

# Pioneers of Color: A Counternarrative of Foundational Figures in Forensic Anthropology's History

Matthew C. Go<sup>a</sup> • Isis Dwyer<sup>b</sup> • Tisa N. Loewen<sup>c</sup> • Nandar Yuki<sup>d</sup> • Chaunesey Clemmons<sup>e</sup> • Sydney S. Garcia<sup>a</sup> • Kamar Afra<sup>f</sup> • Fatimah A. Bouderdaben<sup>g</sup> • Alba Craig<sup>h</sup> • Isabel S. Melhado<sup>h</sup> • Tanya Ramos<sup>h</sup> • Ivanna Robledo<sup>g</sup> • Evonne Turner-Byfield<sup>i</sup> • Aaron J. Young<sup>j</sup> • Jessica K. Juarez<sup>k</sup> • Elaine Y. Chu<sup>g</sup> • An-Di Yim<sup>l,m</sup> • Allison Nesbitt<sup>n</sup> • Jesse R. Goliath<sup>o</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** Popular renditions on the history of forensic anthropology have traced the discipline's roots back to early European anatomy and nineteenth to twentieth-century American research and applications to the legal system, often highlighting the works of several recurring figures. These forebearers are overwhelmingly composed of white men to the exclusion of, as we argue here, pioneers of color. As a counter to prevailing Eurocentric narratives, we present the biographies of diverse contemporaries who were equally foundational to the field, including Black Americans, immigrants, and luminaries outside of the Western world. Common themes among their experiences involved discrimination, a lack of opportunities and recognition, and a biocultural and humanistic praxis that demonstrate modern discourses within the forensic anthropology community are not novel. Ultimately, this work shows that the historical foundations of forensic anthropology, in both the United States and globally, include a far more diverse cast of pioneers than what the prevailing literature suggests and should serve as a springboard from which our discipline can grow, both in its past and in its future.

**KEYWORDS:** forensic anthropology; representation; diversity; equity; inclusion; history of science; reflexivity; social justice; biocultural anthropology; discrimination

<sup>a</sup>SNA International, supporting the Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, HI, USA

<sup>b</sup>Department of Anthropology, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA

<sup>c</sup>School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA

<sup>d</sup>Department of Anthropology, University of Nevada Reno, Reno, NV, USA

<sup>e</sup>Department of Biology, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC, USA

<sup>f</sup>Department of Anthropology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Knoxville, TN, USA

<sup>g</sup>Department of Anthropology, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX, USA

<sup>h</sup>Department of Biology, University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, USA

<sup>i</sup>Department of Anthropology, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

<sup>j</sup>School of Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA

<sup>k</sup>Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, USA

<sup>l</sup>Department of Health and Exercise Sciences, Truman State University, Kirksville, MO, USA

<sup>m</sup>Forensic Science Program, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, USA

<sup>n</sup>Department of Pathology and Anatomical Sciences, School of Medicine, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO, USA

<sup>o</sup>Department of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS, USA

\*Correspondence to: Matthew C. Go, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, 590 Moffet Street, Building 4077, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, HI 96853, USA Email: mattycgo@gmail.com

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## Introduction

In early 2022, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) Diversity Outreach Committee (DOC) released a summary of their 2020–2021 survey on membership demographics, perceptions of diversity and inclusion, and experiences with harassment and discrimination at the annual meetings (AAFS Diversity Outreach Committee 2022). Following 1,268 responses to their survey, the DOC concluded that the AAFS in general is doing well in terms of its diversity, with 59% agreeing that forensic science in general is diverse, 68% agreeing that the AAFS specifically is diverse, and 63% agreeing that their specific AAFS section is diverse. Eighty-four percent of respondents agreed that diversity and inclusion are important, and 72% thought that maintaining a diverse and inclusive workforce is a high or essential priority. Nearly 85% of respondents felt that their identity was embraced by the AAFS. Overall, from these responses, diversity in the Academy and the wider discipline of forensic science can be characterized as good. However, the overwhelming majority of respondents who feel the AAFS is diverse, who think diversity is important, and who feel their identity is embraced by the AAFS are cisgendered and European-descended/white (AAFS Diversity Outreach Committee 2022). The DOC is not technically wrong when

it says a majority of respondents believe the AAFS and forensic science as a whole are diverse. Notwithstanding, these demographics belie the respondents' credibility to make such claims. These results also run contrary to a 2018 survey distributed to the AAFS Anthropology Section members, where 63% of respondents believed that forensic anthropology showed little diversity (Tallman & Bird 2022).

The lack of diversity in forensic science and in forensic anthropology is a problem because of the ways it affects the efficacy and growth of our science and our ability to acquire, enable, and maintain scholars from different backgrounds, which provide important contributions to the AAFS' stated goal of promoting justice and integrity (AAFS 2023). The anthropological literature supports this, whether we look at our graduate students (Erhart & Spradley 2022), at our membership in the AAFS organization (Tallman & Bird 2022), at our research topics and researchers (Go et al. 2021), in our collections (Winburn et al. 2022a), in the multitudinous ways that prevent marginalized peoples from entering and later succeeding in the field (Tallman et al. 2022), or in broader scientific fields supporting forensic science (Yim et al. 2022). This is as true today as it has been historically, and anyone teaching their undergraduates on the history of forensic anthropology is likely to echo our monochromatic foundations. The initiators of the AAFS Anthropology Section were all white men. The current AAFS Board of Directors, Anthropology Section leadership, and the American Board of Forensic Anthropology (ABFA) Board of Directors are nearly all white, if not all white. For the past 50 years, eponymous awards from the AAFS Anthropology Section were all named after white men (i.e., the T. Dale Stewart Award, the J. Lawrence Angel Forensic Anthropology Student Paper Award, the Ellis Kerley Research Award in association with The Ellis R. Kerley Forensic Sciences Foundation, and the Clyde Snow Award from the Humanitarian and Human Rights Resource Center). While these men do not deserve less recognition for their contributions to the field, they dominate spaces that continue to push past and current scholars of color to the margins and out of regular discourse. During the 2023 annual meeting, the Diversity and Inclusion Pilot Study Grant was named to honor Caroline Bond Day, while a new award for public engagement was announced and named after W. Montague Cobb. The Outstanding Mentorship Award, the Anthropology Section Service Award, and the Diversity and Inclusion Travel Award remain unnamed in honor of a particular person.

The history of forensic anthropology in the United States explicitly centers on the foundational work of several key figures. In a review of popular textbooks, book chapters, and journal articles that specifically look at the history of forensic anthropology in the United States ( $n = 11$ ), recurring figures are almost exclusively white men (Table 1). These names comprise the traditional pantheon of forensic anthropology's

luminaries—or “gods of forensic anthropology,” to borrow a phrase from William Maples (Maples & Browning 1994: 277). These are the men and occasional women we introduce as the forebearers of our field to students and laity to the exclusion of, as we argue here, people of color. Only two Black men, Charles Warren and William Montague Cobb, are mentioned. Moreover, in the two or three instances they are mentioned, it is either in passing with no mention of their actual contributions or in relation to the accomplishments of other people such as being the student of or having also done similar work to a name more deserving of our attention.

Indeed, as the following biographies can attest to, people of color have not been granted the same opportunities for academic or career advancement, while at the same time being belittled for the advancements they do achieve. Hence, the purpose of this work: to provide a counternarrative to whom we are reading and teaching about to diversify forensic anthropology's foundational history. Much in the fashion of contemporary histories of forensic anthropology, we chose to only highlight posthumous contributors who were largely active in the decades and centuries prior to the twenty-first century (Fig. 1). Many more scholars and practitioners of color are active today but are not mentioned here to give space to our neglected forebearers.

## Back to Black

We begin our counternarrative with three Black scholars who greatly shaped the theoretical and methodological foundations of biological and forensic anthropology. These scholars not only rigorously pursued scientific knowledge but also utilized science as a tool to combat deeply rooted injustices during the pervasive racism of Jim Crow.

Caroline Stewart Bond Day (1889–1948) was the first Black American to obtain a graduate degree in physical anthropology (she obtained her Master of Arts [MA] while W. Montague Cobb, discussed below, was still in graduate school). Pioneering the study of mixed-race Black and white families through both a biological and sociocultural lens, her MA thesis (Day 1970), which in Cobb's estimation was comparable to a doctoral dissertation, was unfortunately not supported for PhD advancement by her advisor Earnest Hooton (Blakey & Watkins 2022; Curwood 2012). Using some of the same techniques that eugenicists of the time had employed, she challenged extant racial myths on genetic inheritance. Running contrary to mainstream desires for neat racial typologies, Day (1930, 1970) showed that mixed-race Black Americans were not degenerate or inherently inferior but rather completely normal by any measure. Moreover, she discredited the notion of fixed racial traits, which is central to modern anthropological perspectives on ancestry. This,

TABLE 1—*Historical figures mentioned in a survey of the literature on the history of forensic anthropology primarily in the United States*

	Ubelaker (2020)	Christensen et al. (2019)	Ubelaker (2018)	Ubelaker (2016)	Byers (2017)	Tersigni- Tarrant & Langley (2017)	Dirkmaat & Cabo (2012)	Komar & Buikstra (2008)	Brickley & Ferllini (2007)	Klepinger (2006)	Işcan (1988)
J. Lawrence Angel	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓
Eric Baccino	✓										
William Bass	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓		
Hugh Berryman						✓					
Walter Birkby						✓	✓				
Johann Blumenbach	✓										
Paul Broca	✓										
Sheilagh Brooks	✓							✓			
Alice Brues	✓		✓								✓
W. Montague Cobb						✓	✓				
George Dorsey	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Thomas Dwight	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Luis Fondebrider	✓										
Oliver W. Holmes				✓	✓	✓				✓	
Earnest Hooton				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
W. W. Howells				✓							
Aleš Hrdlička	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Richard Jantz						✓					
Arthur Keith							✓				
Ellis Kerley	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wilton Krogman	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cesare Lombroso	✓										
William Maples							✓	✓			✓
Theodore McCown								✓			
Thomas McKern	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Dan Morse								✓			
Stephen Ousley						✓					
Ted Rathbun							✓				
Stanley Rhine						✓	✓				
Harry Shapiro				✓			✓			✓	
Charles Snow	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓	
Clyde Snow	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Paul Stevenson				✓	✓	✓					
T. Dale Stewart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Robert Terry					✓	✓	✓				
T. Wingate Todd	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Mildred Trotter	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Douglas Ubelaker				✓							
Charles Warren	✓						✓			✓	
Harris Wilder	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	
Jeffries Wyman	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	

however, meant her work was not well received at the time and it was left largely ignored (Ross et al. 1999). Her work was also prescient in that, being mixed race herself, she showed the value of reflexive, emic, and autoethnographic research in advancing the field. Today, her data set, comprising more than 2,500 individuals from 346 families, including her own family, with anthropometric measurements,

descriptions, hair samples, photographs, and detailed interviews, is still treasured.

William Montague Cobb (1904–1990) was the first Black American to earn a PhD in physical anthropology, studying under T. Wingate Todd, and the first distinguished professor of anatomy at Howard University. He is best known in forensic circles for establishing the first and only skeletal

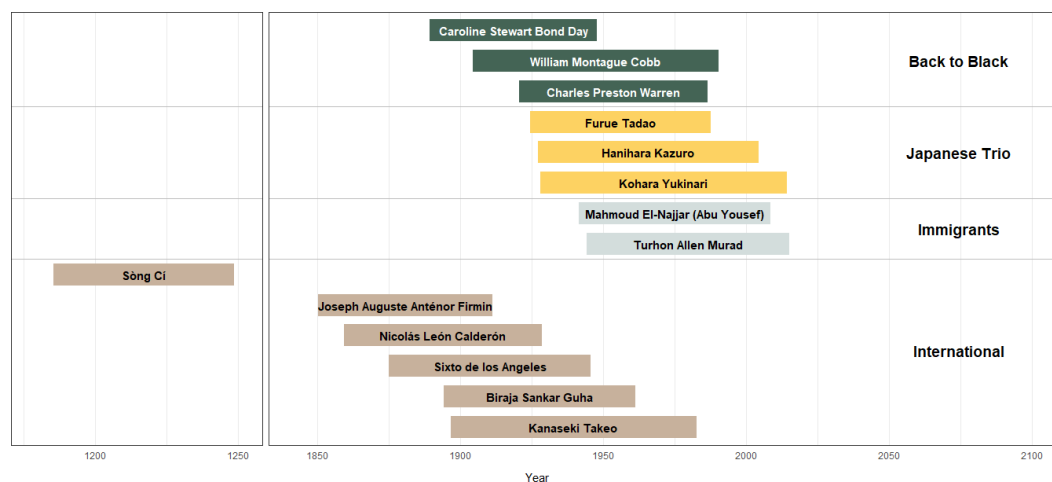


FIG. 1—Timeline of highlighted pioneers of color.

collection housed at a Historically Black College or University, in addition to instituting a comparative anatomy museum and a collection of fossil casts (Cobb 1936a). He acquired these materials while recognizing that Black scholars would need their own resources if they wanted to advance anatomical and anthropological sciences (Blakey & Watkins 2022). His research emphasized the influences of social forces on skeletal variation, fighting contemporary notions of biological determinism as a cause for racial disparities, and he was a fierce advocate for the participation of Black scholars in the fields of anatomy and human biology (Cobb 1934, 1936b, 1937; Watkins 2007, 2013). He additionally published on age-related skeletal changes, evolutionary morphology (Cobb 1934, 1940), and comparative dental anatomy, among others (Cobb 1943, 1948, 1957). By his death, he had published more than 1,100 articles. In public health circles, Cobb conceived the Imhotep National Conference on Hospital Integration, an event that he organized seven times. As a means of eliminating issues of racism in healthcare, the conference contributed to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Medicare and Medicaid Bill. Also culturally significant, he served as president of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) from 1976 to 1982 (Rankin-Hill & Blakey 1994). Cobb served as vice president of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (AAPA) in 1948 and as president in 1957, making him the first Black person to be elected to the highest office of any major anthropological association in the United States (Harrison & Harrison 1999).

Lastly, Charles Preston Warren (1921–1987) is best known for his work as a forensic anthropologist for the American Graves Registration Service in Manila following World War II; the Central Identification Unit in Kokura, Japan, during the Korean War; and later for the Vietnam War at the Central Identification Laboratory in Thailand and

in Honolulu. Possibly the longest-serving military forensic anthropologist (Baldwin-Jones 2018), Warren's contributions span work with air crash victims' remains, radiological approaches, commingled skeletons, laboratory procedures, and identification of osteological trauma, to name a few (Warren 1981). As a professor in Chicago and consultant to the Cook County Sheriff's and Medical Examiner's Offices, Warren helped to identify the victims of serial killer John Wayne Gacy. He also consulted for neighboring Will and Kankakee counties and for Lake County, Indiana. He made significant research contributions to both forensic anthropology and Philippine studies and was actively contributing to the field during one of the most foundational forensic efforts in anthropology, identification of Korean War dead (Baldwin-Jones 2018, Solheim 1987; e.g., Warren 1976, 1978, 1981, 1985, 1986). Warren's biocultural foundations stemmed from his broad expertise, including two master's degrees in anthropology, allowing him to apply ethnographic approaches with his work in the Philippines with Black Asian populations (Warren 1981). Although Warren's military work prevented him from publishing more of his research, there is evidence that white anthropologists such as Thomas McKern appropriated some of his ideas without giving Warren credit and his writings were published without proper attribution or acknowledgment (cf. Furue & Warren 1955 with McKern 1958; Warren 1981). Warren was also allegedly refused membership within the AAPA because his work was considered too applied (Baldwin-Jones 2018). Despite this, he served as the first Physical Anthropology Section program chair of the AAFS in 1979, as its secretary from 1981 to 1983, and was given the Distinguished Service Award by the American Anthropological Association's Association of Black Anthropologists in 1987 (Field 1998). He was also honored with a Meritorious Civilian Service Award by the US Army in 1975 (Warren 1981).

## A Japanese Trio in Postconflict America

Prior to Warren's arrival in Japan, three Japanese anthropologists—recent graduates from the University of Tokyo—were already hard at work identifying the remains of US service members who had perished across the sea on the Korean Peninsula. Furue Tadao (古江忠雄; 1925–1988) is probably the best known of the three in war dead accounting circles. Well after the Japan lab closed in 1955, Furue continued to serve as an anthropologist for the US Army, first in Thailand, where he reunited with Warren, and then permanently in Hawai'i in 1977 as the Central Identification Laboratory's (CILHI's) lone scientist until his death. He contracted hepatitis B during his work in disaster victim identification during the 1976 EgyptAir Flight 864 crash in Bangkok, leading to cirrhosis, liver cancer, and ultimately his death in 1988. In 1985, Furue was awarded the Congressional Excalibur Award honoring excellence in public service for his contributions to war dead identification. Among his methodological contributions were experiments in craniofacial photographic superimposition (Klonaris & Furue 1980), radiograph restoration (Dailey & Furue 1988), and, controversially, morphological approximation (see Cole 2018). Amid political and public pressures during the Reagan administration following the Vietnam War on the handling of POW/MIAs, Furue's identifications would later be heavily scrutinized and even litigated (see *Hart v. United States* 1988; Wagner 2013). Ellis Kerley, who incidentally had Furue as his best man at his wedding, was brought in as part of a delegation that reviewed CILHI's and Furue's identification standards. That Furue supposedly only possessed a bachelor's degree—with some even going so far as to claim he had “no formal schooling” (Sledge 2005:125)—was a constant source of criticism despite 35 years of practical experience. Along with Warren, Furue was also allegedly denied membership to the AAPA, presumably for similar reasons (Baldwin-Jones 2018).

Unlike Furue, Hanihara Kazuro (埴原和郎; 1927–2004) and Kohara Yukinari (香原志勢; 1928–2014) were hired on an 80-day contract, but their relatively short time identifying bodies at Kokura was a trial by fire. Hanihara (1965) described the discrimination Japanese anthropologists faced in comparison to their American colleagues during post-World War II reconstruction in the country. Japanese anthropologists were paid significantly less despite being in identical positions, they were left to find their own accommodations, and their scientific analyses were less respected and more heavily inspected by superiors (Hanihara 1965). Hanihara went on to gain his ScD and become a household name in dental anthropology (Brace & Seguchi 2005; e.g., Hanihara 1961, 1967, 1981), while Kohara established the Japan Academy of Facial Studies and conducted research in anthropometry, bioarchaeology, gigantism, and aging, among others (e.g., Kohara 1963, 1982; Kohara et al. 1971; Kondo et al. 1950).

Both Kohara (1989) and Hanihara (1965) wrote memoirs of their time at Kokura, and all three Japanese anthropologists published a paper advocating for skeletal identification capabilities to be developed in Japan, modeling their framework after their experiences working for the United States (Furue et al. 1952).

## Immigrants, We Get the Job Done

Back in the continental United States, immigrant and first-generation anthropologists were making a name for themselves. Known to friends as Abu Yousef, Mahmoud El-Najjar (1942–2009; محمود النجار) was born in British-administered Mandatory Palestine. When he was six years old, he and his family were exiled to the Gaza Strip during the 1948 Palestinian Exodus. By the time he finished high school, his older brothers had managed to send him to the United States, where he earned his BA in Economics at Arizona State University (ASU). During his time at ASU, El-Najjar took an elective in physical anthropology, which inspired his love of bones. He completed his MA and PhD at ASU, where he first proposed the link between porotic hyperostosis and iron-deficiency anemia. His work in paleopathology expanded to studies of enamel hypoplasias, tuberculosis, and treponematosis, and he coauthored several texts on human variation and forensic anthropology in English and in Arabic (Al-Shorman & Rose 2012). After appointments at Case Western and the University of New Mexico, he returned to the Middle East and worked for universities in the UAE and Kuwait. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, he found himself once again a refugee. He eventually found an academic position in Jordan and built a legacy there, where he is considered the father of Jordanian physical anthropology (Abu Dalou et al. 2014).

Those previously or currently affiliated with California State University, Chico's Human Identification Laboratory are also familiar with the work of Turhon Allen Murad (1944–2015), Chico State's first tenured physical anthropologist. Murad was born in Indiana to a Baptist mother who ran away from home at age 17 to marry his father, a 39-year-old Muslim Albanian immigrant who passed through Ellis Island in 1913 (Murad 1998). Murad attended Indiana University, where he earned his BA, MA, and PhD in anthropology. Upon graduation, he accepted a position at Chico State, where he would stay for the next 38 years. There, he served as Department Chair, Director of the Human Identification Laboratory, and developed the Certificate in Forensic Identification. Murad was a key figure in the development of the Mountain, Desert and Coastal Forensic Anthropology Meetings, serving forensic students and professional practitioners in the southwestern United States. In 1989, he was certified as Diplomate No. 42 of the ABFA and joined its Board of



Directors in the early 2000s. His decades-long career included several roles, including as a consultant for CILHI, instructor for the Federal Bureau of Investigation Emergency Response Team, and member of the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team. His memorial fund supports scholarships for students at Chico and the annual Chico Forensic Conference.

### Beyond America's Shores

Beyond the shores of the United States and its empire, which so often becomes the default and sometimes sole nexus on the history of forensic anthropology, were other global pioneers. While some attention has been afforded to the venture for a global history of forensic anthropology (Blau & Ubelaker 2016; Ubelaker 2015), these discourses rarely enter mainstream teaching or research, nor do they give sufficient credence to individuals.

Five centuries before Western forensic science emerged, China's Sòng Cí (宋慈; 1186–1249) wrote a textbook directed at coroners conducting criminal investigations. The comprehensive text included the oldest known forensic use of insects, how to conduct autopsies, how to determine the cause of death, how to estimate the postmortem interval, and how to test for paternity. It contained detailed descriptions of every bone in the skeleton, including how to macerate them, their utility in trauma analysis, and how to distinguish differences between the sexes. *The Washing Away of Wrongs* (洗冤集錄) is regarded as the world's first treatise on forensic medicine (Asen 2017; McKnight 1981).

Exiled in Paris from Haiti, Joseph Auguste Anténor Firmin (1850–1911) was admitted to the Anthropology Society of Paris, despite regularly being silenced by racialists. His most famous work, *On the Equality of Human Races* (*De l'égalité des races humaines*), published in 1885, was a rebuttal to Joseph Arthur de Gobineau's disquisition on Aryan superiority, Black inferiority, and antimiscegenation. In it, Firmin challenged virtually every extant racial myth and redefined anthropological methods, including the use of craniometry and how data were interpreted. He also first laid the basis for understanding human variation in skin color as an adaptation to climate (Firmin 1885). Firmin is likely the first scholar of African descent to write a treatise on anthropology while correctly envisioning how the discipline would grow as a science beyond its racist roots (Fluehr-Lobban 2000). Yet, his work went unrecognized for 115 years until it was rediscovered and translated into English by Asselin Charles in 2002, which itself is a testament to the Anglochauvinism of modern academia (see Baker 2016; Tietze & Dick 2009).

In Mexico, Nicolás León Calderón (1859–1929) was the first to head the newly minted Section for Physical

Anthropology at the Museo Nacional, where he imposed new osteometric standards and provided specialized equipment and anthropometric services across the country (Tiesler & Jaén 2012). He grew the museum's collections and brought an analytical lens to what were otherwise considered curiosities (León 1919). For these efforts, some consider León as the father of Mexican physical anthropology (Peña-Saint-Martin & Vera-Cortés 2018).

Across the Pacific in another Spanish colony, Sixto de los Angeles (1875–1945) was doing similar work in the Philippines, using craniometry to study criminal behavior and introducing the fields of criminal anthropology and forensic medicine to the islands. As professor and head of the Department of Legal Medicine at the University of the Philippines, he published in both English and Spanish on forensically relevant topics spanning pathology, anthropology, jurisprudence, and expert testimony (e.g., de los Angeles 1910, 1914, 1919, 1927, 1934; de los Angeles & Villegas 1920). Regarded as the father of Philippine forensic medicine, he is particularly famous for examining the alleged remains of Andres and Procopio Bonifacio and Gregorio del Pilar, leaders of the Philippine Revolution (Manuel 1970).

Meanwhile in India, Biraja Sankar Guha (বিরজাশঙ্কর গুহ [Bengali]; बरिजा शंकर गुह [Hindi]; 1894–1961), who attended Harvard from 1920 to 1924, was the first Indian to earn a PhD in anthropology. Studying criminal, physical, and race mixture anthropology, among others, under Hooton, he is known for classifying Indian castes into different races according to a four-field approach (Guha 1924). Later in life, he reversed his stance and strongly opined against this, advocating for the theory of a single human race rather than the mythical purity of separate races (Guha 1959). In 1927, the Zoological Survey of India appointed Guha as its first anthropologist, a position that served as the catalyst for anthropology's growth in the region (Sinha & Coon 1963). In 1946, he successfully separated anthropology from the Zoological Survey and founded and directed the Anthropological Survey of India, which today engages in forensic anthropological research, training, and casework. He served as Anthropological Advisor to the Government of India and was a fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, president of the Anthropological Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and a member of the International Congress of Anthropology subcommittee on revisions of craniometric measurements along with being vice president of its Physical Anthropology and Human Biology section, among many other elected positions.

Lastly, professor of anatomy at Taihoku Imperial University (now National Taiwan University) Kanaseki Takeo (金關丈夫; 1897–1983) contributed to the earliest biological anthropology literature of Taiwan. He led many excavations there, as well as in the broader region in Hainan, South China,

and Indonesia, preserving important sites and records. In Japanese circles, he spoke out against the homogeneity of the peopling of Japan, was one of the forerunners to study population history through human remains, and advocated for the indigenous peoples of Taiwan and Japan, risking censorship from the colonial Japanese government (Chun 2016; Nobayashi 2003). Devoted to the advancement of science, Kanaseki's father willed his skeleton to his son's collection upon his death and Kanaseki likewise donated his own skeleton so that others could use the two to study familial and genetic relationships osteologically (Chun 2016).

## Discussion

For many of the pioneers discussed, the successes they were able to achieve may seem in contradiction to our protestations of long-term, systemic, and embedded prejudice and sexism. However, that conflation is an apologetic for the power dynamics that allow structural violence to continue within claims to the contrary. The relative obscurity of many of these otherwise formative scientists is exemplary of the limitations of opportunity students and early scholars face. Past concerns such as truncated educational advancement, difficulty finding mentorship in one's core disciplinary approach, aggravation for applying multidisciplinary methodologies, and fewer opportunities to publish within primary journals are repeating patterns. Such micro- and macroaggressions are actively squeezing future researchers out of forensic anthropology. Those that stay struggle to identify safe collaborative partners and have supportive mentors in their research specialty, and they become casualties of insecure contingent faculty positions and predatory journals (Ocobock et al. 2021). Both Day and Warren's circumstances and positionalities would mean they would never earn more than a master's degree, despite having made significant investments in advancing biological anthropology and becoming skilled practitioners. Day's nearly 200-page tome of a master's thesis (1970), utilizing multiple methodological approaches, took 10 years to complete. Warren, who completed two master's degrees and began work on a doctoral dissertation, was ultimately unable to finish (Warren 1981). While both experienced a level of privilege and opportunity, particularly the light-skinned Day, the structural and personal racism and sexism that held them back is made explicit in their writings and implicit in the obvious mismatch between their efforts and their outcomes. In the case of Furue, his bachelor's degree was used against him to discredit a lifetime of work and experience. Today, the glorification of the highest academic accolades continues despite many qualified professionals without advanced degrees, certifications, or publications, particularly in human rights contexts in other countries, making significant impacts in our field.

Illustrative of how these authors faced discrimination is the appropriation of their ideas and research with little or no acknowledgment. For example, Warren (1981) discussed how he and Furue worked extensively on a novel methodology for differentiating commingled remains using UV light (Furue & Warren 1955), only for this approach to be published by McKern in 1958. Their report and research were not cited or mentioned, despite indications that McKern had drawn directly from it (Furue & Warren 1955; Warren 1981:175). This was not an isolated event, as can be seen with the discrimination that Hanihara and Kohara experienced in the forms of blatant wage inequality and heavier scrutiny of their work (Hanihara 1965). Indeed, in the case of Firmin's prescience on human environmental adaptation, his theory was disregarded for more than a century only for it to be resurrected under different authors today. Unfortunately, the same problems that have affected scholars of color in the past continue to resonate with scholars of color generations later.

The recent disciplinary turn toward biocultural and humanistic practices in forensic anthropology signals a shift in forensic praxis (Goodman 2013; Goodman et al. 1988). Whether through more nuanced approaches to ancestry and sex estimation that honor the complexity of racialized and gendered experiences (Bethard & DiGangi 2020; DiGangi & Bethard 2021; Haug 2020; Meloro & Bouderdaben 2022) or analyses of embodied structural inequities (Winburn et al. 2022a), biocultural approaches look beyond individual identification toward a better understanding of lived experiences of decedents and the circumstances that bring them to our tables. Yet, upon reflecting on the contributions of Black pioneers in this discipline, it becomes clear that the application of biocultural theories and approaches to forensic anthropology is not novel, even before the important work of cross-disciplinary practitioners that contributed to the way "biocultural" is understood now (Goodman 2013; Goodman & Leatherman 1998; Goodman et al. 1988). Day's autoethnographic investigation of anthropometric traits in mixed-race Black and white families exemplifies the importance of spotlighting alter(ed)native perspectives (Watkins 2020) in this discipline. Amid an era dominated by false racialized typologies, her perspective as a mixed-race individual allowed her to not only repurpose the tools of eugenicists to disprove claims of fixed racial traits and racial inferiority but also underscore the value of biocultural and contextual information evidenced in first-person accounts of genealogies, photographs, and data beyond skeletal traits. Similarly, Cobb's positioning as a prominent anatomist and biological anthropologist, and another Black scholar in the era of racialized biologies, resulted in activist research explicitly in service of debunking racialized science and subsequent social inequities (Cobb 1936b). Warren's groundbreaking research across Southeast Asia and the Andaman Islands endeavored to explore variation among darker-skinned populations in the

regions who had been misrepresented by anthropologists as a singular race. Employing a truly four-field approach, Warren examined not only phenotypic variation but also the diverse linguistic and cultural variation across these populations, as well as the histories of cultural evolution and migration in the archaeological record (Baldwin-Jones 2018). Even as forensic anthropologists continue to grapple with population affinity and the biocultural nature of human variation (Ross & Pilloud 2020; Ross & Williams 2021), Warren's revolutionary work remains largely overlooked and undercited (Dwyer et al. 2022).

Bolles (2013) uses the concept of double jeopardy to illustrate the complexity of being both Black and a woman in academic anthropological spaces. This double jeopardy of racialized and gendered experiences is mirrored in forensic anthropology, through the historical erasure of diverse scholars as well as the exclusion of diverse scholars and practitioners today. Bolles (2013) states that despite using innovative analytical tools that purposefully dissect the implications of social positioning and inequality, Black feminist anthropologists and their work are rendered almost invisible by the canon-setting of white men and women. Similarly, despite employing novel and innovative analyses of human biocultural variation, Black pioneering scholars in forensic anthropology are largely erased from the disciplinary canon. We put forward that it is absolutely critical to uplift these diverse voices in forensic anthropology because the biocultural turn we are witnessing is not novel. By leaning into the scholarship of diverse scholars in this discipline, we can not only avoid reinventing the wheel but also add much-needed nuance to conversations of a humanistic forensic anthropology and see the many parallels between pioneering scholars of color and present-day scholars of color in forensic anthropology and allied disciplines who are following this academic lineage.

Promising guidance has been discussed by AAFS members and American scholars (Adams et al. 2023; Bethard & DiGangi 2020; Byrnes & Sandoval-Cervantes 2022; DiGangi & Bethard 2021; Goliath et al. 2023; Gruenthal-Rankin et al. 2023; Stubblefield 2011; Winburn et al. 2022b). However, additional insight can be gained beyond Western contributions. Most forensic anthropological research tends to be US-centric; more than 50% of knowledge production in the field is done by US-based forensic anthropologists (Go et al. 2021). Because laws, legal circumstances, and forensic work in practice differ globally, we should be encouraged to look at what scholars from other contexts have done.

The traditional Western, cisgendered, and often male-centric approaches to practice, research, and teaching cannot be expected to meet the needs and realities of contemporary forensic work (Byrnes & Sandoval-Cervantes 2022; Go et al. 2021; Goliath et al. 2023), especially in regards to gender identity, migrant border crossing investigations, missing

persons cases, and international human rights violations (Adams et al. 2023; Bird & Bird 2022; DiGangi & Vargas 2022; Dwyer et al. 2023; Haug 2022; Kaplan et al. 2022; Soler et al. 2022; Stewart & Delgado 2023). Numerous accounts of non-Western forensic anthropological work that prioritize multidisciplinary community engagement provide important perspectives (Kim et al. 2022). While much of non-Western English publications focus on mass human rights tragedies and victims (Groen et al. 2015; Klinkner 2023; Koff 2005), recent growth in artificial intelligence technology makes non-English literature much more accessible. Global practitioners demonstrate approaches that build understanding of community mourning, cooperation, postcolonial considerations, and trust of legal and scientific institutions (e.g., Go & Docot 2021; Peccerelli & Henderson 2021). We do not expect easy cross-application in American settings but instead hope to draw from others' knowledge and experience, which decenter Western approaches as perfected, evolved, or superior. As forensic anthropology continues to grapple with the role of positionality and scientific objectivity (Afra et al. 2022; Winburn & Clemmons 2021), it is imperative to note that the very commitment to scientific objectivity is reflexive of the authority that is often uncritically afforded to whiteness and the scientists who benefit from its privileges (Clancy & Davis 2019).

## Conclusion

This obviously incomplete list of luminaries serves as a springboard from which our discipline can grow, both in its history and in its future. As we have just shown, the historical foundations of forensic anthropology, both in the United States and globally, include a far more diverse cast of pioneers than what the prevailing literature suggests. These foundational figures excelled in advancing our knowledge of human variation and evolution and its potential for forensic application despite contemporary efforts to stifle their participation. Racialized women and Native scholars, in particular, have been relegated to the outermost margins of history, as evinced by the lack of women and Indigenous scholars on this list.

Acknowledging diversity is not a box to check but a condition for survival. Our abilities to recruit and retain talent, boost creative problem solving, and stay relevant are contingent on our willingness to consider how we got here as a field and better define where we are going. There is no one mold nor one formula for how to make a forensic anthropologist, and our foundations should reflect as much. While we finally honor the trailblazers of color in our history, we must also continue the work of recognizing current scholars of color and creating nurturing environments for them to thrive. As we celebrate 50 years of anthropology at the AAFS through



this special issue, championing diversity is how we ensure we deserve 50 more.

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This labor is also invigorated by the corpus set forth by forerunners such as Drs. Michael Blakey, Faye Harrison, Ira Harrison, Lesley Rankin-Hill, and Rachel Watkins, among many others, who recognized early on the exigency for historical representation and are cited throughout.

Lastly, as an ensemble composed entirely of early career scholars of color, we hope to represent a new generation of diverse perspectives giving voice to an older, historically excluded generation who, in many respects, paved the way for our success. May this article continue to make inroads for an inclusive forensic anthropology with opportunity for all.

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