Panel 2 Part 1

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

archaeology, archaeologists, people, museum, project, belize, archaeological, mutual aid, community, talking, funded, excavation, person, work, queer, institutions, power, hear, thinking, marginalized groups

SPEAKERS

Miller Power, Gail Boyle, Smiti Nathan, Megan McGrath, Bill Auchter, Phoenix Archer, Antonio Beardall

Phoenix Archer 00:00

Hello, everybody, and thank you for joining us for the second part of the UnArchaeology live conference, where we got our panelists here, eager, ready and waiting and actually going to the information about what panel two panelists are going to talk about. So, we will be talking about mutual aid, and DIY archaeology. How to collaborate and build in the ability for others to assist with your project and goals and how the reliance on large institutions within archaeology can be decentralized. Furthermore, often faced with little or no audit and high expectations. Many projects rely on getting the right people to volunteer. Is there a better way for people to interact and assist one another that creates collaborative spaces and outcomes? What would the blueprints be for this way of working together? And what steps can we take to begin to form a practice of partnership, informally, and in the spirit of aiding one another? Other ways to promote the informal creation of materials and methodologies that don't rely on the rubber stamp of an institution? Well, there we are. We've got more information on what we're going to be talking about in our panel two. So, as I said, my name is Phoenix Archer, I'm the facilitator for this panel. My pronouns are she and they, I am wearing a light - I forgot my color there - a light blue headband and braided hair. And my cardigan is dark green and light gray. I'll pass over to Bill to introduce. Oh, you're on mute Bill.

Bill Auchter 01:45

Right from the beginning. Always a professional. Hi, my name is Bill Auchter. My pronouns are he and him. I am I guess, by the government, a Caucasian of Hispanic descent. I am a man with glasses and an olive t-shirt and wearing an olive t-shirt. That, guess, that's the best for my descriptive at the moment. And I guess you do you want me to pass it on or -

Phoenix Archer 02:19

Yeah, you could pass it on, yeah.

Bill Auchter 02:20

Okay. I guess, Antonio next.

Antonio Beardall 02:25
Hello, everyone. My name is Antonio Beardall he him I'm wearing a red shirt though you can't really see it. It's not fully 8 am here in Belize yet and I woke up not too long ago. So, I'm in a dark room to try and keep you know, some Saturday but yeah, so you can't really see much, but good morning, and I'm happy to be here. And I guess let's go with Gail.

Gail Boyle 02:55
Hi, my name is Gail Boyle. I'm a white woman. I'm she/her. My hair is silver. I'm wearing a pair of glasses today and very long, blue dangly earrings and I am talking to you from Bristol in the UK. Pass it on to Megan?

Megan McGrath 03:17
Hi, I'm Megan McGrath. My pronouns are she/her. I'm a white woman with pink hair. And I'm wearing a yellow jumper today. I'll pass it on to Smiti.

Smiti Nathan 03:31
Thank you. Hi, I'm Smiti. My pronouns are she/her. I'm a woman of South Asian descent with long hair wearing a black shirt today and I'm sitting in a children's room. I will pass it on to Miller.

Miller Power 03:46
Hi, I'm Miller. I am a white man with short blue hair wearing black headphones and a shirt and waistcoat. Pronouns are he/they.

Phoenix Archer 03:58
Wonderful. Thank you all for introducing yourselves. Hope you're all raring to go and excited for our topic. So, DIY archaeology and mutual aid. Let's explore that. What was your experiences everybody? Go dive in!

Gail Boyle 04:18
I think I'd like to get a sense from everybody else as to how we're defining large institutions. I come from a museum background. And clearly, we have very large museums with very large budgets, but equally we have, you know, little one room local community museums that have next to no money whatsoever. So, are we defining institutions by size, by number of people, access to money, or the way that they operate?

Miller Power 04:49
I think access to money is a good way to define it. Because obviously, if you're like the British Museum, or any of those nationally funded Museums, that's obviously an institution. If it's a University Museum, again, obviously very well-funded. But yeah, if it's - if it's your little local museum, that's one room, I used to work at the Colman's Mustard Museum, which was one room that was also a shop. I think we can agree that that's - that's - that's less, but they're obviously still, I think all museums, if you're calling it a museum, you are being held in by this sort of definition of the museum, even if you're not like a huge institution, because the big people, really, the big museums are putting those labels on - on the smaller museums, if that makes sense.

Bill Auchter 05:35

I just look at it as one through like power relations, especially if we're talking about trying to accomplish projects. If we're trying to operate an archaeological outreach project or an archaeological project, what if there's an institution involved, and that institution has power over that project? It doesn't matter if it's a one room Museum, or the British Museum, or the Smithsonian Institute, they're going, they have rights, say so and veto power. So that's where I sort of see it, it's more about the power than the money. Um, it's always who gets to make the last call. And it's typically it's the one paying the bill. But that's where I see it.

Antonio Beardall 06:24

Here in Belize, I guess we do it a bit differently. We have an Institute of Archaeology, that's where I work. But we don't really do the actual excavations, we have many projects that come into Belize to do field work as a means to to train their students. So, we govern, essentially, how they get set up. We give them the licensing that everything they need and then the projects themselves are the ones that have their own questions, and I guess, their own funds, and they decide who gets to work with them or not.

Gail Boyle 07:10

I think what you had to say about power was really interesting Bill, because it is about power. And it's about the sharing of that responsibility or that power, that enables more people to be involved with projects. So, people who have knowledge, skills and understanding hold power, irrespective of whether they have any funding to be able to deliver a project. And, you know, it's interesting, like on the scale of "Is it a small one-man band Museum", I work for a large regional museum. It's the biggest regional museum service in the southwest of England. But I have actually very little money in order to be able to do anything, but I do hold a lot of power, in terms of enabling other people to be involved. And, also, the ability to give up that power. Because that's really what this is about. It's about us enabling people to participate on a level that they choose to participate in a way that they want to. So, from my perspective, I mentioned this before, that archaeology is not just about archaeology, it's about understanding what people want to get from it, and how to enable that. And sometimes that will be knowledge making, it will be strictly archaeological. And sometimes it won't, it will be about health and wellbeing it will be about being part of a community project that brings people together in terms of their identity. So, I do personally believe that it is to do with power more than anything else, and the giving up of power.

Smiti Nathan 08:44

And to build off of Gail's point, and Bill's and everyone else's here. And one thing that comes to mind when I was thinking of this panel is access. So, in the countries I work in you, in order to get a permit to work in that country, you might need to have an institutional affiliation, in addition to funding. So, when I was thinking of this problem, and this challenge that we're going to be discussing today, I was thinking what sort of like structural mechanisms, of course, like hold access to the money, but also that power as well. So that in kind of ideating around possible solutions or discussion like that issue of access is definitely there as well.

Megan McGrath 09:31

Just thinking and the others have mentioned, you know, museums being institutes and stuff, but I don't know about other countries, but in Ireland, a lot of our excavations are conducted by private companies, because archaeology has been found on the land and they don't care at all for the archaeology. They don't want you to be there. They're there because, you're there because it's the law and you know, you have to be kind of thing they could care less what you find. They just want you to get out of there as soon as possible. And then the only other properly funded excavations really are ones funded by universities as well, which also holds that whole. You know, they've got there, they're not maybe as you know, they have maybe more interest or more academic integrity than some other institutions may have. But they still have, you know, narrative to fit or, you know, they still have power or money or whatever other things we've been discussing, they have to kind of narrow down sort of thing.

Miller Power 10:49

Yeah, and I think we've definitely had a growing sort of tradition of community funded archaeology projects. So, I've worked on the Caistor Roman Project, which is, it's just Heritage Lottery funded and organized by the community, and then they get the experts in to like, a tell them what to do and stuff. But it's still really interesting, because they're - what they're expecting is what we sort of taught them to expect. Like in school or on telly and stuff they want to know about, like the generals, and the strong men and the people on the horses. And this is the sword and is this horse, like, we have, like, the remains of a horse like this is a battle horse, because that's sort of what we've taught people the Romans are about and every period because of sort of our foundation on, I'm going to talk about colonialism like a load so sorry, foundation on colonialism, as like a discipline, we - it trickles down to the people who aren't even if we think they're like, sort of unbiased by our biases, they are because we're teaching them to people. So even though these, there are like lots of excavations that are run exclusively by non-archaeologists, with just the help of archaeologists they're still, or even without the help, they're still looking for things that we've taught them to look for. Does that make sense?

Bill Auchter 12:09

Yeah, no, uh, there's a lot of community archaeology. And so, it goes for all things from public dig days, where it's say an ongoing, I'm thinking now down to James Madison house, Montpelier in Virginia, where they have a nice foundation, and they have professional archaeologists working all year round, but they are constantly having public days. And they will constantly have workshops, to teach the public, the interaction there on the ground with them, and so forth, to groups like Archaeology in the Community based out of Washington, DC, where it's trying to get into classrooms and teach children from there. The Montpelier that's like a foundational thing that's like a old presidential house, they got foundation money, Archaeology in the Community more of a, they need to fundraise every year just to get every penny to put materials in their hands to get into schools. So, it kind of goes on there. But like, we were, I was originally coming here thinking we were gonna talk a lot about funding, but kind of the first panel, they talked about funding. So, I was thinking after the last we did a pre panel before we -this is how the sausage is made-. Before we did this talk today. And since then, I looked over my my Twitter's feed, and over, you know, who I read, and so forth, I realize I have a large collection of archaeologists from a wide variety of fields, and why aren't we, you know, collectively utilizing this communication tools, we have social media, where we archaeologists are talking amongst ourselves, so that when we got a project in hand, and you have a question, the expert's a tweet away. So, you

know, using those tools to sort of bypass some of those institutional tools as someone who spends a lot of time in commercial archaeology. One of the downsides is that I am locked out of the academic journal, and archaeo- and article window, so you know, all these cool, the books are way too expensive, and the articles are all behind paywalls. So, I have no access to that information. So, you know, and you know, it's like, well, what do I need it for? Well, you know, commercial archaeology is at least in the United States is the most archaeology being done in the country. There is more archaeology being done for commercial purposes than anything else combined. And they're there, they are the first people to look at and interpret these sites. And they're doing it with incomplete information. But that's... I ran off to a tangent. But the idea of just you know, we need money. But I think there's also an intellectual capital. We could also use. Capital's the wrong word try to flatten everything down.

Gail Boyle 15:24
And this is where the collaborative partnerships between the different aspects of those that the deliver archeology comes into play. So, for example, I've always described myself as a museum archaeologist. First and foremost, my entire career has been based within museums connecting people with archaeological material that people have found, and the way that we communicate the stories, the information, the activities, and things like that. And I kind of feel that we're a piggy in the middle in between academia, and the commercial world, in that sense, in that, we need to understand everything that comes out of the ground, from the commercial world. But we also need to understand what academia is starting to do in terms of researching, and new information. And we have to synthesize that for a public audience. And just going back to something that Megan was saying, in, in certainly in England, Scotland and Wales, the vast majority of archaeology in practice is as a result of the developer funded program, where sites are dug in advance of development, and as museums, generally, still, you are collecting that material and is still generally the ones who have the most access to it, ordinary members of the public, who won't, won't understand how to read a site report and probably aren't even interested in reading the site report. And it's how we distill that, but also how we encourage them to participate. So, what can we do? If we are middle people between academia and commercial world and the public? What can we do to make sure that all of those people come together and benefit from the process? In the long run, that's what we're doing it for. We're doing it for people. And we're doing it for the archaeological record. And we need to mesh the two things together.

Antonio Beardall 17:13
I like what you just said, Gail, one of the things that I do with Belize is I'm very active in education. I just got back to Belize, this week, from Arizona, where I did my graduate. And I looked at archaeology in Belize, and how the public benefits from what is being done in terms of outreach in terms of education. And there is a huge gap, because a lot of these projects that come down from the US come to Belize do the work. And they have to give the institute a report of the work that they've done. And then eventually they go off, and then they publish in so many journals. But these articles, you know, you have to pay for them. And they can be expensive. And so, the people of Belize don't really have access. But we also have every single year, the Belize archaeology symposium where all the projects come together in one venue and talk about their research. But once again, what what I found out is that a lot of these presentations are very jargon heavy. They're too technical, for the layperson to understand. So, I recommended that the projects that come here have to realize who their audience is. The audience is not other archaeologists in the audience. It's the people of this country. It's their history

that they're excavating, they need to know in, in layman's terms, what is being done, what they have found out, because a lot of them come to the symposium, but it goes over their heads and they're completely lost. One of - and a lot of these projects also come here and not many of them are interacting with the public. They go off to the site, they're closed off. They have their students; they hire a couple of locals to work with them. But yes, that's the extent. And so, what I'm seeing is that us as the Institute, we really have to revamp the conditions for working in our country, that as an archaeological project, you know, public education needs to be a major focus of what you do. You can't just come for a month or two, dig, give a report and leave. You need to engage with the communities nearby and tell them this is what we're doing. This is why it's important. And if you want to publish a scientific article fine, but also publish something in a way that is easy for everyone else to digest. So, it's not just the institute that has to rework what they do, but the projects coming in, have to retool how they engage with the public and make public education a very top priority.

Miller Power 19:58
Yeah, and I certainly agree with- Obviously, we need to change the way we're like disseminating information to make it more accessible. I'm hearing a lot of like, Bill and Gail, and you Antonio talking about, we need to educate them, but and do better us engaging with the public. But I think we need to let the public do they want to do, I think we've had too much of an influence, we're coming from an academic background, we're coming with a big bias. And like, as they were saying, in the previous panel, it's really important to get all these different perspectives that aren't sort of, I don't say tainted, but I kind of do - tainted by like the academic institution, they obviously they are, as I was saying before, they are tainted because we've- we've done it through education before. But I don't think we need to think of it as an equal exchange, they were talking about power dy - power dynamics. In the last panel, we really don't want it to be like us teaching them, or we're being really helpful and helping them we want if we're going to, like provide them with skills. It's an equal exchange with providing us with that sort of ideas of knowledge and helping we're helping them do a thing rather than just we're teaching them does that. I think that makes sense. Hopefully.

Bill Auchter 21:09
Yeah.

Gail Boyle 21:11
I would totally agree, because I'm not about teaching people or educating people, I'm about enabling people to do things that they want to do, not necessarily what I want them to do, or what or for me to expect that there are particular outcomes. You know, just going back to what Antonio was saying, just there about, you know, you have to differentiate what you're doing in order to be able to engage with as many people as possible, and you have to embrace the outcomes that you perhaps weren't expecting. And there are outcomes that other people will expect that you won't even have thought of, you know, I'm constantly amazed by some of the things that that happen as a result of the projects that we do. And, um, and I think, you know, we've just published so the Society for Museum Archaeology in the UK has just published 14 case studies, which are called Communicating Archaeology. And one of those projects in particular that I'm thinking about is one that was run by the Djokovic, the York Yorkshire archaeological trust yet, which is called Your Dig, which invited people to come and reinterpret material and present material from their perspective. And that was looking at old archives that were in

museums, and creating something, but it was about doing it together. And it wasn't about prescribing what was going to happen.

Antonio Beardall 22:38
You bring about, you both bring up a very good point. And one of the things that also found out in my research is that sometimes we think that because we are the experts in our field, that people will want to listen to what we have to say. So, we have gone into, into schools, and you know, and all these places, and we tell them what it is we think they want to hear and we don't ask them. What are your interests? What is it that you want to know? What are your questions, so that we can work around what it is that you want to know. For example, if we go into a place that does farming, and we go and talk about the science, and architecture of the Maya, for example, they don't care. But if you talk about ancient Maya farming techniques, and all of a sudden it's like, 'Okay, I understand this, and here's why'. And you start to have a dialogue. And so now, once again, if we also have to retool how we engage with people, and what we view as educational, and we can't just think because we know what we know, that they also want to know what we know. We have, you know, it's about working with them. So, you're right, we have to teach them they have to teach us it's about learning from each other.

Phoenix Archer 24:02
Thank you. Megan, Smiti, you know, let me know what your experience is when it comes to dealing with communities and educating them and especially funding. How do you kind of balance what you need to do for your funders, but also to educate the communities you work with? And if you haven't had experience about what would your dream experiences be?

Megan McGrath 24:22
So, I don't have any experience really, with working uh in archaeology in the field or anything like that. But I do remember when we're talking about like, sort of collaboration of information between archaeologists and the public. I remember a story a professor once told me about um they were on site somewhere, and there was all this iconography, that they were trying to figure out what it could have meant to the people at the time, and they just couldn't understand what it was, what it signified anything like that. And eventually, the archaeologists that were working at this site, they were also Living with people who lived next to the site, they were sort of like, being housed by them and stuff. And at one point, one of their professors was watching children drawing. And he from that he figured out what the iconography meant, because he's used to, when children draw a picture of a house, they'll draw like, you know, the box with the triangle roof and the windows. But the children of this community drew houses from like the top down, like the layout of the house. And that's what the iconography was, it was the layout of a house in the same way. So, it was something that he wouldn't have thought of at all, because that's just not how, you know, they do things sort of thing. But obviously, the people of this community immediately recognized what it was because, you know, they do things a lot differently. So, I think it is really like a collaborative effort. That, and I think it was Antonio said that, you know, presenting things to the public -or maybe it was Gail - presenting things to the public, and being like, what do you see, these are our interpretations. But what do you interpret from this stuff, because these are like your ancestors, this is your history. So maybe your way of viewing things, is more accurate to you know, their way of viewing things than our way of viewing it is.

Smiti Nathan 26:26

Thanks for that Megan. I have a little experience with this, mainly from my doctoral research, I did it in Oman, and a big part of the project, my dissertation project was doing what's called ethno-archaeology, which is essentially ethnography for archaeologists. And there's, you know, there's a whole theoretical body there, happy to talk about it, if anyone's interested. But the big part of that, for me was co-creating along with a community members who were interested in, you know, either becoming archaeologists, or they worked in some way with heritage, and especially women, for me, because in Oman, access to opportunities, it can be very gendered sometimes. So, I felt that as like a person who identifies as a woman, and as an archaeologist, this is an opportunity to engage with women in a way that could not just be, you know, training and maybe skills that they might not have, but also that mutual co creation process of thinking about research questions, asking questions that they were interested in, potentially also the community we're interested in. And as well as like my own research interests. So, I'm not saying this is like the best model. But for me, going in and doing any type of archaeological work, trust building is like was super important, and being very transparent to the best of your ability, like, you know, the knowledge that you're either uncovering or asking for what's going to happen with that. Um, so then, like moving forward and thinking about disseminating information to the public and educating others. For me, you know, I'm thinking of like, certain and discrete groups. So, when we're talking about like, educating community members, for me, I'm like, Well, wait first, like, who are the community members that I'm working alongside with and like co creating with who are essentially like the team members that are interested in archaeology, like want to gain skills and have skills to offer as well. And then who are the people that are part of the community that might not, you know, be involved in the day to day but wants to know, what's going on in their community and have like, you know, an interest and then, and then I think of like, okay, who were like stakeholders or other people involved outside of that kind of those kind of groups, and, of course, tailoring any materials and dissemination through that, but I can't say I personally have a concrete, perfect blueprint processes of how that works. But those underlying values for me are like trust, and co creation and transparency.

Bill Auchter 29:16

Yeah, no, I like what Smiti is saying there and it's because I've always pictured, like, the idea of UnArchaeology being sort of a non-institutional non-University backed project, meaning like a community project, where a community comes to an archaeologist and says, "Hey, we're interested in doing something" and then you begin to define the community, the stakeholders, and so forth. Then you have to do the little things like, uh, you know, depending on your jurisdiction, is it even legal for you to conduct a excavation Of course, excavation is the last thing you want to do. You have the history, you got the property checks, you gotta do all those sorts of, you know, the hard work before you even get to the excavation. But you're constantly in partnership, it should be an even with the with us talking about mutual aid is making me think of like, you know, flat hierarchies. So that there is co-equal communication, but no one above others, except maybe the community but the - you looking at, you know, where how your other resources are going to be through your community members through your network of other archaeologists, you know, through... you're tapping into your network of people and institutions. Just because you don't want to use institutions doesn't mean you can't use the people in those institutions. They are still a very valuable resource for you, when you're trying to work things over. You know, materials can be borrowed from other companies, and so forth. If your organization has a advocational archaeology group, that's a group to tap into as both human resource, logistical

resources. They may know the resources of that particular area well. So, in some ways, your most important job as an archaeologist is to be like a project manager or something like that. But let everybody shine the best they can. showing off their - their best now includes yourself, of course. But you know, you're just orchestrating everybody to be their best selves on this project. And I'll leave it there for that one. Later on, we could talk about when that can get a little hairy. But I think that's a good place to start.

Phoenix Archer 32:02
Thank you, Bill for that. And just moving away from the collaborative process, but bearing in mind, how do we deal with issues such as mutual aid. How would that be useful when it comes to the collaborative process? And how will we go about getting mutual aid as well? Let's take that to the floor? Has anybody worked with any mutual aid project at all in their in their countries and chosen fields?

Miller Power 32:35
I mean, I've worked on mutual aid, not in the archaeological sense. I also have worked with community archaeology projects. But I don't know if I'd call them mutual aid. I don't know if I have the wrong understanding of mutual aid within archaeology, because to me, it means, the groups I've been involved in, it's about having a base of like a non-hierarchical base of helpers. All like, we have like a form where people can put in requests, and then we just go out and do the things for the people. So, I don't know how that would. I don't know how mutual aid works in archaeology. But that's what it means. To me. As an activist.

Phoenix Archer 33:21
That's good to experience for some people, I've got a variety of definitions of mutual aid when it comes to archaeology. It's the collaborative process of the different groups coming together to raise funds to host and produce an archaeological project. So, it can be in terms of, I don't know if you've heard of the Black Trowel Collective, where they help on certain projects, usually smaller projects, or trips or pools for archaeological projects, things like that. So, there are some groups that do that out there. And if you're not familiar with them, has anybody got any dreams of ideas of what they would love to kind of fund and what their dream kind of archaeological projects are? If it's mutual aid funded that'd be awesome, even better.

Miller Power 34:15
Well, I'll go. So obviously, I as I said, previously, I've been involved in community projects that have been like, not like crowdfunded, but like community organized and the community has brought together the funds in whatever way they could manage. But I would love to see more of like, groups of people who aren't archaeologists having ideas and not feeling like they need to go to a professional to like start off that idea. So, for example, I went to the- oh I can't recall what it was called. It was like a queer museum conference a couple of years ago. And from it- I just really- there was lots of different like - a museum came to like queer people, and were like, we want to do like this exhibition, and they were all really cool. Because like queer people had a lot of influence on it, the non-archaeologist. But it'd be really cool - like from that I was, like, I'd love to just like create an exhibition where all the queer people in - I live in Durham - in Durham, like all lots of different queer people got together like one outfit, and just put it in an exhibition. But I have a complete barrier, even though I'm technically an archaeologist,

but especially if we look at me as just, like, a random person, I have no way of doing that. How on earth would I do that? I could try and fund it. But I'd need I'd need the connections. But I think that's kind of the sad thing about this. We've- we've had a very "us and them" narrative so far in this discussion. And that kind of makes me sad, because why aren't the "us" broad enough to not need to describe it as "us and them"? I think I made it a tweet. During the other panel, I said, we're not who were excavating, because that was a quote, but why not? Why aren't archaeologists all kinds of people were missing trans, disabled, people of color, from the archaeological record, because they're not the people who are getting to excavate and analyze and have a say, and obviously, I am a queer person, I am a disabled person. So, I am an archaeologist, but I still am very marginalized within the archaeological sphere to the point where I can't enact these ideas that I have. And they'll probably never come to fruition because really, I have about as much as influence as like any old person on the street who has a sort of idea. I don't know really where I'm going at this point. I'd had a bit of a rant, but there you go.

Gail Boyle 36:33
So, I just like to pick up on that, Miller, in terms of what are the barriers that you perceive to come into talking to somebody like me in a museum say, 'Hey, I've got this idea. Can you help me?' What you know, are you able to point me you know, kind of like, what, what is the initial barrier? Is it because you think that we would say no?

Miller Power 36:52
Yeah, so there's - I've written about this a bit. There's a big distrust, especially in the queer community, but also in disabled and in, like, obviously, I can't speak on the behalf of people of colour. But there's something I've seen people of colour talk about as well. We have a big distrust of institutional heritage/museum people, they often misrepresent - misrepresent us. There's a - there's a big meme, if you know about memes that's - that goes around queer communities that some archeologist digs us up, and they see that we've got a big sign, and it says, "I'm a big gay, I'm sleeping with my boyfriend, this is my boyfriend, we're very together." And then they archaeologist is like, "They must have just been friends. Because that - that - they can't have been - no - right, they must have just been friends." And that's how they present it. And there's so many of these memes, I've got loads in my paper, I can maybe bring them up or link them to them - link to them later. But queer people, do not - [do] have a distrust of people in museums. And marginalized people have a distrust of people in museums because museums represent a thing that has ignored us. And colonialism. And the thing that's erased us and written by, like, old, white people. And, you know, yeah, so I wouldn't, even as an archaeologist, I feel slightly uncomfortable going to someone who just works at museum because I, they would want to put their box on my weirdness, if that makes sense. Like, it's going to, it's going to end up being put in a straight cis, understandable box, when, really, I want to expand and make it understandable for people who are like me, I don't really care if how understandable it is to -

Gail Boyle 38:32
[interrupting] I find that quite, quite hard thing for me to listen to, in the sense that I don't see that in my organization, because I know that we've been really working hard not to be that kind of organisation, and to enable people, and I think, therefore we're not doing it's not necessarily just my own organisation, but - but generally, then we're not doing enough, enough of a job to enable people to feel comfortable to come to us like that. And, and, and to be free enough to let them present the way that

they present. You know, I did a whole project, years ago, we started doing a project, which was about multiple perspectives and understanding which voices want to be represented or how we could enable people to put their voice into the museum. So, we did a whole big, kind of like public engagement project, we asked them about particular things, whose voice did you want to hear? Who is the person who's going to be prioritized in all of this? What would you like to see? And that's what happened. So, we do present multiple perspectives. And as far as M-Shed is concerned, which is the museum I was involved with the putting together or is 10 years old this year. But it's all predicated on the fact that we all have different perspectives. It's people focused and it's story lead, it's based on audiences. We do a lot of work with different types of communities to enable them to feel comfortable, and for them to take control of things. Um I'm not saying that we are completely different to every other museum, but I do realize that there are some, which you might describe as traditional. But it's almost kind of like, we're not all like that.

Miller Power 40:22
Yeah, I get what you're saying, obviously, I really respect the work you've done to like outreach to people, I'm sure that's really good work in the community. But ultimately, I don't know, as a marginalized person, we see the museum and it's, regardless of it's like a more, you know, we're very, like, very impressed when it's like a more, there's more dialogue. But ultimately, it's still sort of like this thing, this box that we've got to get into to be in the thing. And it's hard to, like, break past that. I understand, like, because you can do all of this work. And it's really great. But it's so difficult to sort of get past this barrier for us of this is a safe place now. Because it's not guaranteed, even if you seem very welcoming, and understanding, ultimately, we have to do something that you approve of, or like an even if you're like really open to approval anything, we don't know that. Does that kind of make sense? Like, we're not like, we're naturally defensive, because the world has made us like that.

Bill Auchter 41:23
Yeah, and to - this may not be a solution to what you're talking about, but two problems of sort of a barrier of entries. Because there's a lot of barriers of entries all over the place in archaeology, one of the first things to accept in archaeology is that we are the bad guys of history, we have contributed to the you know, colonization, and in some cases, genocide, or at least cultural genocide of peoples around the world. So, when you're trying to try to find your way, some of the normal institutions aren't interested in hearing those things. After saying that, my example is very frivolous. I was into the idea, I'm reading about archaeogaming from people like Megan Dennis, the Valve Collective and with being locked down, I wanted to explore the idea of excavation of gaming. In my ideas was tabletop gaming. Because in some ways excavation I read too much Foucault, excavation can be a process of the mind, and a process of language and so forth. There's no place for that. So, I set up a YouTube channel so that I could do things like that. And it's not just me, there's much better YouTube channels out there. Umm ArcheoDuck, before she was on the Great British Dig. We can't see it here in the States. She has her own YouTube channel, on like Instagram and tik tok. Amelia the Archaeologist is does great outreach for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing archaeologists. She's a cultural service archaeologist doing work in the Great Basin, hard power line work being a deaf archaeologist that's she's hardcore. That's dangerous, dangerous on the best days and being deaf makes it that much harder. So, there's these there are these individual archaeologists making their own online spaces to - to sort of bypass, like, okay, you don't want to talk about what I'm talking about? Fine. I'm making my blog. I'm making my

YouTube channel. I'm making my content. I am bypassing you. I am making my podcast. So, let's not get started in the podcast world, and how that's grown over the past few years with archaeology-based podcasts. You know, the Archaeology Podcast Network and all the other ones. So, there are alternatives. Are they easy? No. Are - is there a good chance of failure? Yes. Absolutely. Yes, I have failed four or five times so far, on my online endeavors, but I still try them. And I'm still trying to persevere and try to find - find different methods. Early days of the pandemic I was trying to do an interview show with other archaeologists trying to find out how, you know, the pandemic was affecting their lives mostly it was like, PhD students panicking over the fact that there were defending and all their materials locked up at the university that he couldn't get to. But yeah, um, I just I'm a strong advocate of looking for the alternative. And that's one of the reasons I want to be on this panel is that, you know, we you hear the people yelling and screaming about the Benin bronzes, yet the British Museum still has them. The marbles are still there, even though there's a huge outcry for that. So sometimes you got to go other places to get your voice heard.

Phoenix Archer 45:26
Thank you for that Bill. You know, it was it was something that Gail touched on earlier on with perceived barriers, I think it's quite interesting as a person who is visually a black person and working in the heritage sector, the colonial aspects that you have touched on as well, but colonial things, you know, the kind of the claiming of the wounds and the kind of the healing wound, sometimes it goes deeper than just having a call out. And sometimes it goes more than that. Sometimes it's a case of actually going into the communities directly and asking them more than just the simple what you want to hear, actually looking at the hurt and pain and the trauma when it comes to the statue when it comes to the you know, the obvious slavery related painting and portraits, I think you need to actually get used to the uncomfortable of hearing things, you're not used to and putting those your reports. And going back to funders and saying, Hey, I'm not happy with these community members. And I would like to hear from Smiti and maybe they'll ask them what it's like in their hometowns in their own countries, when it comes to dealing them or BIPOC community members and how they discuss that when it comes to archaeology.

Smiti Nathan 46:34
Sure, I can jump in here and I want to be very like transparent about like, my current situation, and because it's informing my perspective, so I, you know, I did the PhD in archaeology, I did a postdoc. And now I do work at a large university, but not in a faculty role, I am in a staff role, but because of my affiliation with the university, I do have privileged access, I can, you know, I can access like journal articles. Applying for grants, that's a sticky situation, but I do recognize, like, my privilege there. Um, but I will say in being part of an institution, yeah, certain things are definitely easier. But being a person of visibly South Asian descent, not really, you know, a typical person in the places that I work in, I'll just leave it at that. But I will say in terms of like, building like trust, something that Miller said about feeling safe. And safety is like, so key. And I think I can only speak for the, you know, the projects that I work on, I think there needs to be a lot more time spent on that aspect, energy spent on that aspect. So, and again, I, I work in a staff position. So, when I'm thinking of like, "Okay, what are the tangible outcomes, like, I want to see in order to feel safe?" Well, I want minoritized groups at the table, and not just one person, you know, I want multiple people of diverse perspectives, because I personally don't want to be tokenized like, and so that's like, one aspect of like, trust building, I don't want, you know, I want - I

rather have solutions proposed to me, in addition to asking me what I want, I'm like, I don't know always like what I like, I just know, I don't feel safe, and I'm frustrated, and I'm tired. So, I think an ongoing conversation, and I've seen other groups in institutions do it. But I know, especially in our country in the US with like the civil rights movement that really are the latest civil rights movement that has been very visible. Starting last summer, you know, there are a lot of statements cut out and I'm like, Great, that's the first step. But like, what about accountability? You know, and accountability is tricky, if you don't really know what to do. And that's an ongoing process. So again, I don't have like complete solutions to that. But I just know, what I have been reflecting on on what makes me feel safe as like a minoritised group in this field.

Phoenix Archer 49:25
Megan what's it like over in Ireland? How does archaeology kind of work with different marginalized groups to have a more collaborative process?

Megan McGrath 49:34
Um to tell you the truth, I don't really know because no one that I went to university with or at least that I, you know, was in my group at university was from a marginalized group. We were all white women or men, majority women. And so, you know, we don't really you know, we can't speak for anyone else, obviously, we they're not our experiences. I'm sure there were other people possibly in other years, you know, that were of marginalized groups, but there weren't any in mine, which may also speak to an issue that, you know, either they didn't feel comfortable or they weren't interested. I'm not sure why there wasn't people of any marginalized groups in my year at university. But, you know, that might be something that the university should look into as to why maybe question why. If it's just a case of nobody was interested that year, then obviously, nothing you can do about that. But if there's some other reason why people of marginalized groups weren't taking archaeology or classics, or history, you know, then that should be looked into? Because obviously, you know, it's everyone's history, and it should be represented by everyone.

Miller Power 51:00
Yeah, I mean, I think often the - to me, the answer for why is it's being run by someone who is nothing like me, like, even if you're trying to be as open and inviting and, like, accessible as possible. Ultimately, if I'm a weird non-binary queer person that lots of cis, people do not understand, I don't want to be in a project that is run by a cis person who is like, not, like, it's scary, it's scary. Like, I stepped back from so many projects since I came out as a trans person, because I don't want to be in a space where it's going to be I have to explain myself constantly and try and explain my perspective constantly. So, I just avoid it. And I'm sure it's the same for- as a disabled person, it's just like, not worth it to explain my access needs- as I'm sure people of color probably also share this issue of, they don't want to be in a space where they might potentially be questioned and not understood. And know, like, I feel like they have to tone police themselves and stuff like that. So, I think that- that I think we don't feel welcome. And people don't feel welcome, because it's not being run by someone who is them, it's being run by an archaeologist and archaeologists are almost always sort of white people, cis white people, or, you know, people who have a lot of privilege and power who struggle to relate to. Yeah -

Antonio Beardall 52:38

Yeah. Just going off that. I was going to say that one of the things that we need to work on in Belize is trying to take away that notion that archeology is and is done by and is for white people, because there is that stigma that still lingers in, in Belize. because traditionally, it has been white people who have come in and done the archaeology and done the reports, who have done the looting, and taken back artifacts to the British Museum. And for a long time, archaeology was not even a subject that was offered in any of the schools here, which is kind of stupid, because we have all the resources, we have projects coming here, but we're not teaching it to our own people. Local people get hired to work as, as assistants, they get to be to lug buckets and move rocks, but they don't get to decide the questions or they don't get to interpret, they don't get to present the work, they are not in on the conversation. So that is something that we are trying to change. It's gonna, I guess, it's not gonna happen overnight. But we're starting. There's a project I work with, and I work only with, with local, local youth, from the high schools and even from as young as if you're seven years old, and you want to come and dig. I will, you know, you can come and dig. I'm there just to make sure that you don't destroy anything. But you get to do all the work. You get to write the cards. And then when you find something, you know, we'll stop and discuss what do you think this is and why and we'll talk and that is something that I've been doing for years. And so, my dream project is a project that is run by local people. They're done by local people, they write the notes, they do the drawings. And there's already a small mound in the center of a town not far from here, that we're thinking this would make a great project for the people of that town. It's there. They would love to come and see what's going on and to see their own people working on a project helps to break it down that no, this is not just for white people, it's for everyone. It's for me as well. Because even when they see people presenting on archaeology once again, it's white people, and they see that as Oh, I'm not them. So, archaeology for me is untouchable. So, you know, we might not have, as far as we know, some of the more serious issues in terms of excluding people, but it's just that there's a clear divide in Belize with an "us versus them". Where the "us" and - and - and I group myself and that is, we are we're white, we're the elite, we're the experts so we know. And then there's everyone else. And no, you can't ask the questions. No, you can't decide where we're going to dig it because you don't know. And that's the stigma that we are trying to break.

Phoenix Archer 55:55

Thank you so much, Antonio, I just want to let everybody know, we're about to start our 10-minute break. So, everybody can get a cup of tea, stretch their legs have a bit of a rest from the screens. So, we're up at 3:50. So please come back. And, you know, the conversation is getting interesting. It's getting good. So, we're back by then. Thank you all for listening to the first part of panel two's discussions. Thank you very much.