Epilogue

Real, Recent, Replica: Confessions of an Archaeologist/Curator/ Puerto Rican

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As soon as I agreed to write the epilogue of this volume, I knew it would challenge me on a number of levels. Because of my position as a curator and a field archaeologist, the volume's lead editor asked me if I could address, "...the viability of engaging museum collections in studies, with all the dangers that this can bring…" This troubled me not so much because of the nature of the issue, but because I have some strong feelings about it. And strong feelings in academia can mean taking things personally and with a strong passion, which inevitably leads to controversy.

Nevertheless, things took an unexpected and unsolicited turn. Before I started reading the chapters I was (and still am) certain that I know the main issues related to these topics and I thought I knew my position on all of them. However, once I began reading, I started seeing things from many opposite sides and noticing my own (and other peoples') biases and hidden assumptions/premises. I am not referring necessarily to the authors' views, but to my own way of thinking. Some of these doubts/questions were triggered/inspired by some of the contributors, others from a critical approach towards some of the statements in the chapters. I began seeing the problems addressed here as multivalent and with a multiplicity of sides that I have not been able to organize in a rational way and much less solve. For that reason I use the word 'confession' in the title of this chapter; particularly, because I am questioning what I have been doing for most of my career and I have not been able to reconcile many of these views. This multiplicity of views is making me question my identities as archaeologist/curator/Puerto Rican; identities that ultimately and directly link to our subject of study, the archaeological record/cultural heritage.

I begin the discussion with a series of stories of some of my experiences with the topics of this volume. In a way, this is to show the range of types of situations that arise when one is involved in this 'business.' It also shows contradictions and many gray areas. The rest of the paper is organized according to the identities I explore here, as listed in the title. Of course, they are written from my personal view. The idea is to show the plethora of problems involved with each of them. To complicate things, many of the issues I discuss overlap two or more of my identities. But, before I start I want to make it clear that I strongly believe that we need to protect and preserve the archaeological record and the cultural heritage and patrimony of people and that it is our duty to fight for their protection. Some of the comments below may seem to put into question this statement, but it is more in efforts to expose some of our contradictions, to clarify what exactly it is that we are defending vs. what we think we are defending, and how some of our ‘ideals’ can be naïve or simplistic. Hopefully, everything will become clearer as the discussion progresses.

Stories: Loss of Innocence

(1) My first story happened during my time as a member of the Editorial Board of *Latin American Antiquity*. As many of you may know, the SAA has a strict policy of not publishing articles, photos, drawings, or descriptions of objects that have not been obtained under ethical circumstances (Society for American Archaeology 2018). At one point during my term, the editors brought to the board two manuscripts that focused on objects from a well-known institution. These objects were also part of well-known, private collections donated by wealthy and influential collectors, and that included many objects that may have been obtained under suspicious circumstances. However, for what to me seemed a black and white issue ended up in a long debate within a series of email exchanges between board members that lasted for weeks. The arguments were long and complicated. As I remember it, one issue was: where do we draw the line? Many of the larger and older museums have objects that have been looted, taken out of countries without the appropriate permissions, etc. It is true that at one point in time, those practices were the standard of the trade, but does that make a difference? But even if we agree with that statement, in some ways, it is “easy” to say that objects obtained in 1910, for example, should be fine to publish because historically that was the standard at that time. But, how about the 1950s, when many countries already had laws protecting their archaeological heritage, but no strong international agreements existed? In addition, even if this was the “standard” at that time, does that make it right? Was it right for major museums to obtain objects from, say, Latin America, because of the colonial situation allowed it at that time? Is it fine to publish those objects? Interestingly, some colleagues did not see any problem at all — why not publish the objects since we have them accessible already? Two other topics included in the discussion, among many more, was how the publications of such objects will enhance their commercial value and how some aspects of our discipline would be severely hampered if they did not include objects that had been removed from their contexts without what today we would consider proper recording.

The editors, in a skillful way, proposed a text addressing this issue in the publication guidelines of the journal, which has been revisited by later editors and today reads as follows:

> “Specifically, SAA will not knowingly publish manuscripts that provide the first descriptions of such objects. *In the case of LAQ, the editors are particularly wary of publishing images of looted artifacts that are in private collections or held by museums, whether or not they have been previously published*,” (Society for American Archaeology 2018: 7, emphasis added; see also Principle no. 3 in the SAAs Principles of Archaeological Ethics [1996]).

This debate opened my eyes to the fact that that the topics discussed in this book are more complicated than our zeal to protect the objects.

(2) Besides promoting and doing research on collections, as a curator I also have to deal with requests for identifying or authenticating archaeological objects. Most of the time, the requests come from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) unit who occasionally intercept objects imported into the country. I normally decline requests from private collections, although I help some individuals who end up with mundane archaeological objects (e.g. sherds, stone axes) by accident or out of casual curiosity (e.g., inheritance, purchased in an auction). Occasionally, I get requests from colleagues at other museums with possible new acquisitions, in which case I tend to assist, with the premise that they are obtaining the objects in an ethical manner. However, in one occasion a colleague curator (and archaeologist) from a well-known and established art museum contacted me to authenticate an object that was brought to the US from Puerto Rico and was being offered for purchase through an art broker. The object was a fake (probably made in Dominican Republic) and came with a faked letter supposedly from Ricardo Alegría, a well-known Puerto Rican archaeologist, 'authenticating' it. I immediately informed this colleague about the Puerto Rican law and the illegality of selling Puerto Rican antiquities and even transporting the object outside the island without the government's approval. I also contacted the *Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña* to see how they wanted me to proceed. They asked me to obtain the name of the broker and, if possible, the name of the owner so they could send letters to inform them about the illegality of their actions and intents. When I contacted the curator/archaeologist, they refused to provide any information because they did not want to sour the relationship with the broker. My colleague declined even after I pointed out the ethical and legal issues involved. I asked my colleague to, at minimum, let the broker know about the illegality of the transaction; to my surprise, my colleague had already done so, but the broker was already fully aware of the Puerto Rican law, and had proceeded regardless. Although I think my colleague's institution would not have purchased the object once they knew it was removed illegally from Puerto Rico (not to mention a fake), their zeal in protecting the museum's relationship with someone who blatantly disregarded the ethics of the discipline and the laws of the place of origin baffled me, and to this day still enrages me. Unfortunately, as mentioned in several of the chapters, situations like this happen more often than not, even in the most 'respectable' organizations. Call me naïve, but again, this opened my eyes to a situation I was not expecting: the enemy within.

(3) Recently I met a colleague curator I have not seen for a while who had started working in a new job. This person is an art historian who has worked peripherally with Caribbean collections and their job was to curate a collection owned by a multinational company that included some archaeological objects. However, this curator could not disclose neither the company's name nor the location of the objects.

My impression is that this collection is part of a practice of corporations to purchase antiquities as part of their art collections (e.g., see Appleyard and Salzmann 2012; Lindenberg and Oosterlinck 2010). My colleague was excited about the new job and the magnificent collection, and eventually sent me photos of some amazing objects from the Caribbean I had never seen before. They may be fakes or authentic, but either way my impression is that these objects have been passing from one private collection to another under the radar of museums and governments. Again, I was conflicted. On the one hand, I did not know how these objects were acquired (whether legally or not), nor their history. All I knew for certain was that they are receiving a high level of treatment and care. But, on the other hand, was this job ethical? Looking back now, I do not think it was. However, what is at the core of this story is that in the whole conversation we had, I did not sense from my colleague any concern about the potential ethical dilemma of working with such a "secret" collection which may have been obtained, in part, illegally. Nor, for my part, did I inquire further about the collections, or bring up the potential ethical problems related to this curatorial position.

Archaeologist

As mentioned in the introductory chapter to this volume, the Principles of Archaeological Ethics of the Society for American Archaeology has several articles that deal with the preservation of the archaeological records in all its forms (i.e, site, artifacts, collections, field notes, and data). According to these principles, it is clear that the archaeologist's first duty is not towards the discipline or institutional affiliation, not even to the "owner" of the archaeological heritage, but to the archaeological record. As an aside point, in my opinion, this statement should also include our duty to protect the people that created such archaeological records. In other words, we should have the responsibility of not misrepresenting them or their descendants (if present) by misusing the data to (re-)create their history in an inaccurate manner. I know all this sounds basic and obvious, but while most of us will agree on these terms, in practice we often do not follow them. An example of this in the Caribbean is the use of the concept of Taíno which traditionally has been used by almost all of us to refer to the identity of the native peoples from the Greater Antilles, Bahamas, and, at least, Virgin Islands. However, the term and concept have been strongly questioned and criticized recently (Curet 2014; Oliver 2009; Rodríguez Ramos 2010; Torres Etayo 2006) since it is an academic construct that falsely homogenizes and misrepresents what in reality was a large diversity of identities and cultural practices (e.g., Berman 2013; McGinnis 1997, 2001; Wilson 2001). Despite the fact that one has questioned these arguments, many are still misrepresenting the peoples of all these islands by using this concept in their publications in an indiscriminate manner without any explanation and ignoring its implications. Making things worse, it continues being used used in popular media, misleading the general public, and perpetuating the simplistic view of the ancient peoples created by previous archaeologists.

Within the context of this volume, these ethical norms have three themes that I will explore in three examples. But, first, I start with another obvious statement that we need to keep in mind: archaeological fieldwork, independently of how extensive or intensive it is, destroys or distorts archaeological sites. And, because we can never recover all the information possible, we, too, destroy potential archaeological data. Considering this statement, then, archaeologists, in theory, should have a good reason to excavate, and always concentrate their efforts to minimize the degree of destruction. This is even more critical when we are working in places that are not our own country and, more important, when it is not our heritage or patrimony.

The first theme is that at least in some sectors of American archaeology there is an underlying consensus that to become an archaeologist one has to conduct excavations. I can give at least two examples of this perspective in academia. The first is that some universities or advisors still expect, and some actually require, doctoral candidates to conduct fieldwork for their dissertation project. I understand that many research questions may require fieldwork, but not all of them. Many topics can be handled by analyzing existing collections. I know of cases where students could not follow the topic of their interest because it involves only laboratory work and not fieldwork. The second example are teaching and museums positions requiring applicants to have an on-going field project, again, emphasizing the field aspect of archaeology and eliminating ‘collection based or laboratory oriented’ researchers from the pool of candidates.

Expectations and practices like these ones are not only discordant with the principles of archaeological ethics, but also send the unintended message that archaeology is all about finding things and not an anthropological science. It erroneously implies that methodology and data collection is what defines the discipline.

What options other than excavating do we have? The answer is simple (and here I am wearing the curator hat, too): we have to start making use of object and archival collections in museums and in official depositories. Although many will argue that collections do not provide the important and critical information on context, this is only partially true and normally said from a biased and uninformed position (see further discussion in the following section). Suffice to say that many influential, successful, and impacting projects have been conducted using collections. Examples of these in the Caribbean include Jeff Walker’s (1993) study of stone collars and three-pointers, José Oliver (2008, 2009) on semiotics and social organization, the study on collections of the British Museum (Oliver et al. 2008; Ostapkowicz et al. 2013), Boomert’s (2000) study on interaction spheres in Trinidad, Vernon James Knight’s (n.d.) on-going project on personal ornaments, Joanna Ostapkowicz’s work on wooden and cotton sculpture (e.g., Ostapkowicz, et al. 2012; Ostapkowicz and Newsom 2012), Lawrence Waldron’s (2016) focus on zoomorphic adornos, William Pestle’s (2010) study of diet using stable isotope analysis, Jonathan Hanna's (2018) research spanning collections and limited excavations in Grenada, and many others.

Ignoring or underestimating the degree of destruction caused by archaeological excavations instead of using collections feeds a poor, unethical, and irresponsible practice. It perpetuates the vicious cycle of researchers giving preferential treatment to excavations when the answers to their questions may lay in the abundant collections in museums, and leads to the production of another collection that ends up collecting dust on shelves in museums or repositories. It is a vicious cycle! At the end of the day, then, why preserve the excavated materials? Unfortunately, many governments and cultural agencies in many countries have answered this in ways that many of us do not like: disposing of the bulk of their collections. Of course, they retain and curate the "best" artifacts, and in some cases, perhaps a sample of the more mundane ones. All these issues become more significant when considering that we are talking about the cultural heritage we are tasked with protecting. To be clear, however, the intention is not to blame the decision makers; the lack of storage is a serious problem and solving it requires fiscal fortitude.

All this is to say that, despite being documented (*if* reports are produced at all – which is another potential ethical issue I am not discussing here), unnecessary archaeological excavations can be as damaging to the archaeological record and as unethical as looting for profit. After all, we (archaeologists) are profiting from the archaeological record. As graduate students we use it to acquire a degree and, eventually, get a good job, especially if a field project is required. And, we continue doing it to get promotions and prestige. So, although different in kind and degree, in some ways, like looters, we have an ulterior motive and interest in destroying the archaeological record. However, to make it clear, I am not implying or suggesting that excavations are not necessary. Excavations are often necessary. As one of the anonymous reviewers of this volume correctly stated: "the Caribbean [situation], where so many of the sites are coastal, essentially demands the recovery of archaeological materials lest they be lost to storms, erosion, impending sea level rise, development, and a host of other natural or cultural processes." The discussion above specifically targets unnecessary excavations and the state of mind in some archaeological circles that implies, consciously or unconsciously, that fieldwork makes the archaeologist. At the risk of repeating myself, methodology does not define a discipline. Archaeology is a social science (at least in the Americas) and excavation is just one of many methodologies and techniques used to achieve the scientific goals of the discipline: to understand and explain past human societies in all their forms. However, one point is true, considering the large number of collections available, the discipline/schools should be promoting among their students the use of museum collections for their graduate projects instead of promoting or even requiring fieldwork for degrees and jobs.[1]

Museum Curator

While curiosity cabinets and the establishment of the earliest museums go back to the 15th and 17th centuries, respectively, it is only in the last century that the museological discipline has gotten rid of many 'old habits' from that past. More importantly, museums have changed their missions, ethics, and goals. Now collections are not just feeding the fetishism of collectors, nor are they symbolic of the power of 'civilized' empires. Now museums are more about protecting, preserving, and researching the collections, using them for education, representation, and appreciation, and making them accessible to the widest audiences both nationally and internationally.

Here I approach my curatorial position from two perspectives. The first one is, again, from the point of view of the value of collections for archaeological research. I concentrate, then, on the myths, misconceptions, and fallacies that roam among colleagues about the types and quality of information that can be obtained from them, or if it is possible to obtain any information at all. The second is from the perspective of the relationship of the curator with people outside the museum, primarily collectors and donors.

1/ The value of museum collections

There is a general feeling in the discipline of archaeology that museum collections cannot replace excavations since many of them do not have contextual data and, if they do, it is not specific enough. It is true that initially and for a long time most museums were interested mainly, if not solely, in objects. This is part of the fetishism present among the early antiquarians and museums (as discussed in several of the papers in this volume) and, to be honest with ourselves, it is still present in our disciplines. Under these circumstances, collections are accompanied, at best, by basic information such as cultural affiliation and cultural region of origin (not necessarily origin of the object). A more specific context was not that important, with the exception of cases where a more localized provenience could increase significantly the social, monetary, or "historical" value of the object, and its uniqueness (e.g., a vessel from Pompeii or King Tut's tomb). However, these are generalized statements that hide what actually is a diverse degree of details in collection records. The research potential of each collection needs to be assessed individually. To show this, I present here three Caribbean collections from the predecessor of my home institution, the Museum of the American Indian (MAI), today the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). All three were the result of excavations by 'top' archaeologists of their times. The first is Jesse Walter Fewkes, who was an anthropologist on staff at the National Museum (today, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History), but who, at least between 1912 and 1913, also did some work for MAI. The second is Theodoor de Booy, who worked in the Caribbean from 1911 to 1918. The third, Mark Harrington, a North Americanist who was sent to investigate eastern Cuba in 1915 and 1919.

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[1] It is important to note that several agencies and countries have already developed procedures to address this issue. According to Dominique Bonnissent (personal communication): "France's research policy, which is applied throughout the national territory, including overseas territories such as the FWI, is to consume less archaeological heritage by encouraging researchers to use existing collections to solve their scientific problems, as far as possible, rather than to carry out new excavations. However, this policy does not apply in the case of preventive archaeology where sites are irreparably destroyed and must therefore be excavated before destruction."

Although the work of these three researchers overlaps in time and they knew each other, their field practices were considerably different. For example, the only one who may have excavated in a stratigraphic manner was Harrington, while Fewkes and de Booy excavated trenches with very little, if any, vertical or horizontal control. In terms of field notes, the most detailed ones are from Harrington and, to a lesser degree, Fewkes. De Booy's notes have yet to be found, but if his publications are a representative sample, his level of detail increased throughout his career (see Curet and Galban 2019). However, de Booy began working with specialists from other disciplines on his projects, for example to identify faunal remains or the chemical composition of water from caves. Nothing like this was done by either of his two colleagues, nor did it become standard practice until reletively recently. The level of selectivity of collections also varied between the three of them. Harrington seemed to be the less selective, meaning he collected many more types of objects. On the other hand, de Booy's selectivity changed throughout his career, while Fewkes seems to have concentrated on objects with diagnostic features. Finally, both Fewkes and Harrington had worked in North America (including the American Southwest) where ethnographic and archaeological research went hand-in-hand, giving them a stronger anthropological perspective than de Booy. All this is to say that expectations of museum collections should be assessed individually and not assumed that they have little or no contextual information. True, some collections may require long and tedious archival work, but not much more than dealing with all the administrative and logistic work associated with fieldwork.

Today, things are considerably different in museums where provenance and provenience (see Ostapkowicz and Hanna, Chapter 1 for the usage of these terms) are of utmost importance. Most museums with anthropological collections would not accept or purchase objects or collections without this information. Art museums are different, though. In addition, some museums have programs to obtain information on old collections retroactively. For example, NMAI has a program called Retro-accession (McMullen and Galban 2019), where a fulltime researcher and curators, are trying to reconstruct the biography of the objects/collections and, in some cases, provide contextual data of where the object was obtained originally. These may include date of acquisition, name of the collector or donor, provenience, and provenance of the object, how the collector obtained the objects, field notes kept in other institutions, letters that discuss the project if fieldwork was involved, reports and other documentation. In short, although much still needs to be done, procedures like these are providing information on collections and their histories and context that is useful for researchers (see Milosch and Pearce 2019 for other examples).

But, perhaps, more frustrating for a curator of archaeological collections, is the outdated view many colleagues have of museum collections. In addition to these old and poorly-documented collections, museums and other archaeological depositories also have collections obtained from more recent archaeological projects. Recent collections tend to be well documented and are accompanied by the original reports and field notes. This is where many of the materials obtained from salvage and academic projects end up. For the Caribbean, although some of these collections can be traced as far back as the mid-20th century, their numbers increase exponentially after the 1970s, when strong research programs were formed in the Greater Antilles and salvage archaeology became a legal obligation in places such as Puerto Rico (see the Appendix for development in other islands with the same effect). In these cases, some of these collections tend to include larger and more variable types of materials including samples of charcoal, soils, and faunal and botanical remains than previous projects.

Therefore, many collections in museums and depositories have the capacity to provide the information that can answer a plethora of research questions. It is time for archaeology to leave behind favoring fieldwork at the expense of museum work when the latter can provide the necessary information in a cheaper and faster way, and without further destroying the archaeological record/cultural heritage.

2/ Museums, collectors, descendants

Curatorship is entangled with the relationship museums have with collectors, art brokers or agents, as well as the descendants of the people whose material culture is represented in the collections. Although I started working in museums at a young age, my career as a curator began when I worked at a private, non-profit museum. At that time, the department of Anthropology had a formal group composed of people interested in Anthropology and Archaeology and included people from different backgrounds. However, many of them had their own private collections of antiquities. Sometimes the meetings of the group were held in a member’s house, which provided the opportunity for them to show their collections. Interestingly, one of my colleagues mentioned that many of the collections had a good number of fakes. When questioned if he had told them, he responded (and I am paraphrasing) “Nooo! If I do, they’ll complain or sue the broker or agent who sold it to them, who at the same time will sue the museum [and, perhaps, my colleague] for defamation.”

At first, this relationship was a little uncomfortable to me; “perhaps, a remnant of the old days,” I thought. But, was I naïve or, more importantly, wrong? These type of relationships still persist today and are very common, in great part because of what is at stake. Collectors tend also to be big supporters and sponsors of museums: donating funds, unique objects, and even whole collections. Moreover, they also bring other potential donors and supporters to the museum. I hate to admit it, but it is a necessary ‘evil’ in the environment we live. Even my institution, the Smithsonian Institution (NMAI), which is funded by the American government, still cannot operate at full capacity or, in some cases, survive at all without the support of private individuals.

Although museums and curators may need the relationships with collectors and others involved in the world of antiquity collections, this does not mean that we have to be unethical or ‘sell our souls.’ By this I mean, we should not dilute or completely drop our ethical values. This does not mean that it is acceptable to authenticate objects from dubious collections, much less to visit and praise them. This behavior damages and counters all the efforts of colleagues, organizations, and governments at local, national, and international level to stop the illegal traffic of antiquities. Even worse, it helps promote them. Doing that will put into question our integrity and ethics and, by association, those of the institution. Our names and those of our institutions, for example, can be used as proof of authentication and to increase the commercial value of the objects when trying to sell them. The potential effects can be more serious if the object was illegally obtained or fake. Not to mention that these situations can be complicated when considering that many objects are the culture heritage of contemporary people, especially the direct descendants of the culture that produced them.

However, I am not trying to imply that collectors are bad people. Many of them are people with genuine interest of the past, the people, and their cultures. Their support of museums is done from an honest interest and belief that what museums do is a good and a necessary service to society. The comments above are more a word of caution. We need to be conscious of the ethical limits of a relationship of this kind and of the consequences of being lax. However, a relationship with individual collectors can also be seen as an opportunity for educating them and bringing them to par with the standards of the trade and international accords. I do not think most collectors fully understand the ethical, humanitarian, and moral issues involved in collecting antiquities and the impact their practices have. I truly believe that many times this relationship can be turned around as a positive opportunity to educate them. However, what I am saying is that it is possible, not that it will be easy. It will require a lot of effort, tact, and creativity from museum representatives to develop sensible strategies to accomplish such a relationship. This, by the way, can be an approach that complements in some ways the suggestions presented by Yates (Chapter 11). Yes, doing this takes time and much work, but when considering what is at stake, it is worth it.

A final comment on collectors and the unethical and sometimes illegal practices of some curators and museums. When private collectors donate their collections, I believe that the curator and the museum have the ethical and legal responsibility of investigating and reconstructing the biography of the objects and determine, if possible, which were illegally obtained. They can report the pieces or, in the case they accept them, they should contact the country or indigenous descendants (see below) and begin the process of repatriation. Instead of doing this, more often than not, museums accept private collections from a stance of 'don't ask, don't tell.' We cannot continue staying quiet; to do so makes us accomplices. Even worse, because of our training and positions, we should be judged by higher standards and that makes us even guiltier.

To finalize this section, I want to refer to communities of descendants of the people who produced the ancient objects in our collections. This is also a complicated issue. But, we have to start taking them into consideration when we do fieldwork, in the case of archaeologists, and when we collect, in the case of museums. I know some colleagues have already begun using 'cultural sensitivity' in dealing with collections. But, I think that as a discipline, this is lacking in Caribbean archaeology. It is true that in many cases, it is difficult to determine who the actual descendants are — after all, it has been over 500 years of colonialism. To make things worse, in some islands, many people want to be Amerindian (as described for Puerto Rico below and in Oliver, Chapter 4). But, we have to start somewhere.

Puerto Rican

When the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was officially established in 1950s, the island needed to create its own national identity (Dávila 1997, 2001). For this the government relied on Ricardo Alegría, who invented a "national identity" that promulgated the idea of the merging (creolization) of the three races and cultural traditions: 'Indio','[2] African, and European. Of course, this is a fallacy because, even though creolization happened, it was not as uniform or homogenous throughout the island as the 'model' makes us believe, when even today racial categories such as white and black, which imply purity, are still used to describe or refer to people. Moreover, expressions such as European, 'Indio', and African homogenize and simplfy the multiplicity of cultural and biological groups that actually contributed to the formation of modern populations (see Oliver, Chapter 4.)

It is with the creation of this model that the 'Indio' and the pre-Columbian history of Puerto Rico became democratized and proselytized. Eventually, the term 'Indio' was replaced by the concept of 'Taíno' (which is another fallacy, see Curet 2014, 2015), and their life, culture, and society was included in school curricula and textbooks. Alegría (1950) himself wrote a children's book and created the *Centro Ceremonial de Caguana*, the first archaeological park of the island. The mechanisms to implant this model were so effective that today representations of the indigenous past are present all over the island in a multiplicity of media. These include many contemporary artistic media and crafts such as tattoos, murals, paintings, carvings (Oliver 1998; 2005; this volume), films (Feliciano-Santos 2011:51-ff.; Dávila 1997, 2001), commercial logos as well as festivals and other events dedicated to 'Indian' themes (e.g., *Festival Nacional Indígena de Jayuya* and *Festival en Las Indieras*, Maricao).

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[2] I am using the term *Indio* and Indian in quotations here to differentiate Amerindians from those actually from India. I use 'Indio' instead of other possible terms such as Amerindian because this is the term used by the model and most Puertorricans.

On the other hand, the African side is hardly celebrated or even mentioned (at least, not as much as the 'Indian'). A good example of this lack of interest or recognition was the first Afro-Puerto Rican museum, which was founded in the island in the 2000s and, according to colleagues, had to close its doors within five years because the lack of support.

The 'Indian' or 'Taíno' became the symbol of the pure Puerto Rican. What can be more Puerto Rican than the original 'Indians,' the first ones to fight colonialism? In an unconscious and perhaps conscious manner the message is that the 'abusive' Spanish and the 'inferiority' of the Africans are not appropriate models/symbols of *puertorriqueñidad*. This bias is also present in academia, where we emphasize more the 'Indian' and Spanish as subjects of study than the enslaved and their descendants. Plantation houses or sugar cane factories are excavated, rebuilt, or remodeled, but not the slave quarters. They are ignored. We academics may speak of the institution of slavery, but very few actually discuss the enslaved themselves, and the conditions of their lifeways, their cultural and social practices and legacy. And I have to confess that I am as guilty of this bias as anyone else.

This whole scenario has been complicated by studies in genetics, which introduced another variable into the already messy formula of identity and heritage. Initially, these studies showed that a large percentage of Puerto Ricans had indigenous mitochondrial DNA (Martinez-Cruzado 2013, Toro-Labrador et al. 2001), which led to people claiming indigenous descent. This happened even with individuals who had strong African phenotypes. As a matter of fact, a man who phenotypically looked of African descent, stood up in a conference and praised geneticists because he always thought his family ancestry came from maroons, but his mitochondrial DNA results were indigenous and now he 'knows' that he is Taíno. This is a clear example of how the supposed 'authority' of hard science often trumps oral history or, maybe, a family tradition.

With this discussion I am not denying the contributions of indigenous culture to Puerto Rican culture. We definitely have some traditions that have been passed down throughout the generations. However, in reality, many of them are not distributed equally throughout the island; some regions having more evidence of mixtures than others do. Other regions also have more African or Spanish influence. And, yet, these other influences are not represented in the same way in popular culture.

In terms of the cultural heritage, this means that its protection in the island gives preferential treatment to the pre-Columbian past. Even in school, more space is given in textbooks to the indigenous people, but little about slavery and even less about those enslaved and their contribution to Puerto Rican cultural traditions. So, being a pre-Columbian archaeologist and after years of emphasizing the indigenous ancestry discourse, I look back and feel that while trying to educate people about the history of the island, I have been an accomplice to giving preferential treatment to the Amerindians at the expense of many other cultural and biological contributors. Nevertheless, what weighs even heavier on my heart, is that it is not only me; this is the norm in Puerto Rico and, I suspect, it is happening to some degree in many other parts of the Caribbean. So, the question is not if we need to protect the cultural heritage, but whose cultural heritage are we preferentially defending? Or more to the point: whose heritage are we not protecting? But, even worse, by emphasizing one heritage over another, whose fictive legacy are we imposing on who?

Conclusions

I began this essay warning the reader of my conflicting thoughts. Some may think that many of these aspects may be the result of overthinking the topics, but a bigger and more dangerous strategy is to under-think it. More dangerous because we are academics and in this world, we have an aura that we know better and that our knowledge is supposed to be more accurate. Therefore, what we say, do, and publish can and does have an effect on how people see (and create in their minds) their past and their 'heritage.'

My original intention was to address many of the issues presented in the previous chapters including ethics, the destruction of the archaeological record, falsifications, illegal trade of antiquities, and culture heritage from the different identities in my life. I thought it would be easy since the topics seem straightforward and we all know we have to protect the cultural legacy of our ancestors, both biological and cultural. But it is clear that this was a naïve and simplistic perspective. While we agree with their protection, for some of us, in practice, our positions are lax and we tend to drop our defenses. From interacting with collectors in manners that are unethical, to conducting unnecessary excavations, to defending zealously the pre-Columbian past while crassly ignoring (or even denying) the contributions of the huge African (and other peoples) component, it is clear how our prejudices and biases show up in an active, albeit unconscious way. But, whether it is on purpose or not does not matter, the effects can be the same: it is still promoting illegal collections, destroying the archaeological record, and ignoring the protection of cultural heritage. Talking from a personal perspective, we all have the best of intentions and we agree with all the principles portrayed in this volume. However, many times our actions and responses to some situations betray us, and it is here where we need to work on bringing our biases to a conscious level and confronting them with our ethics.

It is difficult to propose some solutions to these problems, but it is clear that a multiple and diversified front is necessary. In many cases I believe that education is one of the key strategies (see, for example, Ostapkowicz and Hanna, Chapter 1; Oliver, Chapter 4); and here I am not referring to educating only the public and children. I am referring to educating the archaeologists, academics, museum curators, cultural workers, etc. For example, I think basic courses on these topics should include a lesson on ethics – a topic I do not believe is taught in, for example, graduate schools in archaeology. Nevertheless, it cannot be just a lesson, it has to go beyond education; it is about inculcating this as a way of life, keeping it at a conscious level all the time. Other strategies have to deal with changing the 'culture' in museums on how to handle relationships with collectors and the way we collect. A final example would be to promote among archaeology students the use of collections for research projects and perhaps even have a class to train them on collections-based research.

I began this paper thinking that it will be a straightforward essay. However, starting from the request from the lead editor to a personal 'soul searching' on how we do business (in museums and archaeology) as usual, the situation quickly became a surreal, multidimensional quagmire. A quagmire I cannot unravel, but one that I hope offers some guidance for those also wearing these various hats, now and in the future.

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