



ARTICLE

Open access violence: Legacies of white supremacist data making at the Penn Museum, from the Morton Cranial Collection to the MOVE remains

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Abstract

This article examines how openly sharing data online can continue the dehumanizing work of 19th century “collectors” who stole the bodies of colonized peoples. It addresses the ongoing controversies at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (“Penn Museum”), regarding the interlinked weaponization of over one thousand crania used by racial scientist Samuel George Morton, and the remains of two Black children murdered by the police in the 1985 MOVE bombing, and asks, how can descendant communities regain their kin and take control of the data the museum has extracted from them? And how can scholars and other heritage workers within colonial institutions support them?

Keywords: repatriation; archaeological ethics; museum ethics; bioanthropology; descendant communities; MOVE bombing; data ethics; medical racism; racial science

Introduction

In late April 2021, the news broke that the bones of a Black child murdered by the Philadelphia police in the 1985 MOVE bombing were used as props in a free online Princeton University course, filmed at Philadelphia’s University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (hereinafter Penn Museum).¹ The previous week, the Penn Museum issued a public apology for their “unethical possession” of over 1,300 crania from which white racial scientist – and University of Pennsylvania graduate – Samuel George Morton extracted data to prove the inherent superiority of the white race.² This article addresses the

¹ Two articles were published in quick succession: Maya Kassuto, “Remains of Children Killed in MOVE Bombing Sat in a Box at Penn Museum for Decades,” *Billy Penn*, 21 April 2021, <https://billypenn.com/2021/04/21/move-bombing-penn-museum-bones-remains-princeton-africa>, accessed September 25, 2023; Abdul-Aliy A. Muhammad, “Penn Museum Owes Reparations for Previously Holding Remains of a MOVE Bombing Victim,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 April 2021, <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/penn-museum-reparations-repatriation-move-bombing-20210421.html>, accessed September 25, 2023.

² Penn Museum, “Museum Announces the Repatriation of the Morton Cranial Collection,” press release, 12 April 2021, <https://www.penn.museum/documents/pressroom/MortonCollectionRepatriation-Press%20release.pdf>, accessed September 25, 2023.

unfolding situation, catalyzed by these weeks in April 2021 but starting decades and centuries earlier. As I finalize my edits on this article in June 2023, the implications of an extensive report on the treatment of the MOVE remains, released by the city of Philadelphia a year ago,³ have yet to be fully addressed, and most of the demands of the MOVE organization have not been met.⁴

In the time since I originally researched and wrote this article, I have become personally involved in descendant community organizing around the Morton Cranial Collection, as a court granted the Penn Museum's request to be allowed to bury the remains of what they claim to be 20 "Black Philadelphians," instead of relinquishing control over their remains to those who can best care for them.⁵ My involvement has been not only as a scholar who works in this area but also as a person who is acutely aware that my own Indian ancestors have sat on shelves in the Penn Museum's basement alongside the skulls that Penn now seeks to bury and were likewise used by Morton and his successors to prove the superiority of the Caucasian race, as he termed it. This shared legacy and fate of people from all over the world ties together complex and overlapping descendant communities of care, and the work of finding ceremony and rest for these ancestors will last for decades.⁶

These are painful stories to explore – ones that constitute targeted, ongoing terrorism against specific people and against racialized groups of people. I am sharing these stories because I do believe that the dead rise when they are ready – ready to force the conversation about the crimes committed against them, ready to demand the remembrance and rest that they are due. Long after they lost their lives within contexts of white supremacist violence, they live on, precisely because their bodies are not in the right place. It matters that the people who are responsible for stealing, retaining, and abusing ancestral remains were – and, in some cases, remain – highly regarded by their colleagues. The Penn Museum describes Samuel George Morton as "the pre-eminent American scientist of his time,"⁷ and Alan Mann, who insistently misidentified and then hoarded the remains of two MOVE children when he was the curator-in-charge of the Morton Cranial Collection, says that Morton is considered by some to be "the founder of physical anthropology."⁸

During Morton's lifetime, the city of Philadelphia was the cultural and medical center of the United States, and Morton was a well-connected and well-respected member of the political elite.⁹ Mann himself had a distinguished career first at the University of Pennsylvania, and later at Princeton University, where he retains emeritus status despite student protests after his role in the theft of MOVE bombing victim remains became public.¹⁰ And

³ Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022. The remains at the Penn Museum are discussed in most depth in section 2 of the report. Additionally, as the article was going to print, new photographic evidence emerged of Janet Monge displaying the remains of two MOVE victims at a public event in her lab at the Penn Museum in 2014, including Delisha Africa, whose remains she and the Penn Museum denied ever having. Abdul-Aliy A. Muhammad, "Statement on new evidence about MOVE Remains held at Penn Museum," read at press conference at Penn Museum on 31 August, 2023, <https://aaliy.substack.com/p/statement-on-new-evidence-about-move>, accessed September 25, 2023.

⁴ See the petition "MOVE Children Deserve to Rest in Peace! Return Our Family's Remains NOW!" <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/move-children-deserve-to-rest-in-peace>, accessed September 25, 2023.

⁵ Abdul-Aliy A. Muhammad and Lyra D. Monteiro, "Finding Ceremony for Ancestors Held in the Penn Museum and Other Colonial Institutions," *SAPIENS*, 10 May 2023, <https://www.sapiens.org/biology/finding-ceremony-morton-collection-repatriation>, accessed September 25, 2023.

⁶ For the latest updates, see *Finding Ceremony*, <https://www.findingceremony.com>, accessed September 25, 2023.

⁷ Penn Museum, "Background," <https://www.penn.museum/sites/pmclassroom/collection>, accessed September 25, 2023.

⁸ Mann 2009, 159.

⁹ Fabian 2010.

¹⁰ Benjamin Ball, "Students Hold Protest in Solidarity with MOVE," *Daily Princetonian*, 2 May 2021, <https://www.dailyprincetonian.com/article/2021/05/move-bombing-remains-princeton-protest-university-pennsylvania>, accessed September 25, 2023.

Mann's former student, Janet Monge, the curator who filmed the video using Katricia Dotson's remains,¹¹ who was also in charge of the Morton Cranial Collection, is fondly regarded by many who have encountered her in real life or through her numerous television appearances and presentations and was even named 2014 Curator of the Year by *Philadelphia* magazine.¹² Each of these scientists was nurtured by, and remains embedded in, institutional structures that trained and supported their work and sanctioned it in various ways – for example, Monge was recently a co-author on a publication in the prestigious journal *Nature*.¹³

At the other end of the spectrum, there have been calls in print¹⁴ as well as commissions established by various anthropological associations¹⁵ seeking stricter legal and ethical standards as a result of the abuses that came to light in 2021. Still more of their colleagues and successors have attempted to minimize the actions of Mann, Monge, and the Penn Museum as just another example of possibly unethical, but unexceptional, practices that appear everywhere. This is absurd and reflects the continued racism rampant in museum, medical, and anthropological fields; indeed, if it is true that every museum contains the remains of victims of very recent police violence whose families believed them to be buried, this in no way makes it okay.

The focus of this article, however, is on centuries-old practices of data sharing by white scientists and on how it is a political act when people who consider themselves to possess the remains of our ancestors publish the data they extract from them. We cannot heal the wounds of empire by making the intricacies of its violence available to all. Every act of data sharing is political; given my own position within the academic and museum worlds, it is a political act for me to share the story of the work of Morton, Mann, Monge, and the Penn Museum as well as of the broader structures of power that have supported, enabled, and encouraged them. At the same time, I am intentionally not sharing everything that has been entrusted to me by those who are involved in this ongoing struggle, or that I have uncovered through my own archival research, because much of it is not for me to share. In attempting to strike a balance, I have made some calls with which I do not feel fully at ease. One involves sharing a blurred image from the online Princeton course video, which appears in the next section.

Turning people into data

The data that colonizers create out of the bodies of those they oppress is itself violence. The data discussed here includes not only the measurements and value placed on the skulls by Morton himself but also the online presence of data, images, and the ongoing circulation of racist analyses grounded in his work as well as the circulation of photographs and x-rays of

¹¹ Katricia Dotson is Tree Africa; I use the former name in this article because that is what her living sibling, Lionell Dotson, calls her.

¹² Malcolm Burnley, "Best of Philly Snapshot: Janet Monge, Best Museum Curator," *Philadelphia*, 30 July 2014, <https://www.phillymag.com/things-to-do/2014/07/30/best-of-philly-snapshot-janet-monge-best-museum-curator>, accessed September 25, 2023.

¹³ Brielle et al. 2023.

¹⁴ Dunnavant, Justinvil, and Colwell 2021; Passalacqua and Pilloud 2021; Stantis et al. 2023.

¹⁵ See the American Anthropological Association's "Commission on the Ethical Treatment of Human Remains," *American Anthropological Association*, <https://americananthro.org/about/committees-and-task-forces/tcethr>, accessed September 25, 2023; Benjamin M. Auerbach and Fatimah L. C. Jackson, "Preliminary Report: Results of the AABA Taskforce on the Ethical Study of Human Remains Survey of Members of the African American Community and of Biological Anthropologists," Fall 2022, *American Association of Biological Anthropologists*, https://bioanth.org/documents/333/Preliminary_Report_-_AABA_Taskforce_on_the_Ethical_Study_of_Human_Remains_Surveys.pdf, accessed September 25, 2023.

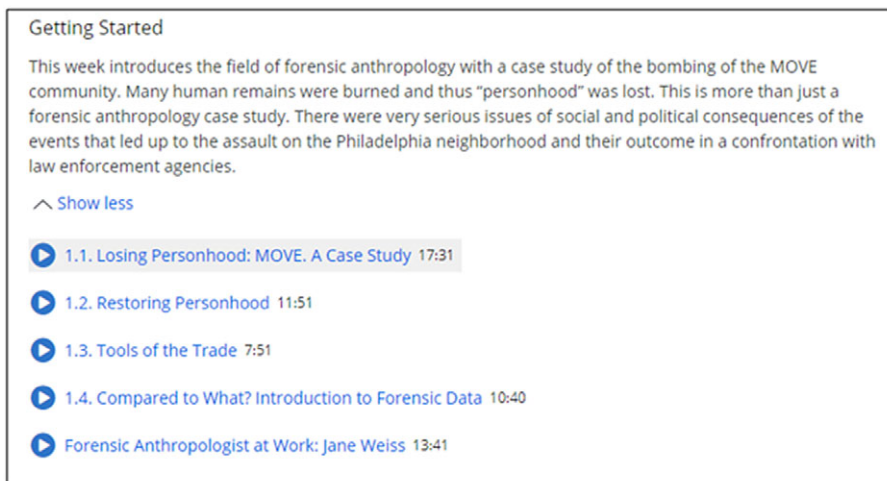


Figure 1. Screenshot from Wayback Machine capture of now-deleted Princeton University course on Coursera open learning platform, “REAL BONES: Adventures in Forensic Anthropology,” showing videos for the first week’s lesson. Courtesy of the author.

Katricia’s remains and the teaching video of the examination of her bones. The data crimes of scientific experts are multifaceted and are a major tool that they use to keep afloat a dispute grounded on the territory that they control – to have the excuse to continue to keep the dead as their property.

Katricia was 14 years old when she was murdered. She would have been 50 by the time 4,553 students from all over the world had enrolled in Princeton University’s Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on the free platform Coursera and watched the first lesson that culminated in the examination of her bones.¹⁶ The six-week course was titled “REAL BONES: Adventures in Forensic Anthropology.” Coursera removed the course from public view when the controversy over it broke out in April 2021, but, at the time of writing, part of the video in which Monge uses Katricia’s bones as teaching tools can be viewed in a segment from “Democracy Now!”¹⁷ Additionally, some of the pages associated with the course are preserved on the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine, including transcripts of some of the videos and the description of the first week’s contents.¹⁸

This learning tool was originally filmed to support Monge’s own teaching at Princeton,¹⁹ and she assigned it to students in her own Spring 2021 Forensic Anthropology course at the University of Pennsylvania. Monge later said that she understood the MOOC “would have a global reach, forensic anthropologists routinely handle cases involving missing persons or genocide” and considered the MOVE case study of special value for that audience.²⁰ In the first four videos of this “lesson” (Figure 1), Monge, then a visiting lecturer at Princeton,

¹⁶ See the archived version of the course webpage prior to its deletion. “REAL BONES: Adventures in Forensic Anthropology,” August 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210421222119/https://www.coursera.org/learn/real-bones-forensic-anthropology>, accessed September 25, 2023.

¹⁷ Amy Goodman and Juan González, “Ivy League Secret Exposed: Classes Used Bones of Black Children Killed in 1985 MOVE Police Bombing,” *Democracy Now! The Quarantine Report*, 27 April 2021, https://www.democracynow.org/2021/4/27/philadelphia_move_bombing_human_remains, accessed September 25, 2023.

¹⁸ See the syllabus, archived before it was deleted in April 2021. “REAL BONES: Adventures in Forensic Anthropology,” August 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210421222119/https://www.coursera.org/learn/real-bones-forensic-anthropology#syllabus>, accessed September 25, 2023.

¹⁹ Pratt, Kastenber, and Vassallo 2021.

²⁰ Pratt, Kastenber, and Vassallo 2021, 29 (paraphrasing their interview with Janet Monge); Janet Monge, interview with author, March 2022.

introduces the MOVE bombing as the kind of event that can take away “personhood” and describes some of the methods that forensic anthropologists use to determine the age of an unknown victim.²¹ In the second and third videos, she spends time discussing the images of Katricia’s bones – closeup photographs as well as x-rays – and explains how this is a controversial case because while “we” have concluded that this was the body of a young woman, of the age of 18 or older, “other folks looking at the material” have concluded that she was 14 years old.

In these videos, Monge lectured in a studio on Princeton’s campus.²² But, for the final video, titled “Forensic Anthropologist at Work: Jane Weiss,” the scene shifts to the Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials (CAAM) Room 190 classroom, in the basement of the Penn Museum, where Monge was a curator.²³ This location was chosen by Monge as a better set.²⁴ In this video, a number of bones are arrayed on a table – some smaller, more fragmentary bones on the right, in front of Monge, and larger, more complete bones whose origin is never given, in front of her student, Jane Weiss. The three small, fragmentary bones in front of Monge are part of Katricia’s right thigh (femur), right hip (innominate), and part of the left pubic bone (pubic symphysis).²⁵

While they discuss the bones of a murdered Black child, the two white women literally stand in the center of a triangle of racialized human remains – on the examination table in front of them and also in two walls of glass-fronted cabinets full of Morton’s stolen skulls behind them (Figure 2). As their visual arrangement in the Coursera video suggests, these two sets of remains – the bones of the MOVE children murdered in 1985 and the crania in Morton’s nineteenth-century collection – are directly linked in ways that can help us to see how white scientists extract data from the remains of the Black and brown dead in order to support their interests. Morton’s collecting practices were both enabled by, and constituted, US empire. Historian Ann Fabian describes the 138 suppliers that Morton recruited to rob graves: “[M]issionaries in Africa, doctors in Florida and Cuba, diplomats in Mexico and Cairo, white settlers ... in Indiana, soldiers in Georgia, explorers in the Arctic, scientists in Oregon,

²¹ Janet M. Monge, “REAL BONES: Adventures in Forensic Anthropology,” Coursera course, Department of Anthropology, Princeton University, 2020.

²² Pratt, Kastenber, and Vassallo 2021.

²³ As recently as August 1, 2023, the Penn Museum still listed Monge as “associate curator-in-charge and keeper of collections” for the Physical Anthropology section, titles that she held for many years. Penn Museum, “Contact Us,” <https://web.archive.org/web/20230801072524/https://www.penn.museum/about/contact-us>, accessed September 25, 2023. However, Monge told me that she had been fired on 25 September 2021. Janet Monge, interview with author, April 2022. Penn Museum’s director aggressively denied that she had been fired when I met with him two weeks later. Christopher Woods, interview with author, April 2022. The truth seems to lie somewhere in between: Monge’s lawsuit on 20 April 2022 states that she was demoted to the position of keeper, resulting in a \$50,000 pay cut for two years, after which “she will have been deemed to retire.” Alan B. Epstein and Adam A. Filbert, *Janet Monge v. University of Pennsylvania*, Spector Gadon Rosen Vinci P.C., Civil Action 22-2942, 20 May 2022, 44. The Penn Directory, which draws from the university’s centralized Human Resources database, shows Janet Monge holding the title of “manager, Museum Collections” rather than curator. “Penn Online Directory,” <https://directory.apps.upenn.edu/directory/jsp/fast.do>, accessed on September 26, 2023. It seems that this is one of the many things that the museum has decided to be secretive about – it is unclear whether they fear giving the impression that they caved to the demands of MOVE members and others that she be fired. See petition “MOVE Children Deserve to Rest in Peace!”

²⁴ Pratt, Kastenber, and Vassallo 2021, 39–41.

²⁵ A fourth bone fragment associated with Body B-1 (the designation for Katricia’s remains), the right pubic symphysis, is not shown in this video, but is shown in a 2018 X-ray in an earlier video in Monge’s Coursera course (Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022, 33–38). As outlined in detail in section 2 of the report commissioned by the city of Philadelphia in 2021, this is consistent with documentation from 1985 and 1986, which indicates that the Medical Examiner’s Office as well as outside experts examined four fragments of Body B-1: the right femur, the right innominate, and both the right and left pubic symphyses (Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022). However, the right pubic symphysis remains unaccounted for after the 1 November 2018 Penn Museum x-ray.



Figure 2. Dr. Janet Monge (right) and Penn undergraduate student Jane Weiss in CAAM 190 Classroom at the Penn Museum, discussing the remains of Katricia Dotson, who was murdered in the 1985 MOVE bombing (on the right, on the table, in front of Monge) from Week 1 video in Princeton Coursera Course “REAL BONES: Adventures in Forensic Anthropology” (remains not blurred in the original). Courtesy of the author.

and a president of Venezuela.”²⁶ The dead that Morton accumulated in Philadelphia were trophies of American whiteness, which enacted the expanding empire simply by being gathered together in one place, thousands of miles from where they had lived and breathed; just as Katricia’s remains – from a house in West Philadelphia whose proximity Monge stressed in the first video lesson – represent trophies of white dominance over Black resistance.

Everything that shaped this fifth, and final, video in the lesson was built upon a foundation of operationalizing the bodies of non-white dead in the service of white supremacy. The CAAM 190 classroom was built in 2014 to Monge’s specifications, with custom-made, old-fashioned cabinets to display skulls from the Morton Cranial Collection.²⁷ Their ordered presence, contained behind glass, conveys authority, control, knowledge – all of which are about whiteness, wealth, and empire. The crania represent the proud lineage of racial science as they were the very instruments with which Morton “proved” the biological superiority of the white race, in the 1830s and 1840s. The door that led to the hallway was to the left of where the film crew set up, and the shelves of the cabinet that faced the glass window of that door exhibited dozens of skulls of dozens of African people who died in Cuban slavery.²⁸

In the final Coursera video, Monge describes the condition of the remains and explains that very little was recovered from “this individual”²⁹ – one who she had implied in the previous four videos is still unidentified. She introduces her student, Jane Weiss, as “the

²⁶ Fabian 2010, 36.

²⁷ See 2014 announcement of the opening of this classroom in “New Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials (CAAM), in Penn Museum’s Renovated Conservation and Teaching Labs,” *University of Pennsylvania Almanac*, 61(7): 12, September 30, 2014, <https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/volumes/v61/n07/pdf/093014.pdf>, accessed on September 26, 2023.

²⁸ Paul Wolff Mitchell, interview with author, January 2022.

²⁹ Monge, “REAL BONES.”

person who's looked at them most carefully" because she is doing her senior thesis on them (this lesson was filmed in January 2019). While Monge holds one of the bones up to the camera, she explains that they are "juicy," they have a sheen reflecting the leeching of bone marrow to the outside of the bone and a distinctive greasy smell – a sign that they are not that old, and she points out the remains of the ligaments.

At Monge's prompting, Weiss recites some of the different kinds of testing that she has done, and some other kinds of testing that they hope to do. Monge adds that "hopefully this is part of your thesis too, like sampling for DNA analysis and then attempting to match it with, you know, records that are out there of missing folks," reinforcing the impression that the identity of the person whose remains are in the video is entirely unknown. When asked to estimate the age of the bones, Weiss states: "I know that the person is in their preteen or teenage years," and Monge redirects her to offer the same explanations that she herself gave in the previous videos for why the bones might seem to be that age (according to Monge, those reasons include: their size, the apparent state of the various growth plates, and so on), but, really, they are of an older individual (according to Monge, those reasons include: MOVE people were malnourished, what look like an unfused epiphysis on the innominate bone is really just the effect of the high heat and of something falling onto the bone when the house collapsed, and so on).

Monge's language, which I cannot see a way to quote directly without compounding the harm, is remarkable – as intimate as the details she describes are, she does not acknowledge that the forensic experts officially hired to investigate the bombing agreed on the identification of this individual, whose remains were initially designated "B-1." The expert forensic team that was brought in to identify the remains after the city very publicly botched their investigation of the crime they committed, identified the B-1 remains as those of 14-year-old Katricia "Tree" Africa, who was also described as being present in the basement of the MOVE house at 6221 Osage Avenue by both of the bombing's two survivors.³⁰ In the Coursera videos, Monge notably does not call them "Body B-1," even though that label is used in the x-rays of Katricia's remains that she shows in the second video³¹ and by Weiss in her thesis.³² Monge's specific line of reasoning to support her aging estimate, however, can be traced back to 1985, when her mentor Alan Mann, first used these same arguments to identify "Body B-1" as a 20-year-old woman.³³ Weiss also replicates Mann's analysis (presenting it as her own independent opinion) in her senior thesis, completed months after the video was filmed.³⁴

How did Katricia's remains – separated from her name and identity so as to serve as an introductory "case study" of what it means for forensic anthropologists to restore "lost personhood" – end up in front of a film crew in the museum of the Ivy League university in the city that had been that child's home? Why did Monge claim that her remains had not been identified? And why does she, and the Penn Museum, continue to deny that they also had Delisha Africa's remains?³⁵

³⁰ For the identification of these remains as those of Katricia, see Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022. For the bizarre sequence of disputes in connection with her remains, see Heim et al. 2022, 90–96.

³¹ Monge, "REAL BONES."

³² Weiss 2019.

³³ Tucker Law Group 2021, Exhibit 6.

³⁴ Weiss 2019.

³⁵ Delisha Africa is Delisha Orr. I use the former name in this article because it is what her living mother, Janet Africa, calls her. For the identification of the "Body G" remains as those of Delisha, and the evidence for her remains having been at the Penn Museum from 23 September 1986, until (at least) 1 November 2018, see Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022; Abdul-Aliy A. Muhammad, "Decades after Philadelphia's MOVE Bombing, Penn Museum Still Keeps Secrets on the Remains of 12-Year-Old Girl," *Hyperallergic*, 20 April 2022, <https://hyperallergic.com/725976/philadelphia-move-bombing-penn-museum-still-keeps-secrets-on-the-remains>, accessed on September 26, 2023;

Anonymizing Katricia, Disappearing Delisha

The harm in this case is unthinkable.³⁶ And, yet, the violence inflicted on the children by the police department that took their lives, by the white medical examiner who gave away their remains, and by the white scholars and curators who used them as teaching tools and props for over 30 years, even exposing them in a teaching video distributed worldwide, is not in any way inexplicable. Rather, it is part of a centuries-long pattern of Philadelphia's scientists and agents of the state defining themselves as white and human and defining people who looked like these murdered children as Black and subhuman. On 13 May 1985, the Philadelphia Police Department bombed the West Philadelphia home of the members of MOVE, a Black anti-police organization, igniting a fire that burned down an entire Black neighborhood, and murdered 11 people.³⁷ The premeditated attack was designed to kill everyone in the house that day, including the children – a fact acknowledged obliquely in October 2022 when the Department of Public Health reissued the death certificates of all 11 victims, to characterize their deaths as homicides rather than accidents.³⁸

The attack continues to haunt the city of Philadelphia. Thus, the news in April 2021 that some of its violated dead had been kept at the Penn Museum – and, in the following month, that the city's Medical Examiner's Office had also secretly kept a number of trophies from the victims' bodies³⁹ – opened old wounds for many, including specifically those who loved these people during their lives. Fourteen-year-old Katricia's family thought that she had been buried, alongside her sister Zanetta, in December 1985, when her father watched her baby blue coffin be lowered into the earth as her aunt collapsed in tears beside the grave.⁴⁰ Katricia's brother, Lionell Dotson, learned that his sister's bones were in a teaching video when his wife saw an article about it on the Internet in 2021.⁴¹ A representative for 12-year-old Delisha's incarcerated parents authorized the burial of their daughter in September 1986. After believing her daughter to have been buried for 35 years, Janet Africa has had to live with uncertainty as to the whereabouts of her daughter's remains since 2021.

as the article was going to print, new photographic evidence emerged of Janet Monge displaying the remains of two MOVE victims at a public event in her lab at the Penn Museum in 2014, including Delisha Africa, whose remains she and the Penn Museum denied ever having. Abdul-Aliy A. Muhammad, "Statement on new evidence about MOVE Remains held at Penn Museum," read at press conference at Penn Museum on 31 August, 2023, <https://aaliy.substack.com/p/statement-on-new-evidence-about-move>, accessed September 25, 2023.

³⁶ Our understanding of the harm in this case has been even more painfully compounded by the testimony of the survivors who were raised in MOVE, and who came forward a couple of months after the revelations that the Penn Museum had Katricia and Delisha's remains, to speak to the horrifying sexual violence they suffered at the hands of MOVE adults. West Philadelphia journalist and organizer Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, captured the painfully interwoven nature of the violence that Katricia and Delisha were subjected to at the end of their lives and in death, and that which MOVE children were subjected to in life, tweeting: "It's possible to know and understand that what happened to MOVE over decades is the result of white supremacist violence. It's possible to know and understand that what happened to MOVE survivors of childhood abuse/sexual violence is the result of the same systems." *Twitter*, 4 August 2021, <https://twitter.com/MxAbdulAliy/status/1422955664155029509>, accessed on September 26, 2023.

³⁷ Harry 1987.

³⁸ Jason Laughlin, "Families of 11 People Killed in the 1985 MOVE Bombing Never Considered Their Deaths Accidental. Now Pennsylvania Officially Agrees with Them," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 October 2022, <https://www.inquirer.com/news/move-bombing-1985-philadelphia-victims-homicide-20221012.html>, accessed on September 26, 2023. This was done in direct response to the recommendations of the report commissioned by the city of Philadelphia. Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022; Heim et al. 2022.

³⁹ Heim et al. 2022.

⁴⁰ Amy Linn, "2 Victims of MOVE Fire Are Buried, But Questions Linger," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 December 1985.

⁴¹ Lionell Dotson, "Wake Up with WURD," interview by Mark Kelly Tyler, 22 March 2022, <https://soundcloud.com/onwurd/wake-up-with-wurd-32222-lionell-dotson-sr-and-attorney-daniel-hartstein>, accessed on September 26, 2023.

Shortly after the news broke in April 2021, she described the horror: “[W]hen our babies are born, they kill them. When they’re growing up, they kill them. When they get older as adults, they kill them ... over and over. And now after so called death ... they’re going to do this?”⁴²

The “why” behind this horror is complex and also not: the dismembered remains of these criminalized Black people constituted trophies for the white people who had subdued them – a long-standing practice of American white supremacy, reflecting what historian Daina Ramey Berry terms their “ghost value.”⁴³ The “how” is still emerging, but what we do know of the path that the girls’ unburied remains took – from the day that their home was bombed to that teaching video – is long and horrifying. Three days after the bombing, Monge, who was then a doctoral student, and her advisor, Mann, a paleoanthropologist at the University of Pennsylvania, examined the remains of all 11 people murdered on 13 May and made identifications of their age and whether they were male or female.⁴⁴ An independent team was brought in two months later, hired by the Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission set up by the mayor and led by world-renowned forensic experts. This team found that Mann and Monge had misidentified a number of the bodies.⁴⁵

Even though he had only been employed by the Medical Examiner’s Office for a day and a half at the beginning of the investigation, Mann reinserted himself following the MOVE Commission’s public hearings in November 1985.⁴⁶ Upon re-examining the remains with Janet Monge, challenged the expert reevaluation of the remains where it contradicted his own, particularly the assessment of the two bodies for which the new teams’ identifications were not backed up by airtight evidence (prior x-rays of unique injuries or bone configurations and so on). Mann insisted these remains, which the external team had identified as 12-year-old Delisha (“Body G”) and 14-year-old Katricia (“Body B-1”), were instead those of a six-year-old girl and an 18- to 20-year-old woman, respectively. Because no individuals fitting those descriptions were in the house at the time of the bombing, Mann essentially argued that there were two Jane Does, two unknown victims of the fire. He was backed in

⁴² Livestream of press conference by hate5six, “MOVE Press Conference 4/26: Addressing UPenn & Princeton’s Theft of Bones of Murdered MOVE Children,” 26 April 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J3N1D10Fcw>, accessed on September 26, 2023.

⁴³ Berry 2017.

⁴⁴ Tucker Law Group 2021, Exhibit 7. A second graduate student, Michael Spiers, initially joined Mann and Monge, but told the *New York Times* that “The minute I saw the scope of the task, I realized that Alan was not the right person for this,” he said. “This was not his field of expertise.” Bronwen Dickey, “She Was Killed by the Police. Why Were Her Bones in a Museum?” *New York Times Magazine*, 19 October 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/magazine/philadelphia-move-bombing-katricia-dotson.html>, accessed September 26, 2023.

⁴⁵ Tucker Law Group 2021, Exhibit 4.

⁴⁶ Tucker Law Group 2021, Exhibit 6. Mann’s challenge led to numerous newspaper articles that caused additional trauma to the families of the victims, even as further evaluations by outside experts continued to affirm that the age estimates of the official forensics team had been correct. For examples of these news articles, see Marc Kaufman, “Professor: MOVE Body Incorrectly Identified,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 November 1985; Marc Kaufman, “MOVE Finding Disputed: 4 Experts Challenge Panel on Remains,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 January 1986. When asked to provide the reports of the “four experts” from the headline of the January *Philadelphia Inquirer* article to the members of the Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission or MOVE Commission (William B. Lytton to Robert J. Segal, 24 January 1986, Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission Records [PSIC Records], Temple University Special Collections [TUSC]), Segal was unable to offer anything other than Mann’s report and mention that Janet Monge had also been present for Mann’s reexamination (Robert Segal to William B. Lytton, 27 January 1986, PSIC Records, TUSC). By contrast, the forensic team’s determination that Body B-1 was Katricia Dotson was affirmed by reports from several additional outside experts, most notably that of Judy Suchey, an expert on aging pelvic bones (“Age Determination of the ‘MOVE’ Pelvic-Femoral Fragments,” 22 January 1986, PSIC Records, TUSC). Following receipt of Suchey’s report, which estimated the age of the B-1 remains at 12–17 years old and, hence, consistent with Katricia Dotson’s age at her death (14), Segal acknowledged that “It would be unreasonable for me to reject these findings in light of the evidence available at this time” (Robert J. Segal to William Lytton, 23 January 1986, PSIC Records, TUSC).

March 6, 1986

Ms. Stephanie DaMadio
Physical Anthropology, Room 343
National Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560

Dear Stephanie:

I have included the skeletal material on "Move" case B-1 and G. Please re-examine them to whatever extent you require and submit a written report as to their ages and return the material to me.

If you can, please advise me if mild to moderate chronic malnutrition would make skeletal material appear older or younger than its chronologic age.

Sincerely yours,



Robert J. Segal, M.D.
Assistant Medical Examiner

RJS/ch

Figure 3. Letter from Robert Segal to Stephanie Damadio, sending "B-1" and "G" remains to the Smithsonian, 6 March 1986. Courtesy of the City of Philadelphia Archives.

these identifications by the city's assistant medical examiner, Robert Segal, who had reportedly threatened the leader of the independent team with filing a contradictory report if he was not allowed to co-author their report.⁴⁷ Segal's own write-up of that reexamination seems to show that Mann quietly conceded that it was possible that Body G was indeed Delisha.⁴⁸ Mann continued to insist that B-1 was not Katricia Dotson.

The painful paper trail for Delisha's and Katricia's bones that ended up in Mann's possession can be seen in three documents from a box that was recently discovered at the Medical Examiner's Office and is now in the City of Philadelphia's Archives.⁴⁹ On 6 March 1986, after Katricia's family believed they had buried her, Segal sent both Katricia's and Delisha's remains out for one last review by Stephanie Damadio, an anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, who still had the remains when Segal submitted his final report on 18 March 1986 (Figure 3).⁵⁰ And when Damadio sent

⁴⁷ Ali Hameli, the leader of the independent forensics team, specifically stated that he suspected that "the noise that [Segal] raised regarding the age of Cases G and B-1" was him following through on this threat. Letter from Ali Z. Hameli to William B. Lytton, staff director and counsel, Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission, 28 February 1986. PSIC Records, TUSC.

⁴⁸ Robert Segal, memorandum, "Postmortem Examination Addenda," 14 November 1985, PSIC Records, TUSC.

⁴⁹ Heim et al. 2022, 66–77.

⁵⁰ Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022.

51-7A
Rev. 2-70

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
Washington, D.C., U.S.A. 20560

A LETTER HAS, HAS NOT, BEEN WRITTEN _____

SHIPPING INVOICE

REGISTRAR FILE NO. _____

INSTRUCTIONS TO RECIPIENT:
Loans are made for two months unless stipulated below. When returning material, please mention the Registrar File Number. Types sent on loan must be returned by Registered mail.

INITIATING OFFICE
INVOICE NO. _____
September 17, 1986
DATE _____

TO:
Dr. R. J. Segal, M.D.
Medical Examiner's Office
321 University Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19104

LOAN PERIOD _____
Stephanie Damadio,
Museum Specialist,
Dept. of Anthropology, NHB

INITIATED BY _____
UNIT _____
Dr. Ronald J. Getner, Acting
Chrm., Dept. of Anthro, NHB

APPROVED _____

THIS MATERIAL IS SENT AS:
(1) An open long-term exchange (4) A loan for examination at our request (7)
(2) A loan at your request (5) Return of material borrowed
(3) In exchange (6) Return of material sent for identification

(6) Non-FBI

MATERIAL (A: appropriate, state locality, collector, catalog numbers, etc. Total each distribution category)

One box containing human skeletal remains from Philadelphia, PA
Medical Examiner's Office.

86331600 3320 P30000 52200 RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

NO. OF PACKAGES One	DATE SHIPPED _____	RECEIVED IN GOOD ORDER
Registered-First Class	PAYMENT Prepaid	(Name)
SHIPMENT (Express, parcel post, etc.)	(Prepaid, collect, etc.)	(Date)
SHIPPING NO. 258829	SHIPPING CLERK'S INITIALS _____	

RETAIN THIS COPY
U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1970 OF-378-718

Figure 4. Shipping invoice from Damadio to Segal, returning "human skeletal remains," 17 September 1986. Courtesy of the City of Philadelphia Archives.

them back in September 1986 (Figure 4) – without the written aging report that Segal had asked for – he gave Katricia's and Delisha's bones to Mann (Figure 5). His graduate student, Monge, picked them up at the Medical Examiner's Office, which was then a short walk away from the Penn Museum, and Mann kept the murdered children's remains in his office at the museum – where he held the curatorial position his advisee, Monge, would later hold – and never bothered to return them.⁵¹

⁵¹ Monge has denied repeatedly that she ever received Delisha's remains and insists that Katricia's remains are not actually hers. In April 2022, she initiated a lawsuit against 38 defendants, as of 30 July 2022, who she claims have

Monge 9/23/86

Memo to file

Bones arrived by mail from the Smithsonian and will be turned over to Allen Mann for his continued evaluation under an attached receipt.

RECEIPT	CITY OF PHILADELPHIA OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH	DATE 9/23/86
Received from <u>Walter Segal M.D.</u>		CASE NO. <u>Monge</u>
the following material in the case of <u>"Monge"</u>		
<u>Various bones for anthropologic examination</u>		
<u>Janet Monge</u>		

55-X-687 (Rev. 9/57)

Figure 5. Segal's memo and receipt signed by Monge, transferring bones sent by Smithsonian to Mann, 23 September 1986. Courtesy of the City of Philadelphia Archives.

defamed her by (among other things) claiming that she had Delisha's remains. Epstein and Filbert, *Janet Monge v. University of Pennsylvania*. A federal judge has been granting motions to dismiss this lawsuit, and, at the time of writing, a number of her charges had been thrown out. Segal and Mann refused to talk to the attorneys conducting the City of Philadelphia's recent investigation into the chain of custody of the remains (Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022), one of whom says that Segal hung up on her after saying: "I have no interest in talking about something that happened so long ago. Don't call me again." Kier Bradford-Grey, "Return, Rebury, Repatriate," *Distillations Podcast*, interview with Alexis Pedrick, 7 March 2023, <https://sciencehistory.org/distillations/podcast/return-rebury-repatriate>, accessed on September 26, 2023. See also footnote 3 for the newly uncovered photographic evidence placing Delisha's remains in Monge's possession at the Penn Museum.

Mann appears to have lost interest in the remains quickly, stating that, after 1986, “I do not recall opening the Penn Museum cabinet that safeguarded the fragments or reviewing the fragments.”⁵² However, over the next three decades, Monge invited multiple students to confirm Mann’s aging of Katricia’s bones.⁵³ Jane Weiss, the daughter of Jill Topkis Weiss, a major donor to the Penn Museum and member of its Board of Overseers, as well as a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania, was only the most open and public sharing of the data that Mann extracted from Katricia Dotson’s body. In the Coursera video, we witness Monge in the process of teaching yet another student how to “properly” replicate the data of her advisor.

Monge engaged in this pattern of inviting students to replicate the data of a white male predecessor with Morton’s crania as well. In Morton’s case, his data had been publicly debunked in Stephen Jay Gould’s 1981 bestseller *The Mismeasure of Man*.⁵⁴ By 1985, Monge recruited students into the project of measuring and remeasuring the crania in order to defend the accuracy of Morton’s science. With their focus on Morton’s data, the multiple generations of students who have jumped into this debate – either to challenge Gould or to support him – continue to miss the fact that the “collection” is not a set of scientific “specimens”; it is evidence of an ongoing colonial crime in which they are now, at the very least, accomplices.⁵⁵

The Coursera video’s visual juxtaposition of the two sets of stolen remains – Morton’s Cranial Collection and Katricia’s bones – allows us to unlock the ways in which the more recent and ongoing racial violence was built upon a broader logic of white supremacy, rather than just being the deeds of a misguided handful of deranged racists. As Black biocultural anthropologist Rachel Watkins has observed, anatomical collections such as Morton’s often come from the same places that have witnessed some of the most horrifying instances of anti-Black state violence, pointing to their role in shaping white perceptions of Black bodies: the Robert J. Terry anatomical collection, now held by the Smithsonian, originated near where Michael Brown’s body was left in the street for four hours, and the Hamann-Todd anatomical collection is still housed in the same town where, as she describes it, “a 12-year-old boy playing in a park with a toy gun, Tamir Rice, was mistaken for a 20-year-old man brandishing a weapon and was shot dead.”⁵⁶ Similarly, the Morton Cranial Collection is housed just over three miles from 6221 Osage Avenue, the site of the MOVE bombing.

White science, Black bodies, open data

Katricia Dotson and Delisha Africa were not the first criminalized Black Philadelphians to have parts of their bodies collected by the Penn Museum. A number of the skulls that lined the walls of the classroom in which Monge filmed her Coursera video (Figure 2) were also unofficial gifts of the City of Philadelphia to white scientists.⁵⁷ Prior to publishing the 1849

⁵² Tucker Law Group 2021, Exhibit 15.

⁵³ Monge has openly described this in a number of contexts, including her statements to investigators for Tucker Law Group (2021) and Ballard Spahr LLP (Pratt, Kastenber, and Vassallo 2021), in their reports for the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University, respectively.

⁵⁴ Gould 1981, 82–101. Gould first published his critique of Morton in *Science* in 1978.

⁵⁵ I have learned of numerous episodes of remeasuring the Morton crania and reexamining Morton’s data over the decades. In some cases, this work resulted in publications by Janet’s students and interns (Michael 1988; Lewis et al. 2011; Mitchell 2018).

⁵⁶ Watkins 2018, 40.

⁵⁷ Jacquelyne Germain, “Stolen Skulls of Black Philadelphians Were Displayed in an Ivy League Classroom for Years. They May Soon Receive a Proper Burial,” *CNN.com*, 13 August 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/08/13/us/penn-museum-skulls-black-philadelphians-reaj/index.html>, accessed on September 26, 2023. An assessment of the abuse to which the ancestors in the Morton Cranial Collection were submitted through exhibition at the Penn

catalog of his collection of crania, Samuel George Morton appears to have personally stolen the heads of at least seven Black people who died in Philadelphia's almshouse, who were confined there for the crime of being poor.⁵⁸ Such theft from the city-run institution was not an anomaly but, rather, an accepted practice; grave robbing from the almshouse's burial ground was so widespread that an 1845 letter revealed: "[T]hat it occasions dread and anxiety in the minds of some of the inmates of this House is a well known fact."⁵⁹ Morton was a physician at the almshouse and may have treated the people whose heads he stole after death. He turned them into objects for his collection of "crania," the anatomical term for the top portion of the skull that holds the brain and upper teeth, without the moving mandible or lower jaw. There, they joined nearly 1,000 crania that Morton stole from around the world over about two decades.

Based on what he and the men who did most of the stealing for him recorded, the people likely came from all of the countries highlighted on the map (Figure 6).⁶⁰ Morton's research was boldly expansive in its faith that measuring skulls offered definitive proof of the relative inferiorities of the darker people of the world: those who he believed deserved enslavement, displacement, and exploitation. Morton was not the first to suggest that the human head could be the key to the science of race – a science that was ultimately concerned with proving the superiority of white people over the races they encountered, subjugated, and murdered in their imperial endeavors. In the second half of the eighteenth century, European scientists made much of the supposed perfection of form of Greek and Roman statues as indicative of white superiority,⁶¹ and the practitioners of phrenology measured thousands of living heads in a closely related project of linking human character and worth to head shape.⁶² Many nineteenth-century scientists and doctors in the United States and Europe also collected skulls of various humans and animals, and engaged in similar work,⁶³ though arguably none had the impact that Morton did.

Museum, as well as through use in educational programming and events, is outside of the scope of this article; however, for a representative program centered on the Morton Cranial Collection, see the website for "The Public Classroom @ Penn Museum" from 2016, <https://www.penn.museum/sites/pmclassroom>, accessed on September 26, 2023; and the short film about this project: *When Science Meets Race*, directed by Arjun Shankar, 27 June 2017, <https://vimeo.com/223316500>, accessed on September 26, 2023.

⁵⁸ I have arrived at this tentative number based on cross-referencing a variety of sources for indications that Morton listed himself, and not another doctor, as the source of specific crania, in particular, Morton's first catalog of his collection (Morton 1840) and the manuscript catalog of the collection housed at the Academy of Natural Sciences at Drexel (formerly, Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia), which held the collection prior to it being moved to the Penn Museum in 1966 ("Ethnology Collection of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia catalog," vol. 1, Collection 177, Academy of Natural Sciences Archives). Paul Wolff Mitchell (2021) points out that Morton acquired these skulls during the time that he was working at the Philadelphia Almshouse, and this along with other aspects of their descriptions in his records suggest strongly that the crania belonged to people who were incarcerated at the almshouse.

⁵⁹ Humphrey 1973.

⁶⁰ While modern nation-states do not correspond to the identities that had any meaning for many – if any at all – of the people whose remains were stolen for Morton's collection, I have settled on this imperfect solution for conveying the global scope of Morton's theft of ancestors and the ongoing theft that grew the collection following his death. It is often the case that more precise data about locations and races are offered by Morton and those who acquired the skulls for him, but, for many reasons – not least of which is the violence of this data and its use – I have chosen not to map those locations. I also find this approach to mapping helpful for members of descendant communities in offering a quick view, at a glance, of which countries are impacted by Morton's collection. Even so, this map is incomplete, as it only represents where people's bodies were taken from, not necessarily where they were born (as, for example, with the 53 people whose heads José Rodríguez Cisneros stole from Cuba, but claimed had been born in Africa), nor does it fully represent the relative impact, as Morton stole hundreds of crania from within the borders of some modern nation-states, and only one from others.

⁶¹ Bindman 2002; Monteiro 2012.

⁶² Colbert 1997.

⁶³ Dain 2002, 197–226.

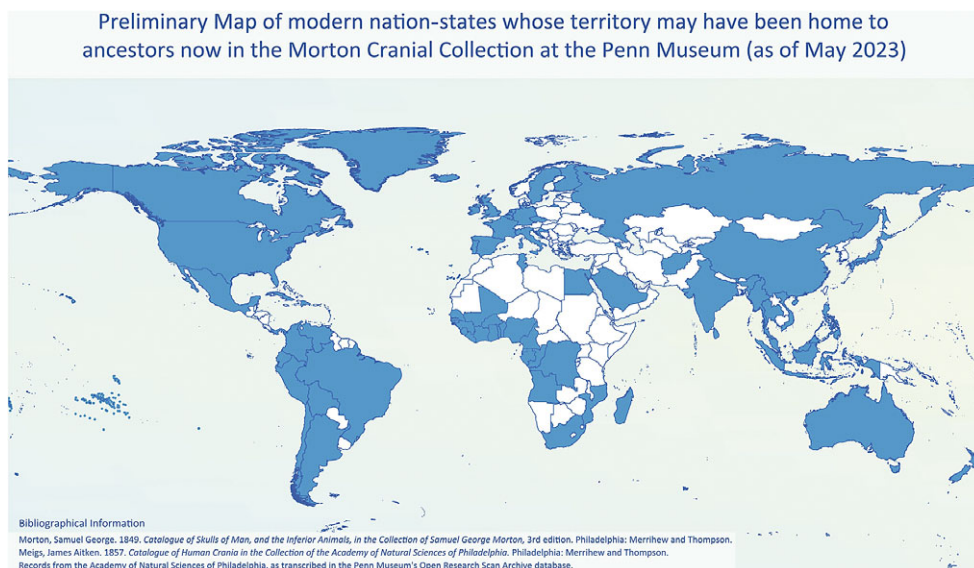


Figure 6. Map indicating modern nation-states from which Morton and his successors stole crania, based on the information recorded about each cranium by Morton, the 138 people who collected crania for him around the world, and those who gave additional crania to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia following Morton's death in 1851. Cartographer: Catherine Gilman; courtesy of SAPIENS.

Morton used German racial scientist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach's division of humanity into five races, between which Morton's uniquely large collection supposedly allowed him to distinguish on the basis of skull size and shape. According to Morton, bigger skulls meant more intelligence, and he interpreted the data he extracted from his collection to mean that "Caucasians" had the biggest heads,⁶⁴ and the other races fell into a hierarchy beneath them, based on their head size: first "Mongolian," then "Malay," "American" (meaning people indigenous to the Americas), and, finally, "Ethiopian." The central aspect of Morton's work was data making – capturing data – which is every bit as much a colonial process as is race making. How a measurement gets defined, and what meaning gets assigned to it, is far from neutral or natural. All data creation is reductive, and, when applied to humans, it turns a person into a number or a two-dimensional image, reducing them to something less than fully human. Through the data that he created from the crania he held captive, Morton ventriloquized the beliefs in white superiority that were as widespread among white men in Philadelphia as they were in the American South.⁶⁵

Proving Black people's "natural" subservience, low intelligence, and, thus, suitability for enslavement seems to have been Morton's primary preoccupation, whether ostensibly writing about Indigenous people of the Americas or Ancient Egyptians.⁶⁶ For his efforts, he was eulogized thus in the *Charleston Medical Journal*: "[W]e of the South should consider him as our benefactor, for aiding most materially in giving to the negro his true position as an inferior race."⁶⁷ What made Morton's work so powerful was his aggressive openness with his data. Morton spread his racist ideologies beyond his circle of friends and correspondents

⁶⁴ For how Morton came up with justifications for excluding "Caucasians" with smaller heads from his calculations, see Gould 1981, 92.

⁶⁵ Lapsansky 1980.

⁶⁶ Frederickson 1971, 76–78; Monteiro 2012, 90–97.

⁶⁷ Stanton 1960, 144.

most significantly through his two major books and their prospectuses and published reviews, which traveled more broadly than did the expensive, image-rich volumes themselves and inspired devoted followers who would advance his racial science even further.⁶⁸ *Crania Americana* and *Crania Aegyptiaca* are filled with lists of measurements and detailed lithographs of his collection, tied together by racist conclusions to support the growth of the white supremacist republic he held dear.⁶⁹ In a practice that is still well regarded as a sign of scientific rigor and transparency, Morton obsessively made his raw data available, inviting challenges to his conclusions without, of course, inviting challenges to the data itself. Morton also published and then republished and then republished again the catalog of his collection so that gentlemen scientists everywhere could know as much as possible about its contents.⁷⁰

Images are data too, and, as with Morton's measurements, the extremely detailed drawings in his books quite literally "capture" that which he has determined to be meaningful about the person, a two-dimensional representation that is so overflowing with details that it redirects our attention from noticing all of the details – all of the three-dimensionality, the humanity of the person – that are missing. These images also hide the damage, violence, and violation that produced the state of the cranium depicted by the artists who Morton hired – the theft, the dismembering, the boiling off of flesh, and, before all of that, perhaps, the violence and starvation that caused the death. The artists also left off of their illustrations all of the writing that Morton and his dealers scribbled directly onto the bones of his "specimens." Nevertheless, they are a substantial presence in all of the modern photographs and in-person encounters with the crania. Collectively, these labels make a powerful impression of the intellectual mastery of Morton and his circle, across time and space, and their physical possession of these people who he had made his property.

Due to the violence and violation that is Morton's data, I am reproducing it as little as possible in this article. The specific manner in which he shared his data is crucial and directly related to the Penn Museum's data-sharing practices, so I feel the need to at least give a sense of the outlines and the characteristics of this data. In doing so, I seek also to foreground my awareness of my position as a scholar and a human with respect to those who were, and continue to be, violated. When it comes to the Morton Cranial Collection, the question of positioning is rendered extremely complex by the breadth of his collecting. His work targeted not just one person or a group of people but was quite clearly also designed to dehumanize all non-white people.

I approach this material as a member of one of the many descendant groups from whom Morton and his network of donors stole ancestors. My Indian ancestors lived and died under Portuguese and British colonial rule in Bombay, Goa, Mangalore, and Karachi; South Asian crania made up one of the largest "groups" in Morton's collection, after Native Americans, ancient Peruvians, ancient Egyptians, and enslaved Africans.⁷¹ Following patterns that more or less hold for the rest of his collection, Morton's catalogs record little other than a racial categorization for most of the 40 heads stolen from the subcontinent, sometimes followed by a gender, some measurements, and maybe concluding with the name of the donor. The person themselves is almost always nameless, their identity subsumed within that of the white collector and the white scientist.

Three of these Indian crania – nameless but for another physician at the Philadelphia almshouse, Joseph Carson, who brought them back from India – hover above the right shoulder of the white student, Jane Weiss, in the widely published stills from the Coursera

⁶⁸ Fabian 2010.

⁶⁹ Morton 1839, 1844.

⁷⁰ Morton 1840, 1843, 1849.

⁷¹ Morton 1849, v–vi.

video, exposed in their own degradation even as they witness the consequences of nearly 200 years of Morton's numericized racial hatred (Figure 2).⁷² Like Katricia's bones, their skulls have been rendered anonymous by science, removed from the contexts of their lives and families to become the research tools of empire.

Data versus repatriation

After Morton's death in 1851, his followers continued his work, providing some of the most enduring images of racial science.⁷³ In 1966, his collection of crania was given on permanent loan to the Penn Museum by the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. Two decades later, Monge, then a graduate student, was appointed as the first and only "keeper" of the collection, a title that is rarely used in the United States, which the Penn Museum uses to describe a role that combines aspects of a curator and a collections manager.⁷⁴ Monge's oversight of the Morton Cranial Collection reveals a set of curatorial practices that we see mirrored in her ownership of the MOVE remains: a strategic deployment of the idea of science, of the primacy of data, of the expert and their research that directly overrides the rights of survivors, family, and descendants of lost loved ones who were snatched from crime scenes, battlefields, and graves.⁷⁵ She has been able to do so in large part because there are few rules – whether in terms of law or professional practice – preventing non-medical scientists from extracting data from human remains or requiring them to return the dead to their respective communities.

In the United States, the idea that it was possible for descendant communities to take back their ancestors from the museums and scientists who claimed them as property was codified into law by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990.⁷⁶ Under NAGPRA, federally funded museums must at least attempt to return certain stolen remains – those that can be associated with federally recognized Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations.⁷⁷

Beyond Native American remains, however, there are few laws that protect human remains in museum contexts. Despite increasing recognition internationally of the rights of postcolonial nations to seek repatriation for their ancestors stolen for science by former colonial powers, museums in the United States are not required to comply with such requests.⁷⁸ Additionally, no legislation offers protection similar to NAGPRA for Black remains in the United States, though efforts to create an African American Graves

⁷² My identification of these crania is based on reconstructing the location of the crania in the CAAM 190 classroom in the basement of the Penn Museum, where they were on display from 2014 until 2020, with the assistance of Paul Wolff Mitchell (interviews with author, December 2021 and January 2022). Mitchell worked for and with Monge in the Physical Anthropology Section of the Penn Museum from 2009 until 2019, as an undergraduate work-study student and later as a PhD student. Short of Monge herself, he is the carrier of institutional memory around both the Morton Cranial Collection and the MOVE remains.

⁷³ Nott and Gliddon 1854, figures 339–44.

⁷⁴ Janet Monge, interview with author, March 2022.

⁷⁵ The Morton Cranial Collection and the MOVE remains are not the only human remains that have been under Monge's care for decades – estimates range from 10,000 on the Penn Museum's website (Penn Museum "Physical Anthropology Section," <https://www.penn.museum/about-collections/curatorial-sections/physical-anthropology-section> [accessed on September 26, 2023]) to Monge's statement that the museum has 250,000 human remains (Tucker Law Group 2021, Exhibit 14), a truly staggering number when it comes to considering the need for return.

⁷⁶ Fine-Dare 2002; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 16 November 1990, 104 Stat. 3048 (NAGPRA).

⁷⁷ The extreme failure of most institutions to fulfill their obligations under NAGPRA is highlighted by ProPublica's ongoing series "The Repatriation Project: The Delayed Return of Native Remains," January 11, 2023- (ongoing), <https://www.propublica.org/series/the-repatriation-project>, accessed on September 26, 2023.

⁷⁸ Fforde, McKeown, and Keeler 2020.

Protection and Repatriation Act were reinvigorated by the revelation that the Penn Museum secretly held Katricia's and Delisha's remains.⁷⁹

This leaves the majority of the Morton Cranial Collection not legally covered by any repatriation laws – positioned, in the words of Rachel Watkins, as “static entities perpetually available for research”⁸⁰ – to be used without consent at any time and in any way that the researchers desire. While these practices are widespread among museum anthropologists, Monge is extreme in her insistence on making sensitive data widely available and unique in terms of the sets of remains on which she has primarily focused her work at the Penn Museum: the iconic collection of Samuel George Morton, which was used to rank the relative value of different races, and the remains of Black people murdered by the police in the 1985 MOVE bombing.

In 2019, the Penn Museum's cavalier attitude toward the remains it treats as its possessions was directly challenged by West Philadelphia organizer and writer Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, who was the first to say, according to Manlu Liu in *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, that “[t]he crania in the Morton collection should be returned to relatives, and if that's not possible, buried.”⁸¹ Muhammad found out that the remains of enslaved people were in the museum's basement at the 2019 Penn & Slavery⁸² Symposium on 3 and 4 April, which they learned about from a pop-up ad online the previous day.⁸³ The following year, Muhammad's calls for return and reparations⁸⁴ were joined by others, including the abolitionist assembly Police Free Penn⁸⁵ and Penn undergraduate student Gabriela Alvarado.⁸⁶ Alvarado, who was

⁷⁹ Dunnavant, Justinvil, and Colwell 2021.

⁸⁰ Watkins 2018, 32.

⁸¹ Manlu Liu, “Penn & Slavery Project Finds Profs Collected Body Parts of Enslaved People in the 1800s,” *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, 19 April 2019, <https://www.thedp.com/article/2019/04/penn-slavery-project-findings-research-medicine>, accessed on September 26, 2023.

⁸² The Penn & Slavery Project, a multi-year project run by undergraduate students, seeks to uncover the history of the university's involvement with slavery in the face of multiple statements by the university administration denying any such involvement. See Zoe Greenberg, “Indebted: At the University of Pennsylvania, a ‘Comforting Story’ about Slavery and an Ongoing Search for the Truth,” A More Perfect Union series, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 October 2022, <https://www.inquirer.com/news/inq2/more-perfect-union-university-pennsylvania-history-slavery-research-20221011.html>, accessed on September 26, 2023.

⁸³ Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, interview with author, January 2022.

⁸⁴ Muhammad's consistent and impactful publication on the need to return the Morton Cranial Collection spans from social media to Philadelphia's paper of record; some key examples include Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, “Demand University of Penn to Return Enslaved Crania,” *Change.org*, 18 May 2019, <https://www.change.org/p/president-of-university-of-penn-and-board-of-trustees-university-of-penn-to-return-enslaved-crania>, accessed on September 26, 2023; Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, “As Reparations Debate Continues, the University of Pennsylvania Has a Role to Play,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 July 2019, <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/university-of-pennsylvania-slavery-reparations-debate-20190712.html>, accessed on September 26, 2023; Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, “Penn, Complicit in Slavery and Displacement Must Engage in Reparative Action,” *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, 29 August 2019, <https://www.thedp.com/article/2019/08/penn-slavery-project-racism-ivy-league-upenn-philadelphia>, accessed on September 26, 2023; Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, “It's Past Time for Penn Museum to Repatriate the Morton Skull Collection,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 April 2021, <https://www.inquirer.com/news/morton-collection-skulls-upenn-museum-repatriation-racial-justice-20210405.html>, accessed on September 26, 2023.

⁸⁵ Police Free Penn, “Abolition Now: We Demand a #PoliceFreePenn,” *Medium.com*, 15 June 2020, <https://policefreepenn.medium.com/abolition-now-we-demand-a-policefreepenn-8f6ca2d30f1a>, accessed September 25, 2023. For a more detailed discussion of this stage of resistance, see Kinjal Dave and Jake Nussbaum “How the Possession of Human Remains Led to a Public Reckoning at the Penn Museum,” *Hyperallergic*, 31 October 2021, <https://hyperallergic.com/688818/how-the-possession-of-human-remains-led-to-a-public-reckoning-at-the-penn-museum>, accessed September 26, 2023.

⁸⁶ Gabriela Alvarado, “The Penn Museum Must End Abuse of the Morton Collection,” *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, 25 June 2020, <https://www.thedp.com/article/2020/06/penn-museum-samuel-morton-collection-repatriation-nagpra-skulls-racist-science>, accessed September 26, 2023.

transcribing Morton's correspondence at the time of the George Floyd Uprising, published a piece in the Penn student newspaper on 25 June 2020, vividly describing the horror of the Morton Cranial Collection, wherein "[m]any [of the human beings in the collection] were brutally exploited by colonialism while they were alive, and now they rest in a predominantly white institution." Alvarado uplifted Muhammad's and Police Free Penn's demands for repatriation, stating that "[t]hese people belong with their descendants. They belong in their homeland."

By the end of the summer, the Penn Museum had removed "the part of the Morton Collection that has been located in a classroom,"⁸⁷ noticeably not mentioning how many crania had been on display in CAAM 190. In part, this reflects the broader disorganization of the Morton Cranial Collection. To this day, there is no precise count of the crania in the collection, though Paul Wolff Mitchell, who worked for Monge for a decade, estimates that between 500–600 of the crania were arranged on shelves in the small classroom.⁸⁸ The museum also established an internal committee to study the "complications" of repatriating the remains of enslaved people in the Morton Cranial Collection.⁸⁹ The membership of this committee remains secret. The Morton Collection Committee's initial charge was to address the repatriation of the 51 crania of African-born enslaved people who were stolen from their graves in Cuba.⁹⁰ In February 2021, Mitchell, who was then a doctoral candidate in anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, published a report that called into question the basic assumption that those were the "only" remains of enslaved people in the collection, highlighting the presence of 14 Black Philadelphians who were listed in Morton's catalogs, some of whom would have been enslaved earlier in their lives.⁹¹ As a result, the Penn Museum press release on 12 April 2021, containing their apology, and the Morton Collection Committee's recommendations, expanded the scope of repatriation to include the entire Morton collection.⁹²

Another recommendation was "the Museum should ensure that Community consultation is integrated into the process of assessment and action at every step."⁹³ And after hiding from a sea of bad press related to the MOVE remains, the Penn Museum did indeed form a "Morton Cranial Collection Community Advisory Group," to address the Black Philadelphians in the Morton Cranial Collection. It appears, however, that this is a purely superficial attempt at "community involvement"; without informing the group's members, the Penn Museum petitioned Philadelphia's Orphans' Court for permission to bury these Black Philadelphians, claiming that the burial plan in their petition is the recommendation of

⁸⁷ According to an "Update on the Morton Collection" that is visible on this archived version of the Penn Museum's "Morton Cranial Collection" page from 20 July 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200720174404/https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton>, accessed September 26, 2023.

⁸⁸ Mitchell told me that the crania that were catalogued as numbers 1 through 1,000 by Morton and his successors were on display in the classroom, minus those that had been repatriated under NAGPRA, or were being stored in the repatriation room, pending possible return (this included crania that fell under NAGPRA, as well as some others that did not – including crania from Greenland and Canada). Paul Wolff Mitchell, interview with author, December 2021.

⁸⁹ A new webpage for the Morton Cranial Collection was published in April 2021, coinciding with the release of the Morton Collection Committee's report. It is archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20210409045433/https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton>, accessed September 26, 2023.

⁹⁰ See Morton Collection Committee, "Report on Evaluation Phase," *Penn Museum*, 8 April 2021, <https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton/MortonCommitteeReport.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2023.

⁹¹ Mitchell 2021.

⁹² "Museum Announces the Repatriation of the Morton Cranial Collection," press release, *Penn Museum*, 12 April 2021, <https://www.penn.museum/documents/pressroom/MortonCollectionRepatriation-Press%20release.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2023.

⁹³ Morton Collection Committee, "Report on Evaluation Phase."

the Advisory Group.⁹⁴ However, one member of that body has made it clear that the plan was proposed in its current form by the museum's director, Christopher Woods, and that they were not even notified that the museum had sought legal permission to carry out the plan.⁹⁵ These top-down processes by the Penn Museum, to borrow the words of Police Free Penn about other egregious actions of the museum, "reproduce[e] Morton's violent and white supremacist assumption: that the descendents [sic] of enslaved Africans, and of Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian communities do not have the right to care for their own ancestors; and that the desires of imperial knowledge-producers supersede the self-determination of Black and brown communities."⁹⁶ Will the ancestors be returned, or will the "complications" of repatriation necessitate ever more research by "experts" – and the extraction and open sharing of ever more "data" – indefinitely?

Data theft

The Penn Museum's promise to repatriate the collection has not been accompanied by any indication that they are considering relinquishing the valued property of the data that their staff and students – and, before them, Penn Medicine alumnus Morton and his followers – extracted from these crania and which the Penn Museum has disseminated on their website for years. The inherent violence of data creation makes each instance of its use an intensification of that violence. This was as true when Morton shared his data widely as it is when Monge used the Internet to spread them even further. In continuing to use this data following any commitment to repatriation, Monge and the museum call into question their understanding of the concept of, and need for, repatriation in the first place. Either they really do not get it, or they are not acting in good faith.

The Penn Museum's lack of transparency means that it is not entirely clear who "they" are – who is making the decisions about these matters at the museum and if it really goes beyond Monge, who, having worked at the museum for over four decades and developed close relationships with many donors, has an unusually high level of influence for a curator. Regardless, their continued support of her extraction and dissemination of information about the crania is entirely at odds with the perspectives of those who are calling for repatriation of the crania and who insist as well that the museum should "[e]nd the use of data sourced from the collection without consent and remove all images from the Museum's digital footprint that represent the deceased without consent."⁹⁷

Is the supposed absence of identification a justification for proceeding without consent? If we lack a known descendant to seek consent from – more often than not because the links of kinship have been severed by empire – is there any ethical way to conduct scientific research or teaching activities on human remains? The emphasis of student activists on the principles of consent invokes the many non-consensual experiments on Black people and other colonized populations carried out by doctors like Morton⁹⁸ as well as the theft of Henrietta Lacks's DNA, taken from a Black woman dying of cancer at Johns Hopkins

⁹⁴ Jennifer Nevins, *Petition, In re: Morton Cranial Collection, for Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania*. Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County, Orphans' Court Division, 12 May 2022.

⁹⁵ See Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, "Objections to Penn's Orphans' Court Petition," filed on 29 July 2022, https://drive.google.com/file/d/19-MiFoyDYjbulLs6oK5fNp_QQOr19X1Ne/view, accessed September 26, 2023.

⁹⁶ Police Free Penn "Repatriation & Reparations NOW! Restating What We Mean by Abolish the Morton Collection," *Medium.com*, 15 July 2020, <https://policefreepenn.medium.com/repatriation-reparations-now-restating-what-we-mean-by-abolish-the-morton-collection-9a67f9206279>, accessed September 26, 2023.

⁹⁷ Police Free Penn, "Repatriation & Reparations NOW!"

⁹⁸ Washington 2006; Denis 2015, 33–36.

University, without her knowledge or consent, by doctors who profited from it financially.⁹⁹ Similar concerns are raised by the ongoing #FreeRenty campaign, supporting the legal battle of a descendant of enslaved people photographed by one of Morton's collaborators, Louis Agassiz, to get the daguerreotypes of her ancestors back from Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.¹⁰⁰

On the new "Morton Collection" webpage that the Penn Museum posted in April 2021 to coincide with their apology and commitment to repatriate the collection, the following answer is offered to the "Frequently Asked Questions": "How has the Morton Collection been used for research?":

From 2004 to 2011, the Museum was awarded a National Science Foundation grant to CT scan the Morton Collection. As of March 2020, more than 17,500 CT scans have been distributed to scholars around the world; often, researchers use both the actual crania with the CT scans in their research. Researchers have included colleagues from Penn Medicine, Penn Dental, and Penn Law; topics have included worldwide variation in the functional morphology (shape) of the cranium, patterns of growth and development of the cranium and dentition, the analysis of traumatic injury, shape changes in dentition and palate, health and disease patterns of peoples in past human populations, and more.¹⁰¹

This statement reflects Monge's understanding of the crania as scientific research specimens first, foremost, and fairly exclusively. Her pride at making the Morton cranial data so very available to researchers seems to be in alignment with the values of her dissertation research on the methods and materials for casting fossil hominids and primates as tools for scientists – work in which Mann trained her and which she continued to employ students to assist with in the museum's casting lab.¹⁰² The seamless connection that she perceived between the two projects is evident from the webpage for the University of Pennsylvania Museum Fossil Casting Program, which includes under "Related Links" on its homepage a (now defunct) link to the database for ordering the CT scans of the crania in the Morton Cranial Collection.¹⁰³

Even with this context, it is hard not to read the above words, which were posted on a website in April 2021, as a refusal to hear or acknowledge the demands to cease research and the distribution of data extracted from stolen ancestral remains. Or perhaps it is the opposite: can we read this as Monge showing by her words and actions that she does hear these demands but that, as a white scientist who is officially in charge of the collection, she is still the one who gets to make decisions about extracting and sharing new data in the form of National Science Foundation-funded CT scans?

The science performed with this data painfully illustrates how reproduction of data compounds the violence of its extraction. The researchers who use the CT scans treat them as generic samples: their violent origin and their connection to Morton and his research is

⁹⁹ Harvey 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Valentina Di Liscia, "Legal Precedents or Reparations? Lawsuit against Harvard May Decide Who Owns Images of Enslaved People," *Hyperallergic*, 27 October 2021, <https://hyperallergic.com/687964/lawsuit-against-harvard-may-decide-who-owns-images-of-enslaved-people>, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹⁰¹ The FAQ are near the bottom of the Penn Museum's "Morton Cranial Collection" webpage, <https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton>, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹⁰² Monge 1991; Paul Wolff Mitchell, interview with author, February 2022.

¹⁰³ The Open Research Scan Archive (ORSA) is referred to as "Penn Modern Primate and Human CT Database" on the website of Janet Monge's and Alan Mann's long-standing project Skelastic III in the University of Pennsylvania Museum Fossil Casting Program, <https://www.pennfossilcasting.com>, accessed September 26, 2023.

irrelevant, and they are merely useful data points. In one of the many examples of scientific research offered in the “Bibliography” published as part of the Penn Museum’s April 2021 Morton Cranial Collection site,¹⁰⁴ three scholars from Texas A&M and Florida Atlantic University – Lauren N. Butaric, Robert C. McCarthy, and Douglas C. Broadfield – selected 26 “specimens” from the Morton Cranial Collection for their study of the variation in size and shape of the maxillary sinus in “a small sample of 39 dried human crania of known ecogeographic provenience.”¹⁰⁵

The public face of Monge’s lack of consideration for consent is a database called the Open Research Scan Archive (ORSA).¹⁰⁶ The timing of this project, initiated in the early 2000s, is not at all coincidental; many museum anthropologists who were concerned about losing valuable scientific specimens, endeavored to capture and share as much data as possible from any remains that they might be forced by NAGPRA to relinquish.¹⁰⁷ While the ORSA does not hold the actual CT scans, it is, in effect, a mail-order catalog for these “scholars around the world,” a one-stop shop for nearly all of the dehumanizing data extracted from, and recorded about, the crania by everyone from Morton in the 1830s to Monge and her students and colleagues in the 2000s. The database, which is linked to the Penn Museum’s website currently has 4,450 entries, of which 1,677 are from the Morton Cranial Collection. The main page of the user interface is shown in [Figure 7](#).

The entries in this database are not based on the actual composition of the Morton Cranial Collection at the Penn Museum since no catalog of that collection exists.¹⁰⁸ Instead, there is an ORSA entry for each skull contained in the published and manuscript sources for this collection,¹⁰⁹ specifically the crania listed in Morton’s 1849 catalog, J. Aitken Meigs’s 1857 catalog,¹¹⁰ the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia’s Ethnology Collection catalog, as well as curatorial notes on the collection from the late 1930s and early 1940s. This means that the entries do not represent the specific crania that the Penn Museum physically possesses and includes many that they do not possess, such as the cranium of a Black Philadelphian that Morton cataloged as no. 55.¹¹¹ What each ORSA entry for each cranium

¹⁰⁴ See the heading “Modern Research on Morton and His Skull Collection from 1980 to Today,” <https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton/bibliography.php>, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹⁰⁵ Butaric, McCarthy, and Broadfield 2010, 426.

¹⁰⁶ Monge and Schoenemann 2011. The database is hosted by the Penn Museum and can be accessed at <http://130.91.83.227/fmi/webd#ORSASpecimenDatabase>, accessed September 21, 2023.

¹⁰⁷ Projects for extracting data prior to returning NAGPRA remains, similar to Monge’s, were widespread and above board, and there was great demand for protocols and best practices for doing so. See Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994.

¹⁰⁸ The absence of a catalogue for the Morton Cranial Collection as it currently exists at the Penn Museum was mentioned to me by many who have engaged with the collection directly and was raised by Penn Anthropology professor Deborah Thomas as an impediment to the work of the Morton Collection Committee, of which she was a member, in the discussion of “The African Burial Ground: Lessons for the Morton Cranial Collection.” Thomas 2021. In January 2023, Penn Museum shared a printout from their registrar that they claim shows the full catalog of the collection they house, but it can only be quite generously described as a very preliminary document, which they have only just begun to work on, likely in direct response to the informal discovery requests Abdul-Aliy Muhammad and I made as part of the Orphans Court process. “List of Contents for the Morton Collection,” *Penn Museum*, 8 January 2023, <https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton/documents/ContentsMortonCollection.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2023. For example, it includes crania that other documents provided by the museum at the same time indicate were never transferred to the museum from the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and also mischaracterizes the contents of many accession numbers as “skeleton,” when there are extremely few instances of more than a cranium and a mandible being preserved for any ancestor in the Morton Cranial Collection.

¹⁰⁹ Paul Wolff Mitchell, interview with author, January 2022.

¹¹⁰ Meigs 1857.

¹¹¹ “Research Reports on the Cranial Remains of Black Philadelphians in the Morton Collection,” *Penn Museum*, 10 January 2023, <https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton/documents/PennMuseumResearchReportonBlackPhiladelphiansintheMortonCranialCollection.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2023.

Figure 7. Screenshot of user interface for “Open Scan [sic] Research Archive” database, hosted by the Penn Museum. Courtesy of the author.

from the Morton Cranial Collection does do is replicate the violent “data” collected by Morton and his successors (including his protégé, J. Aitken Meigs), presented uncritically, no matter how racist the descriptions (and they are all racist). The Penn Museum’s webpage offers a justification for using these terms that boils down to the “man-of-his-time” idea that that is just how “people” talked.¹¹² The association of data creation with whiteness is profoundly evident here, as Monge joins her nineteenth-century predecessors in being unable to conceive of the (mostly) non-white people whose heads they stole and held captive as humans, who would most definitely have found those descriptions of their bodies to be “insulting and racist,” even “in the nineteenth century.”

The “Photos” tab displays images from a number of invasive angles, many of which reveal that some of that language that is “insulting and racist to us today” has been literally written onto the crania – whether by Morton or by the small army of white men of leisure and science who may stole these ancestors for his study.¹¹³ Viewing them in these photographs

¹¹² “Search the Archive,” *Penn Museum*, https://web.archive.org/web/20220122185658/https://www.penn.museum/sites/orsa/Search_The_Archive.html, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹¹³ Paul Wolff Mitchell, interview with author, January 2022.

makes it almost impossible to imagine the overwhelming horror of being in a classroom surrounded by the crania, as Alvarado describes CAAM 190: “[R]ow upon row, marked with numbers and labels such as ‘idiot,’ ‘lunatic,’ and ‘negro’ directly on their foreheads.”¹¹⁴ Among the final text fields on the “Other” tab is one for “Repatriation,” which is almost always answered “No” or left empty. It is pretty chilling.

Because the ORSA is based on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century catalogs, rather than the actual catalog of the crania currently at the Penn Museum, it still contains all of the crania that have been designated as subject to NAGPRA, including those that have already been repatriated.¹¹⁵ This turns the ORSA into a complete, digital Morton collection, unblemished by the ravages of repatriation, complete with the racist descriptions and “data” extracted from each person. The only thing that distinguishes the NAGPRA-repatriated or eligible crania from the others is that, for almost all Native American crania, the “Photos” tab is empty.¹¹⁶ The violation and dehumanization of the nonconsensual publication of images of the dead has become increasingly well understood among anthropologists as unethical,¹¹⁷ but it is not forbidden legally by NAGPRA.¹¹⁸ It’s somewhat confusing why Monge would make what seems to be a concession toward the idea that the photographs themselves constitute a form of intangible heritage that someone other than her might have claim to and similarly confusing why she would not extend that awareness to other impacted communities who are not covered by NAGPRA. Whatever the reason, it seems a clear example of the bifurcation of anatomical collections that Watkins identifies with the passage of NAGPRA.¹¹⁹

The continued existence of this dehumanizing database – which has not been changed at all since the demands for return began in 2019 – seems to powerfully contradict the museum’s April 2021 claims that they wish to repatriate the crania. The disorganization of the collection, and the inconsistent relationship between the ORSA and the crania at the Penn Museum, is evident in the Penn Museum’s May 2022 petition to bury “at least thirteen” crania of Black Philadelphians, with a provision for burying any additional crania from the Morton collection that they discover in the future to be those of Black Philadelphians.¹²⁰ Although the original petition did not specify which crania these are, the research reports released in January 2023 confirmed that the original number was based on the Black Philadelphians identified in Mitchell’s 2021 report,¹²¹ which was based primarily on an

¹¹⁴ Alvarado, “Penn Museum Must End Abuse.”

¹¹⁵ A large number of the crania in the Morton Cranial Collection are subject to NAGPRA, but not all of them have been returned. ProPublica documented that 64 percent of the 632 Native American remains that the Penn Museum reported to the federal government have not yet made available for return. “Repatriation Database,” *ProPublica*, 26 September 2023, <https://projects.propublica.org/repatriation-nagpra-database/institution/university-pennsylvania-museum-archaeology-and-anthropology>, accessed September 26, 2023. Crania from the Morton Cranial Collection comprise a large percentage of these Native American remains.

¹¹⁶ Paul Wolff Mitchell, interview with author, January 2022.

¹¹⁷ Chip Colwell, “Is It Ever OK to Publish Photographs of Human Remains?” *SAPIENS*, 11 March 2020, <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/photographing-human-remains>, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹¹⁸ The sense that it is not acceptable to display images of remains covered by NAGPRA is widely shared; in 2020, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, adopted a policy explicitly forbidding the creation or use of images of NAGPRA-eligible remains or cultural objects without written permission from the tribe, which defines “images” as “photographs, scans, 3D printing, CT and PET scans, MRIs, drawings, and any other depictions.” “Knoxville Campus Policy: RE00001-K Creation and Publication of Images of Human Remains and Cultural Objects Subject to NAGPRA Protections,” *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, 19 June 2020, <https://provost.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/06/UTK-NAGPRA-image-policy-approved-2020-06-19.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹¹⁹ Watkins 2018, 33.

¹²⁰ Nevins, *Petition, In re: Morton Cranial Collection*.

¹²¹ See “Research Reports,” *Penn Museum*, 10 January 2023, 1–2, <https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton/documents/PennMuseumResearchReportonBlackPhiladelphiansintheMortonCranialCollection.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2023.

analysis of Morton's 1849 catalog, and did not involve an examination of the actual collections of the museum.¹²²

In their revised request to the Orphans' Court judge, which was granted, the Penn Museum increased the number of Black Philadelphians to bury to 20. But because the Morton Cranial Collection has never been catalogued by the Penn Museum, it is extremely unclear whether the physical crania they are claiming they plan to bury correlate to particular descriptions by Morton and his successors. Based on my ongoing research, which is limited by my access only to the ORSA and to published and manuscript sources and not to the crania themselves, I think it is unlikely that all of the 20 crania that the Penn Museum plans to bury are in fact the crania of people of African descent who died in Philadelphia; some seem to lack identifying marks that would allow us to match them clearly with the descriptions of a given Black Philadelphian in Morton's catalog. And, of course, despite the Penn Museum's claims to desire to give them rest, each person's skull is still laid bare in dehumanizing descriptions, violating data, and invasive photographs in their entries within the ORSA.

Worse, images of the Morton crania are unfortunately not confined to the ORSA. The Penn Museum's extensive and profligate use of the images of the stolen crania in the Morton Cranial Collection is in evidence on many pages of their website. On various museum webpages, they function in a decorative manner, marking the topic, the content of the collection in that particular space, setting the tone while simultaneously asserting a white institution's ownership over these people of color whose bodies were stolen from around the country and around the world. Photographs dehumanize. They measure. They thing-ify. What does Penn hope to gain through its promise of repatriating the entire collection, if not to end and counteract, to the extent possible, such treatment of the colonized by the colonizer?

Again, it is hard to take seriously the museum's commitment to repatriation when it apparently cannot see the need to make the very straightforward changes to remove these dehumanizing images from its website. Views on the use of images of human remains are currently in flux,¹²³ and this is reflected in how multiple publications have first added and then removed images of Morton crania or stills from the Coursera video from their online news articles in recent years.¹²⁴ In each case, the editors have cited different reasons for removing the violent images, but they all seemed to agree that doing so was necessary. This is reflective, I think, of the degree to which such images are one of those aspects of the violence of empire that are not easily parsed. Nevertheless, it is striking that multiple editors at campus, local, and national media outlets all recognized that it was not ethical to show even one image of human remains to illustrate the subject of their news story, while the Penn Museum persists in using thousands of images of the deceased without consent on their website.¹²⁵

¹²² Mitchell 2021.

¹²³ Harries et al. 2018; Squires, Roberts, and Márquez-Grant 2022.

¹²⁴ See, e.g., Alvarado, "Penn Museum Must End Abuse"; Komal Patel, "Penn Museum to Remove Morton Cranial Collection from Public View after Student Opposition," *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, 12 July 2020, <https://www.thedp.com/article/2020/07/penn-museum-morton-cranial-collection-black-lives-matter>, accessed September 26, 2023; Maya Kassuto, "Remains of Children Killed in MOVE Bombing Sat in a Box at Penn Museum for Decades," *Billy Penn*, 21 April 2021, <https://billypenn.com/2021/04/21/move-bombing-penn-museum-bones-remains-princeton-africa>, accessed September 26, 2023; Hakim Bishara, "Controversy Erupts over Penn Museum's Possession of MOVE Bombing Victims' Remains," *Hyperallergic*, 22 April 2021, <https://hyperallergic.com/639910/controversy-penn-museums-possession-of-move-bombing-victims-remains>, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹²⁵ Not all publications have abandoned the use of images of human remains; some recent articles that show photographs and drawings of crania from Morton's work include Remy Tumin, "Penn Museum to Bury Skulls of Enslaved People," *New York Times*, 9 August 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/09/us/university-pennsyl>

Centering the ancestors

The Penn Museum and the University of Pennsylvania have shown again and again that, when it comes to the remains of over 12,000 people that they hold in their collections – accessioned and unaccessioned – they cannot be relied upon to understand what the right thing is, much less do it.¹²⁶ This is most evident in the way in which the museum has continued to act unilaterally in connection with the Morton Cranial Collection. After promising to return the entire collection in 2021, they sought permission from the courts in 2022 to bury the remains of “at least 13” Black Philadelphians, claiming to be acting on the recommendation of their “Community Advisory Group.”¹²⁷ Despite the fact that five of the 14 members appointed to this group are high-level Penn administrators, including the museum’s director,¹²⁸ and that this group at no point operated according to best practices for working with descendant communities,¹²⁹ a judge threw out the objections of the concerned parties and ruled that Penn could proceed with the burial without the knowledge or consent of the descendants of the Black Philadelphians in the Morton Cranial Collection.¹³⁰

vania-black-skulls-burial.html, accessed September 26, 2023; Ed Pilkington, “Ivy League University Set To Rebury Skulls of Black People Kept for Centuries,” *The Guardian*, 7 August 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/07/us-university-plans-repatriation-black-american-remains>, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹²⁶ To consider only two examples from the Penn Museum’s response to the events and revelations of 2020–21: first, the Morton Collection Committee’s 2021 recommendation to hire one “BIPOC bioanthropologist, who would combine expertise in analysis of human remains with a track record of advocacy for Black and Indigenous matters in repatriation requests. This appointment should be made jointly as a Curator in the Museum and as a Faculty member in the Department of Anthropology.” Morton Collection Committee, “Report on Evaluation Phase.” This is a classic case of a university putting an impossible amount of work onto one person of color, who is called upon to clean up their white mess; unsurprisingly, this was a failed search and attracted an honorable mention from the field’s flagship journal, *American Anthropologist*, in their “The Worst Job Ads for 2021” (Dennis et al. 2022). A second example is the so-called “independent” report on the MOVE remains (Tucker Law Group 2021), prepared by the legal firm hired by the University of Pennsylvania, which was overseen by Carl E. Singley, the attorney under whose watch the MOVE remains had originally been so mistreated in 1985 and 1986 when he served as counsel to the Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission (more commonly known as the “MOVE Commission”). Penn Museum hailed this report as essentially clearing them and their staff of any wrongdoing, despite the fact that it was sloppily researched and argued, and it put more energy into scapegoating one of Monge’s former graduate students than it did on verifying Monge’s statements about the crucial issues, such as the whereabouts of Delisha’s remains. Indeed, its dependence on Monge’s statements as “fact,” as well as her narrative that there was no wrongdoing, and all that happened was a media storm prompted by a vengeful student, makes it read almost as if it were an early draft of Monge’s 2022 defamation lawsuit. Epstein and Filbert, *Janet Monge v. University of Pennsylvania*.

¹²⁷ Nevins, *Petition, In re: Morton Cranial Collection*.

¹²⁸ Nevins, *Petition, In re: Morton Cranial Collection*, Exhibit B.

¹²⁹ Some relevant examples, which were shared with the judge by Muhammad and myself, as well as by others who submitted letters to the court, include “Engaging Descendant Communities in the Interpretation of Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites,” a rubric published in 2018 by James Madison’s Montpelier and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, <https://montpelier-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/Interpreting%20Slavery%2010-30-18.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2023; the work of the Family Representative Council for the East Marshall Street Well Project of Richmond’s Virginia Commonwealth University, <https://emsw.vcu.edu>, accessed September 26, 2023; and Harvard University’s Fall 2022 Report on Human Remains in University Museum Collections, which centers the role of descendant communities in addressing ancestors in their museums who have a very similar history, before and after death, to the Black Philadelphians Penn sought permission to bury, https://provost.harvard.edu/files/provost/files/harvard_university_human_remains_report_fall_2022.pdf?m=1663090982#:~:text=Nonetheless%20the%20human%20remains%20under,in%20these%20categorically%20immoral%20systems, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹³⁰ Sheila Woods-Skipper, A.J., Decree, *In re: Morton Cranial Collection*, O.C. 578 NP of 2022, Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County, Orphans’ Court Division, 13 February 2023. See also the annotation of Judge Woods-Skipper’s decree by Finding Ceremony, https://drive.google.com/file/d/19P-uTUNwALosw_lkaQ2CfYgTB83S_xVO/view?usp=sharing, accessed September 26, 2023.

Whatever comes next cannot be about “shared authority”; it is time for the museum and the university to relinquish their control entirely, however benevolent they may believe themselves to be. But this does not mean that they can step away completely. The museum and the university are responsible for this violence and for making it right as much as they possibly can. These institutions have only two roles to play in the work to come: to raise and provide the funding for the development of solutions by descendant communities as well as for the implementation of those solutions and to fully cooperate with any requests for support or information made of them by descendants and family members of those whose bodies they have treated as their property.¹³¹ This goes hand in hand with the Penn Museum having insisted on its right to use the crania for so many decades, regarding them as items of prestige from which it has benefited and proudly claiming Morton as a valued alumnus of the university.¹³² Indeed, the Penn Museum can conceptualize this as part (but not all, by any means) of the reparations it owes as one of dozens of institutions of higher education in the United States that directly profited from slavery as well as provided intellectual backing for white supremacy.¹³³

There are at least three types of harm that need to be addressed: on the levels of the actual physical bones (and associated materials, including the documentation of the Medical Examiner’s Office, Morton’s correspondence, and so on); the intangible (digital data such as CT scans of the crania, intellectual property such as Weiss’s 2019 senior thesis, and curatorial notes from the Academy of Natural Sciences, the only copies of which are currently held by the Physical Anthropology Section of Penn Museum); and what I will term “legacy harm,” referring to the broader impacts of the Penn Museum’s actions and the actions of the white supremacist systems that it benefits from.

The Penn Museum must abandon its support for Monge’s claim that she only ever had the remains of one MOVE bombing victim¹³⁴ and must work to return Delisha’s remains to her mother, Janet Africa. In contrast to the reports commissioned by the Penn Museum and Princeton University, a number of published and unpublished investigations by scholars, journalists, lawyers, and community members have concluded, as do I, that there is ample evidence that Monge herself brought Delisha’s remains to the museum in September 1986 and ordered x-rays of her remains at the Penn Museum in November 2018.¹³⁵ While it is very

¹³¹ Even the legal arguments upon which the Penn Museum’s attorney based their case treated these human remains as property, which became clear during a pre-hearing conference in which she referred to the ancestral remains of Black Philadelphians as “charitable assets.” Jennifer Nevins, *Status Conference with for 578NP of 2022*, January 2023.

¹³² For one example of this emphasis on Morton’s high status as a Penn alumnus, see Emily S. Renschler and Janet Monge, “The Samuel George Morton Cranial Collection: Historical Significance and New Research,” *Expedition*, 50(3): 30-38, <https://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/the-samuel-george-morton-cranial-collection>, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹³³ On the colonial origins of American universities, see Wilder 2013. On reparations owed by the Penn Museum, specifically, see Muhammad, “As Reparations Debate Continues.”

¹³⁴ Their continued refusal to do so is evident in the supplemental report they commissioned from Tucker Law Group and then quietly posted on their website, on 16 September 2022. In direct response to the findings of the report for the city (Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022), Penn’s supplemental report purports to “prove” that the museum never had Delisha’s remains. The museum has not drawn attention to its existence, but it can be viewed here (and also is linked from their “Towards a Respectful Resolution” webpage for updates on the MOVE remains. “Towards a Respectful Resolution,” <https://www.penn.museum/towards-respectful-resolution>, accessed September 26, 2023): Tucker Law Group, “Supplemental Report to ‘The Odyssey of the MOVE Remains,’” September 12, 2022, https://www.penn.museum/documents/pressroom/Tucker_Law_Group_Supplemental_Report_September_2022.pdf, accessed September 26, 2023. See also footnote 3 for newly uncovered photographic evidence from 2014 of Janet Monge’s possession of Delisha’s remains at Penn Museum.

¹³⁵ Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022; Muhammad, “Decades after Philadelphia’s MOVE Bombing”; Bronwen Dickey, “She Was Killed by the Police. Why Were Her Bones in a Museum?” *New York Times Magazine*, 19 October

possible that Monge, or someone else, removed Delisha's remains from the museum subsequent to the November 2018 x-rays, it is absolutely the Penn Museum's responsibility to find them and return them to her mother.

Similarly, the Penn Museum owes Katricia's family a full explanation for the missing right pubic symphysis, as specified by her brother Lionell Dotson's November 2022 lawsuit against the University of Pennsylvania and the city of Philadelphia.¹³⁶ This bone fragment is visible in the November 2018 x-ray of Katricia's remains and described in the forensic records from 1985 and 1986 but does not appear with the other three bone fragments in the Coursera video with Monge and Weiss.¹³⁷ Could it have been destroyed for the DNA testing that Monge mentioned in the Coursera video she was planning in 2019? Although the legal reports commissioned by the Penn Museum and by Princeton described Monge's 2019 plan for stealing a sample of Katricia's mother's DNA from her trash (in order to support Monge's and Mann's assessment that the bones were not Katricia's), neither report explains how she planned to get the DNA from the remains for comparison.¹³⁸ Of all the fragments, it does seem likely to me that the one she would choose to test would be the right pubic symphysis, given that it is more clearly associated with the innominate and femur.¹³⁹

As for the Morton Cranial Collection, the secret Morton Cranial Committee that the museum established – on which Monge herself was widely known to sit – proposed in April 2021 that the museum “[f]ollow the NAGPRA model” and establish a parallel process for the repatriation of non-NAGPRA remains in the collection. But NAGPRA, which is a process that was developed in consultation with Native Americans in the 1980s, is out of date with evolving understandings of the rights of colonized peoples and vests far too much power and control over the remains in the hands of the same colonial institutions that originally stole and have retained ancestral remains in order to dehumanize non-white people. Instead, we need to think beyond the assumptions and practices of perpetrator-driven repatriation.

This is work that I am personally committed to and am actively in conversations about how to proceed. Along with Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, I am co-convening a descendant-controlled process we call “Finding Ceremony,” which we are building as a stewardship body made up of members of the many descendant communities, hailing from (at least) all of the countries indicated in Figure 6.¹⁴⁰ This body would be truly independent and composed of people drawn to the work of caring for ancestors rather than arbitrarily selected and appointed by the museum (as happened with the “Morton Cranial Collection Community Advisory Group”).¹⁴¹ Such a body could arrange for the respectful transfer of the ancestors out of the basement of the Penn Museum to an intermediate site and provide care for the crania, while determining how to help them return home – with the ultimate fate of each person's remains determined exclusively by their lineal descendants, their descendant community members, and their relatives.

Ending the use of all the data extracted from our ancestors – and, thus, the violence its use does to those from whom it was extracted as well as its ability to continue to uphold patriarchal white supremacy – will also be a massive undertaking. Penn must take the ORSA

2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/magazine/philadelphia-move-bombing-katricia-dotson.html>, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹³⁶ See Daniel P. Harstein and Bakari Sellers, *Lionell Dotson v. Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania and City of Philadelphia*, Court of Common Pleas, Philadelphia County, 4 November 2022, 10–11.

¹³⁷ Bradford-Grey and Remondino 2022; Monge, “REAL BONES.”

¹³⁸ Tucker Law Group 2021, 65, Exhibit 16; Pratt, Kastenber, and Vassallo 2021, 35.

¹³⁹ Based on the way that it was labelled in Segal's notes, the left pubic symphysis appears to have been assigned to “B-1” later. Robert Segal, “Postmortem Examination Addenda,” 11 November 1985, PSIC Records, TUSC.

¹⁴⁰ Muhammad and Monteiro, “Finding Ceremony.”

¹⁴¹ Nevins, *Petition, In re: Morton Cranial Collection*, Exhibit B.

database offline immediately, and provide it, along with all the CT scans, x-rays, 3D scans, and photos and other digital and analog materials related to the collection, to the descendants. Of course, we do not even know the extent of the data that will be revealed in this process. As of 2018, Monge had unsuccessfully attempted DNA testing on two of the 11 crania that Morton described as Nubian; it is unknown whether she extracted material from other crania for testing since then.¹⁴² Additional intangible materials must also be relinquished, including the Coursera course, which includes images not only of Katricia's remains but also of dozens of crania in the Morton Cranial Collection as well as other human remains that Monge filmed for the other lessons in the course. These videos are currently Monge's property.

Other issues that descendant communities will be faced with include the many digitizations and ebooks of Morton's works that are available free to the public via Google Books, the National Institutes of Health, the Smithsonian Institution's Biodiversity Heritage Library, the Wellcome Collection in the United Kingdom, the Internet Archive, Project Gutenberg, HathiTrust, and Canadiana. In addition to perpetuating the intentionally shaming exposure of the people whose heads Morton held captive, these publications contain a wealth of fodder for present-day hate groups seeking to justify the oppression of people of color, much as they did when Morton first had them printed in the 1830s and 1840s. And what of the archives around the world where Morton's correspondence and papers have been preserved and sometimes digitized, including the American Philosophical Society and the Library Company of Philadelphia, once again enacting the ideal of "open data" without consideration of the harm these materials can cause?¹⁴³

¹⁴² These tests are not published anywhere, but because DNA testing is inherently destructive, it can be observed. In this case, Paul Wolff Mitchell (interview with author, January 2022) told me that he asked Monge about the highly specific damage he noticed to two of the Nubian crania in the Morton Cranial Collection in 2019, after he returned to the country from extended research overseas. Mitchell believed that the damage was clearly not due to dropping but, rather, was targeted, unilateral drilling of the petrous part of the temporal bone, which contains the inner ear bones commonly used in ancient genetic analyses (as described in Chris Palmer, "The Skull's Petrous Bone and the Rise of Ancient Human DNA: Q & A with Genetic Archaeologist David Reich," *Biomedical Beat Blog: National Institute of General Medical Sciences*, 11 April 2018, <https://biobeat.nigms.nih.gov/2018/04/the-skulls-petrous-bone-and-the-rise-of-ancient-human-dna-q-a-with-genetic-archaeologist-david-reich>, accessed September 26, 2023). Mitchell said that Monge explained that she had sent a sample from which David Reich hoped to be able to extract DNA for his Harvard lab's study but that they had been unable to do so (based on the timing and the limited description of the research, I believe this may be the article Monge hoped to contribute to: Sirak et al. 2021). Reich, a long-time (and apparently ongoing; see Brielle et al. 2023) collaborator of Monge, who she has sent other samples from other collections of human remains at the Penn Museum and elsewhere, is a notoriously racist geneticist. See his *New York Times* op ed. David Reich, "How Genetics Is Changing Our Understanding of 'Race,'" *New York Times*, 23 March 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/23/opinion/sunday/genetics-race.html>, accessed September 26, 2023. In this case, Reich's study focused on the pre-Islamic-migration population of the ancient civilization whose Blackness has most vexed white supremacists—including Morton, who wrote of them, in *Crania Americana*: "The hair of the Nubian is thick and black, often curled either by nature or by art, and sometimes partially frizzled, but never woolly" (Morton 1839, 26).

¹⁴³ Some measures have been taken by some of these digital purveyors of Morton's dehumanizing data, including the American Philosophical Society, which has placed "access restrictions" on the digitized versions of some of Morton's images. See, for example, the restriction in the American Philosophical Society's catalog entry for "Original drawing of a Botocudo cranium in the cabinet of Dr. Blumenbach," <https://diglib.amphilsoc.org/islandora/object/graphics:11355>, accessed September 26, 2023 (it is unclear what exactly this "restriction" means, as it did not prevent *The Guardian* from publishing an American Philosophical Society image from Morton's *Crania Americana* in their August 2022 article cited above), and the Smithsonian Institution's Biodiversity Heritage Library, which provides a tiny, easy-to-miss link above the digitized pages of Morton's works stating "Please read our Acknowledgement of Harmful Content," which links to a separate page containing this acknowledgement. Biodiversity Heritage Library, "Acknowledgement of Harmful Content," September 2021, <https://about.biodiversitylibrary.org/about/harmful-content>, accessed September 26, 2023.

So much of the harm of the actions supported by the Penn Museum cannot even be paused or halted, as the property transfers described above suggest. The consent of a person whose head was stolen, abused, and used as a source of data with which to oppress their kin cannot be retroactively restored. The best we can aim to do is offer survivors and descendants that which will, if not make them whole, then support them in moving toward healing, which will doubtless look different in every case. The broader challenge is that the legacy of the white supremacist acts of the past will continue to shape our future, even after the ancestors have been returned to the care of their descendants. Morton's work asserted American Empire overseas in order to collect the "specimens," which in turn justified the institution of slavery, the war against Mexico, and the colonization of the West, while the collecting practices of Morton's dealers removed the social ties of those they kidnapped, dismembered, and entrusted to the US Postal Service to deliver to Morton in Philadelphia.

The data that Morton extracted from the crania created the scientific support for white Philadelphia's racism in the 1830s and beyond, laying the foundations upon which was built the specific flavor of racism that made it thinkable in 1985 to bomb a house full of Black people and shoot those who tried to escape; that made it thinkable to let the fire burn until it destroyed a Black neighborhood; that made it thinkable to excavate the burned home, which held the remains of the murdered MOVE members, using construction equipment, thus dismembering and intermingling the remains and making it even possible to question the identity of two of the young girls murdered by the police, to begin with. Morton's data laid the foundation for the respect accorded to the white scientist, which made it seem reasonable for a white assistant medical examiner to slip his boss's pal, the paleoanthropologist, a box of the remains of murdered Black children; for that professor to leave the remains in a cardboard box in a filing cabinet in his office; for his former student to later take them out and display them at a donor reception; for her to assign them as a senior thesis project to a white student and have that white student handle the bones on camera for a public teaching video.

There is not a part of the MOVE story – or of any modern story of white supremacist violence – that has not been enabled by the work of Samuel George Morton and supported by the data he extracted from the stolen ancestors to justify the colonial projects of his white nation. It is impossible for us to know the wishes of the people who were decapitated for Morton's collection, and so much time has passed that, even in cases where we can identify their direct descendants, we will not be able to speak to those who knew them in life. We would like to think that, if we could, we would follow their desires fully and without question.

But the loved ones of Katricia and Delisha have made it clear what they wanted us to do. As Krystal Strong, then an assistant professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania asked readers of *Anthropology News*, "[h]ow might we professional anthropologists honor the one demand MOVE has consensus around – the release of political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal – and organize toward his release in honor of Delisha and Tree Africa and MOVE?"¹⁴⁴ And, indeed, this demand was first linked to the Penn Museum's possession of Katricia and Delisha's remains by the MOVE mothers at their press conference on 26 April 2021: "If they want to do anything to show people that they are sincere about resolving this situation with MOVE and the city, let Mumia out. He's still alive."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Krystal Strong, "A Requiem for Delisha and Tree Africa." *Anthropology News*, 25 October 2021, <https://www.anthropology-news.org/articles/a-requiem-for-delisha-and-tree-africa>, accessed September 26, 2023.

¹⁴⁵ Janine Africa, speaking at press conference livestreamed by hate5six, "MOVE Press Conference 4/26: Addressing UPenn & Princeton's Theft of Bones of Murdered MOVE Children," 26 April 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J3N1D10Ffw>, accessed September 26, 2023.

As I write today, more than two years later, this demand for the release of a Black political prisoner has not even been acknowledged by the University of Pennsylvania. It may seem that it is not the role of a university to secure freedom for a prisoner – that it is too political to even consider – but, if that is the case, then how will the University of Pennsylvania ever make amends for its role in the oppression of Black Philadelphians over its proud 283 years of existence? That oppression was, and is, political too, and Mumia’s 1983 conviction and initial death sentence for killing a white police officer is also built upon Morton’s racial science. The University of Pennsylvania needs to make this right, and it is within its power to do so. It may not be able to sign Mumia Abu Jamal’s pardon, but, as the state’s respected and powerful Ivy League university, there is no question that it can influence the person who can. And as scholars who would seek to bring healing to the long-dead families of those stolen by Samuel George Morton, and held captive by our professional colleagues, it would be hypocritical to do anything other than to support existing efforts to free Mumia Abu Jamal and to put pressure on the University of Pennsylvania to secure his release, that it may bring some healing to the MOVE mothers.

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