

## **Editorial: A ‘Reflection’ for these times, and a Special Issue on Southeast Asia**

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We are writing this in very early June of 2020. Despite a few still-experimental advances in treatment, the virus caused by COVID-19 continues to confound medical and public health professionals worldwide. Cures and vaccines are still out of reach, and strategies for safely mingling with other people – specifically, other bodies – are changing often, as individual groups respond to the pressures of potential contagion as well as those of economics and politics. People across the globe are enduring a difficult present and facing an uncertain future. Therefore, those involved in community archaeology and heritage are now making choices about how (or if) to continue work that, at its best, *relies* on interacting with other people.

We believe that some version of normal will return. In the meantime, the papers in this Special Issue (which were in press by the time ‘everything changed’) will provide excellent exemplars for collaborative best practice in Southeast Asia, where community archaeology and heritage practices have emerged relatively recently. The collection is guest-edited by Stephen Acabado, and entitled ‘Current Archaeological Practice in Southeast Asia: Collaboration, Engagement, and Community Involvement in Field Research in Southeast Asia.’ We welcome these excellent contributions, certain they will remind us all that *community archaeology and heritage will continue* when the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

Although unfortunately not surprising, one of the most striking statistics that has emerged from researching the pandemic in Europe and North America has been the disproportionate impact (in particular regarding mortality rate) COVID-19 is having on Black and other minority communities. This is a stark reminder of the persistent inequalities, entrenched in our

communities, which have come to the fore even more explosively with the shocking killing of George Floyd by local police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA on 25 May, 2020. We wish to join thousands of others, world-wide, in condemning this heinous act and in doing this, we also condemn the *countless* similar events which preceded it. We hope that the anger and pain that so many are now expressing will, finally, drive societies world-wide (but necessarily beginning in the USA) to enact the structural changes needed to stop the human damage caused by centuries of racial violence and oppression. Our hearts and our pages are open for you to tell us, and each other, how this tiny corner of human social practice can be part of this larger societal effort.

While we are under no illusions that community archaeology and heritage in and of itself can solve these deeply embedded inequalities and prejudices, we feel that working in particular with marginalized communities, which are generally underrepresented in heritage discourse, has its role to play in this process. In this context we would like to finish this editorial/introduction with one positive example of how community archaeology can continue, even now, with fresh strategies to meet current needs and by extension help facilitate greater access for children and young people from minority and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The following ‘Reflection,’ written by Dr. Alexandra Jones and Ms. Sydney Pickens, focuses on using archaeology to engage with children working from home, with both hands-on and virtual learning. Jones directs Archaeology in the Community (AITC), a non-profit group in the Washington, DC area (and serves on our Editorial Board), and Pickens is an archaeology educator with AITC. We know that others are also finding ways to continue community archaeology and heritage while coping with (and even embracing) current limitations caused by the pandemic, and we want to hear from you too. The Jones and Pickens ‘Reflection’ will follow this Editorial, and introduce Stephen Acabado’s long-planned collection from Southeast Asia.