditions of its members’ enslavement, or less. A larger international context reveals a cultural background for these captives, an ebb and flow of migration between different environments and social conditions, shifting demographic structures related to a hemispheric economy, and the interactions of people and environments that changed over the course of the life cycle to impact their biology in multiple unhealthy ways. By understanding these African captives as people from societies of their own who were thrust into enslavement in an alien environment, perhaps their human experience can be more readily identified. This at least was the expressed goal in meetings of descendant community members that informed the research design. And of course the desire to reach back and critically examine that experience is motivated by the scope of interests of an African diaspora “concept” that has traditionally included a vindicationist approach to black history that stands against Eurocentric historical apologetics.

A variety of other, specific theories (or explanations relating specific observations to generalizable systems within which they have meaningful implications for us) have been applied to explain particular phenomena observed at the African Burial Ground. The above approaches, however, form the most general framework of our analyses. The meta-theoretical approach described above comprises a process for generating the questions we ask, for assessing the reasons why we are asking those questions, and for making choices about theory with which the information is organized to answer those questions. They are also perhaps the most unique to our situation in which these approaches emerged as special opportunities to resolve problems and contradictions met with at the site. The principles and processes I have described are often likely to be, nonetheless, generalizable and can be usefully extended for bioarchaeological work in many kinds of situations, not to be limited to this site or to African diasporic bioarchaeology.
Final Comment

It has been rewarding to see, now about a quarter century after Joan Gero and I organized the first session on “The Socio-politics of Archaeology” at the Society for American Archaeology meetings in Minneapolis (see Gero et al. 1983) and with the further inspiration, of the first World Archaeological Congress in Southampton in 1986, the need of practitioners of our field to grapple with the fact of our humanity has begun to be taken seriously enough to produce new ways of knowing the past. One hopes for qualitative change. As for New York’s African Burial Ground, our project anthropologists have shared the pleasure of engagement with a community in a battle for the dignity of a desecrated and belittled cemetery, a place that would be established as a new United States National Monument in the summer of 2006.

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