



## John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology: Alexandra Jones

Thomas Cuthbertson

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The John L Cotter Award recognizes early career achievement in historical archaeology. The 2022 award was presented to Dr. Alexandra Jones (Fig. 1) at the Society for Historical Archaeology's 54th annual conference, in Philadelphia, for her contributions in the realm of public community-based archaeology and her work to bring equity to the field.

Dr. Jones was awarded her Ph.D. in archaeology by the University of California, Berkeley, in 2010. Her dissertation, *Gibson Grove Gone but not Forgotten: The Archaeology of an African American Church*, focuses on the reclamation and protection of the Morningstar Tabernacle No. 88 Cemetery in Cabin John, Maryland (Jones 2010), where she continues to collaborate with the community to manage the site and protect it from the encroachment of the nearby Capital Beltway (I-495). In 2021 the cemetery was included on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "11 Most Endangered Historic Places" list as a result of the efforts of Dr. Jones and the community.

In tandem with this important preservation work, Dr. Jones founded Archaeology in the Community (AITC), a 501(c)(3) archaeology education nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., in 2009. Dr. Jones has developed a variety of programs to educate students of all ages about what archaeology is and the methods it uses to study the collective past. Programs include enrichment programs



**Fig. 1** Alexandra Jones, recipient of the 2022 John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology, 2021.

for younger children, training programs for students interested in careers in archaeology, as well as events to help community members take active roles in the preservation of their own histories. Dr. Jones also collaborates with other organizations through AITC to consult on community-driven projects and develop community-led programs.

As a collaboration among AITC, the U.S. Embassy of Belize, and the Institute of Archaeology (NICH) Belize starting in October of 2015, Dr. Jones developed a Cultural Heritage Youth Workshop Program as part of an effort to convey the importance of protecting Belize's cultural heritage and providing an opportunity for

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T. Cuthbertson (✉)  
Archaeology in the Community, 209 Commerce Street,  
Alexandria, VA 22314, U.S.A.  
e-mail: t.cuthbertson13@gmail.com

communities to take control of the management of their own cultural resources.

The Estate Little Princess Archaeology Project is a collaboration among archaeologists from several universities, the Society of Black Archaeologists, AITC, the Smithsonian Slave Wrecks Project, and Diving with a Purpose.<sup>1</sup> As part of this effort, Dr. Jones developed and continues to teach a field school for local teens attached to the project, the goal of which is to provide local youth with an otherwise rare entry point into the field of archaeology. This program not only gives the local students an opportunity to participate in documenting their own history, but also gives them an advantage in the marine and heritage-tourism industries, which are among the island's greatest economic drivers, further demonstrating Dr. Jones's commitment to developing community-driven projects. Dr. Jones now sits on the St. Croix Archaeological Society Board of Directors and continues to engage with this community and facilitate the management of its cultural resources.

The program with the greatest reach that Dr. Jones helped develop through AITC, in a partnership with the Montpelier Foundation, is the LEARN Archaeology Training Program, a weeklong program in which teachers are housed onsite at Montpelier, work alongside archaeologists, and participate in daily workshops lead by Dr. Jones to integrate archaeology into their classrooms. The impact the program has on those teachers transitively reaches all their students, magnifying that impact exponentially.

In addition to publishing a book outlining the youth programs developed by AITC, *Getting Their Hands Dirty: Archaeology and Youth* (Jones 2012), Dr. Jones has coauthored four journal articles (Dunnivant et al. 2018; Jones and Pickens 2020; Flewellen, Dunnivant et al. 2021; Flewellen, Odelwale et al. 2022) as well as a book chapter (Jones and Carey [2023]). Alongside scholarly writing, Dr. Jones has been able to propagate her message of equitable archaeology through media streams that reach broader audiences in person, in print, and through film presentations. In 2012 Dr. Jones developed four "Time Team America and the Science of Archaeology" field-school programs for the *Time Team America* television show, funded by a National Science

Foundation grant obtained through Oregon Public Broadcasting. In 2020 she helped produce a short film, *Black in Archaeology*, illustrating the experiences of Black archaeologists in the field of archaeology. She has been featured on both the Vanity Fair and DC Super Hero Girls YouTube channels speaking about her career and archaeology as a field. The fact that she has garnered enough attention from media companies to be featured in media streams directed at audiences not usually targeted for archaeology content speaks volumes about the reach of her work.

Dr. Jones is currently an assistant professor at Goucher College and an adjunct at the University of Baltimore. At Goucher she is helping to develop an archaeological program on campus as part of the Hallowed Ground Project, a project meant to address the history of slavery tied to the land on which the college was built. She also sits on the Archaeological Institute of America's governing board as an academic trustee and on the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board.

Dr. Jones has committed her entire career to creating opportunities for communities to have control over their own cultural heritage and to making archaeology a more accessible and equitable field. This goal permeates and guides every action she takes as an archaeologist. It is helping to form the coming generations of archaeologists and beginning to help shift the field away from the neocolonial extractive practices upon which the field was founded and toward archaeology as a service discipline contributing to the communities in which we archaeologists work.

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<sup>1</sup> Diving with a Purpose is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation and protection of submerged heritage resources through providing education, training, certification, and field experience to adults and youth in the fields of maritime archaeology and ocean conservation.

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