4. Mark Leone

with William Rathje and Michael Shanks

Mark Leone, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Maryland, has led the development of historical archaeology worldwide, with radically inspiring work, informed by critical theory and cultural responsibility, in the urban archaeology of Annapolis.

Conversation Introduction

October 25, 2002. Leone offers a candid list of situations in archaeology which either ticked him off or inspired him; either way, these reactions were transformed into an impetus to make change. His lesson to archaeologists in the making is “follow your emotions.” Working in historical archaeology in the US, he shares his own radical stance using emotions and then interventions in local planning and community. His reflections on what provoked him range from the confrontational to the downright shocking.

Michael Shanks: How long have you been in archaeology, Mark?

Mark Leone: Over 35 years. I received my Ph.D. in Anthropology in 1968 from the University of Arizona.

MS: You have seen all sorts of things happen. You have witnessed many transformations in archaeology. Indeed, you were there in the beginning of the so-called New Archaeology. You have connections with the great heartlands, the homelands, the home universities of new archaeology. How have things changed for you over the course of a career that has seen so much happen?

ML: The standard way one presents an intellectual history of archaeology is to ask such a question. In many ways, I don’t think there have been changes in archaeology, if you mean major changes in theories used. I certainly can’t track them coherently, in terms of major accomplishments that result from theories since the creation of the New Archaeology which did achieve major change. I think the way I would put it is that if we do have a history of
archaeology, we create a fake coherence. I'd rather try to say that archaeology has been led by the fact that it exists in the world, rather that it has led where it goes.

MS: What do you think of the things, the occasions, the fields that have led archaeology? Or are you very serious in saying that there are no changes?

ML: Obviously there are key figures, but I think it is important to see that figures have a place.

MS: By key figures, you mean people, you mean archaeologists?

ML: Yes, I mean archaeologists. What I think of as archaeologists, as we were all taught as anthropologists, are functions of elements in society, and that is not to deny peoples’ talents . . .

MS: . . . or their agency . . .

ML: . . . or their wishes and motivations.

MS: Again, what do you think of these things, these occasions, these fields that have affected archaeology? Are they external to the discipline? Or are you saying that archaeology really is just part of a bigger picture and the disciplinary boundaries, yes are relevant, but they are not by any means the whole story. So what are these external, if they are that, things that have affected archaeology?

ML: I am sort of dancing with you Michael, so I can get to the answer I want to give.

MS: Do it anyway, say it.

ML: Having welcomed the opportunity to explain where I am headed, which was offered by Bill Rathje in the summer of 2002, six months ago, I want to deny the importance of standard ways of creating coherence when making a history of archaeology. While I think theories of change are very important, and I think chronology is significant, they are not useful for me here, at the moment.

MS: Do you mean theories in archaeologies, such as the different ‘ism’s’ that come along? And the chronology of those?

ML: Correct. Where I would head, having specifically thought about this for the last 6 months, is that if one wants to do an intellectual autobiography, or an explanation of where students of archaeology are led, what I am going to do first is to say that there are
discourses, dialogues. There is a world out there that talks about archaeology. It is, in short, an intellectual world. And in this book, the readers can read some of the most important contributors to the discipline who are active in this field.

The way that I would introduce a relationship between someone like me, who has been around for decades, and readers who have decades in front of them is to say that discussions about what archaeology is amount to asking how can you contribute to archaeology and how you can understand it. My answer is that I interrupted this discourse, this dialogue, depending on those moments when something in it made me angry, or when I saw something particularly beautiful. There were other times when I didn’t do anything. There were still other times when I couldn’t do anything. And there were times when I realized, out of desperation, disappointment, and outrage that I had to do something. So the element that I am introducing in this intellectual autobiography is that there were times when I was motivated, just as we all are as normal people, by feelings. That was when I took off and did something in archaeology to change it. The theory did not come first. My reaction to some experience did. This whole approach was suggested to me by Alison Wylie in about 2002.

When I was trying to prepare for this discussion, I had questions in front of me from a conversation I had last July 2002 with Bill Rathje and in step with these, I made a list of things that made me mad or inspired me. I’ve done two things with the list. First, I am going to present the list. Then, although what I did is slightly artificial, I used it because it is essential to be coherent. I organized the list chronologically so I can actually do something that readers will recognize that is not chronological.

MS: Let’s hear what you’ve got on your list!

ML: Now, this is more or less in the order in which I got pissed off, or inspired.

MS: In chronological order or in order of significant discourse?

**On the impossibility of role models**

ML: It is chronological. The very first thing that happened to me was that I realized that the standard prehistoric archaeology of 1963, when I entered the field, prehistoric archaeology
before Lewis Binford came along with “Archaeology as Anthropology”, didn’t work and couldn’t be made to work. That was how I felt. This is neither an intellectual evaluation, nor a scientific hypothesis, so it’s not intended to be taken as an insult to anyone.

MS: *Do you mean this in global terms, or do you mean this with particular respect to American prehistoric archaeology?*

ML: Given that we were graduate students and given that we had to read everything, I thought it was all fake. I thought it was impossible to duplicate. And I don’t mean duplicate scientifically. You couldn’t do it.

MS: *But Mark, this kind of archaeology is still around. It still holds on to an orthodoxy all over the place.*

ML: It doesn’t work, I believed inside myself.

MS: *So traditional culture history doesn’t do it. Right. Fine.*

ML: I was really disappointed, but I realized that it was not there.

Bill Rathje: *This disappointment is really angering you at this stage?*

ML: Well, you are asking me something that I would have to think about for a few minutes. I know that I was really disappointed and probably slightly desperate because I wanted to be an archaeologist and I wanted to figure out how to do it.

In 1964, I had dug at Grasshopper ruin, a 12th century Anasazi pueblo run beautifully by Raymond Thompson as a field school by the University of Arizona, for six weeks in Arizona. And one day, I looked at the ruin from a bluff, and I thought this is impossible. My love, when I went into graduate school, was V. Gordon Childe. I thought his books were the best things, certainly he was the best archaeologist I knew of. I came to realize that you cannot duplicate Gordon Childe. But I also found out you can’t duplicate Lewis Binford. He does not represent a model for how to be an archaeologist.

MS: *Why do they not represent models? Is it that they were of that time, of that moment? Is it their personality?*

ML: If I were to tell you that great white men are dead as models you would understand that instantly. Well, why don’t you understand when it comes to Gordon Childe and Lewis Binford?
MS: *Great white men?*

ML: Well, we had a couple of great white women, and you have them in this volume too. It is not possible for them to be models either. Jim Deetz couldn’t be copied either.

MS: *Are there any role models?*

ML: No. There are no role models. Which isn’t to say that you can’t learn from these people. You have to learn, obviously. But the question is *how* do you learn?

MS: *Now Lewis Binford (Chapter 2) said that archaeology is a learning strategy. There is an idea for a role model?*

ML: I think that is OK. I am not going to leave Lew behind. However, I think that the way the New Archaeology began was to ask you to come up with a hypothesis, and you went out and tested the hypothesis. Whatever the testing may have involved, it was the hypothesis that was important. The hypothesis had explanatory value. It was universal. Well, try and invent a hypothesis like Lew did. Try it, and you won’t succeed. At least I didn’t succeed. And then it was Deetz who, in a somewhat different way, solved some very serious problems in American historical archaeology.¹ That work was wonderful, but when you want to do likewise, you can’t. So the impossibility of using these figures as role models is something that frustrated me. In the long run, I found that putting these guys up, these people up, as ideals is the wrong way to teach.

BR: *Do you not feel then that they were part of the development of methodologies?*

ML: Yes, there is no question that the methods were and remain significant. I think that the methods are the key. In other words, the methods are the tools that we can use to do the ordinary business of archaeology. It is not modeling yourself on guys with a kind of talent that cannot be duplicated that is significant, rather it is the methods that one learns. So, I am going to stick with the methods. That is actually where I am trying to steer you, because the

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¹ (ML): Deetz’s work used house form and ground plan, ceramic assemblages, and gravestone images and inscriptions to show conceptual changes in New England religion and ideas of daily life (see Deetz 1996). He did not treat the materials separately or historically, but rather showed how changing forms all showed the same changing pattern of thought. It was Levi Strauss for historical archaeologists and was wonderful. But historical archaeologists never understood Levi Strauss, so it didn’t go anywhere beyond Deetz.
method that I am interested in sharing with you here is not any intellectual coherence on my part. It is one of using emotion, feelings and concerns to interrupt an external discourse based on the fact that it bothered me and, as a consequence, I wanted to make a change. That is the first part of a method; that is analogous to other methods in the field.

MS: *These are critiques.*

ML: Absolutely, but also partially. The emotional reaction is the basis for composing a coherent, believable critique.

MS: *It is not being critical and negative, that is not what you are talking about. Are you talking about a technical sense of critical archaeology and your reference points there? Are you making the same reference to this body of thinking, of working, as a methodology? Is it an attitude?*

ML: From that point of view, there was one person and a group of people from whom I got a tremendous amount of knowledge and protection. I abandoned the New Archaeology quickly when I realized I couldn’t be like Lew Binford. But about 15 years ago, I started to learn Middle Range Theory.² Obviously, instead of using Eskimos and artifacts from a hundred thousand years ago, I used archaeology in the form of topographic maps, printers’ type, and the remains of West African spirit practices³ and said that they are completely different from, and not analogous to, the texts that are related to them.⁴ The garden books,

² (ML): Middle Range Theory is a way of using living materials to form an explanation for unexplained prehistoric archaeological remains. Its purpose is to replace analogy. Once one had an idea about how past behavior worked, one argued how the past might have been organized if archaeological materials behaved as predicted from the present. The point was to look for discrepancies between the two and to always attempt to work with what might account for the differences. This is my take on middle range theory and does not pretend to be an even handed summary of a complex and still-debated method.

³ (ML): The remains I am talking about are caches. Cache(s) is an archaeological word for the deposits put in the ground, or in a house, for curing, protection, or punishment by people using West African spirit practices in North America. In the Slave Autobiographies, or Narratives, these can be called fixens, hands, mojos, or tobys. These practices have been referred to as hoodoo, or conjure, terms that still have racist connotations in some uses.

⁴ (ML): The sources I used to follow Lew’s ideas were not truly ethnographic; they are historical. For landscape, I used the widely available and comprehensive garden design books of the 17th and 18th centuries. For printer’s type, I followed Barbara Little’s lead and used the three printers guides of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, and the *Maryland Gazette* itself, which survives complete and intact. For hoodoo or conjure caches, I used the direct
the newspaper that was printed from the type, and then the *Slave Narratives* (Hyatt 1970-1978; Rawick 1972) were queried against each other. This is all spelled out in my *The Archaeology Liberty in an American Capitol: Excavations in Annapolis* (2005). I didn’t make them analogs to each other, and I learned that from Lew. I learned it by reading, and I learned it from talking with him. Now, this is not the whole way he operates, but I introduced this into my own work. As a result, it has been very fruitful. That is a method. It is not hard to use. It’s easy to understand it in terms of hypothesis testing, which is a simple and basic scientific process. This is not divorced from anything most people understand. That is what I got out of Binford more recently. I don’t think that fails. I think that can be used anywhere.

The second thing I got was a crowd of allies in the Cambridge School. I had come to the same position regarding the place of archaeology in the modern world as Ian Hodder and all of his graduate students, including you, Michael, by the time I met him and you in 1979. I had come along the same lines of reasoning from reading in the U.S. because of my use of Marx and Freud. Then I met everybody at Cambridge. I couldn’t have been alone in the United States without the sense that I could call on allies. I regarded, and I still do, American archaeology as conservative. It doesn’t understand the politics in which it exists. And it has no clear, conscious relationship to a conservative country. Whereas, that was not a mistake made at Cambridge by Ian and you, and your colleagues, Mike, even though the theoretical bases were and remain somewhat different from mine.

Now some things that ticked me off and motivated me to change things . . .

BR: *So the fact that you couldn’t duplicate Childe, Binford, or Deetz was number one?*

ML: Yes. That’s a beginning place.

descriptions found in the Slave Autobiographies taken down in the 1930s. Nonetheless, I contrasted these to the archaeology to find where there were marked differences with archaeological patterns. And there were remarkable differences. Then, once these differences were identified, explaining them became the problem to be addressed. This became a visible way of actually and easily identifying a problem for an archaeologist to deal with. Working this way provided a natural foil and, almost inevitably, allowed for a contribution to the literature because you could find something that had not been dealt with before.
MS: There is a serious point here about your relationship to standard histories of the discipline, but also as how we all relate to the community and its history, the community we may want to belong to, or we may de facto belong to because we do the job. It’s how you work with that history, not the “here is the Bruce Trigger history of archaeological thought account.” We learn from this, and therefore here is this ‘ism’ and I’m going to locate myself there. You have a much more pragmatic and, frankly, a much more savvy politics to working with the history of the discipline.

Follow your emotions

ML: I would not urge anybody to write a history of the field. I don’t think it’s worthwhile, right now. I think that a practicing archaeologist’s job is to deal with the society in which he or she lives. I think that the way to do it is to figure out what motivates you; what are your feelings. Now to give this interview on my own intellectual development and to teach with it, I focused on being ticked off. I also have positive feelings and what I’m talking about here is using them; I am not saying that being angry is the only thing that motivates a person.  

BR: The next one. What is the next thing that made you mad?

ML: I think that there was a large amount of silliness in statistics in archaeology. It just bothered me when this field became statistical. I think it’s fine to count, but I think we need to realize that counting structurally is as important as using a Chi Square test.

BR: Counting structurally?

ML: Yes, counting structurally.

BR: What do you mean?

ML: Deetz, using structuralism, and my own use of Freud taught me to count structurally. I mean contrast the windows with their lights with the tiles on the roof and with the chairs and with the panels—that’s counting statistically and structurally. Archaeologists,

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5 (ML): This whole approach was suggested to me by Alison Wylie who referred me to R. G. Collingwood’s An Autobiography, which I have now read many times. That book is more an inspiration for my approach here. It cannot be a model.
particularly historical archaeologists, never learned to do it. But I don’t want to get into this. I just want to give you a sense . . .

Let me give you a couple of other things that bothered me and among which I made choices for archaeological action.

MS: *Please do.*

ML: I think the way the Society for American Archaeology operates is out of date. I think the same thing for the Society for Historical Archaeology. The leaders of neither organization think they should protect the workers in the field. I think archaeologists in the United States are politically and intellectually timid.

So, let me tell you what to do with these emotionally-based, essentially private reactions. I’m not talking to you in a way that you couldn’t talk to me. You have all these feelings too, about one thing or another.

About twenty years ago I was asked to be the lobbying voice for the members of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) and I gave testimony regularly on Capitol Hill for two years. I met Congressmen. I met Senators. I did this for two reasons: one, I could talk without stumbling; and the other is that my wife had been a lobbyist for three decades representing Princeton University. All the great universities have lobbyists. And I didn’t understand what my wife did. So I became a lobbyist for the SAA. I needed to find out. It’s absolutely fascinating and it works. Lobbying is really important.

Now, I am no longer a member of the Society for Historical Archaeology, and I refuse to be a member of the SAA. I tried very hard to find out what they do, and I won’t work with them because they will not take on the bureaucracy at the NSF or the NEH, and they won’t even try to replace the senior generation of now-retiring archaeologists who created CRM legislation in the first place. Now these are wonderful people, like Fred Wendorf, but the Society won’t even go to bat for the next generation!

BR: *They won’t go to Capitol Hill? They won’t do the lobbying—is that what you’re saying?*

ML: Yes, and the Society for American Archaeology won’t let you touch it.

BR: *Well then, what were you doing there as a lobbyist?*
ML: Well, I tried to figure out how to support the funding for the federal agencies that support prehistoric and historical archaeology, and I found out quickly that the Society would not dare deal with the power structure through lobbying. They wouldn’t take the bureaucrats on.

Now, I’ve mentioned all these things which ticked me off, and these are domains in which I have not succeeded. I have tried to use things that ticked me off or excited me positively, like lobbying, to choose where to place my energies. Because when you deal with things that move you, you can spread yourself thin. If you are going to change something, you have to make a big commitment.

Now, my Department of Anthropology did not have a Ph.D. program. So I worked with a group of state administrators who had gone to the Maryland state legislature to force the administration at my university to create a Ph.D. program in my department. I have invested a great deal of time in that. And then, in order to get to know the power structure in my institution, I was willing to stand for election as chair of the University Senate so I could deal directly with the President of the institution. Hence, I invested there, but I left the SAA and the SHA alone because I didn’t think I could move them. The real place I have invested in, of course, is Annapolis and the CRM bureaucrats would like very much to control what I do there. The government regulators, the very people who regulate archaeology, want to regulate me and my program. So I’m going to fight that a long way.

If you are going to intervene and interrupt a discourse in the field based on how you feel, you need to be prepared for three things: 1) you may fail; 2) occasionally, you will succeed; and 3) you can’t say publicly what I’ve said here. You have to moderate it. You cannot be vindictive and you cannot be furious. You also cannot say you find something extraordinarily beautiful. Those are self-destructive expressions. What I’ve shown you is a flash of anger or delight, but I haven’t given you more than a glimpse, and you don’t want to do what I have done because it won’t get you anywhere.

I want to expand on the idea of using emotions as a way to begin work. The beauty of the city of Annapolis and, particularly, its planned landscapes attracted me. My emotional reaction to seeing the heart of the city was and remains important to me. But above all, the William Paca Garden knocked me over with its beauty. My initial response was entirely emotional. The place was so deeply and profoundly beautiful, I had to find some way to
come back to it time and time again. The utter beauty of a place, or a thing, is a reason for asking why is it beautiful. What causes the city’s landscapes and this garden to be beautiful? That ultimately is the basis for an archaeological question.

I knew right off because of my intense liking for Jim Deetz’s work on New England that I was looking at a Renaissance garden. I also knew right away that he had never thought of formal gardens as Georgian and, further, that he should have. I could correct that mistake. My emotional point came from my intense excitement that I could use Jim’s work and bring it to a new level of completion and, ultimately, to make a complement to his work.

I also knew, or felt, that Jim Deetz never understood that all Renaissance art was successful because of its combination of the use of the rules of optics to create the illusion of depth, or normalcy, in two dimensions or in three. These were called the rules of perspective. But at their heart they used devices to fool the eye, meaning the brain, into ‘seeing’, that is, believing that what it saw was reality or a perfect copy of it. Jim did not focus on the illusion. I chose to and built on him.

I had already read and adopted Althusser, some years earlier (Please provide reference). I already knew that the men and women I was being introduced to in Annapolis had actually led the American Revolution, not been led by it. So, it was just inevitable to me to ask how the masks and illusions of equality described by Althusser for capitalism were connected to the illusions of Renaissance perspective used so very commonly by the capitalists who founded our country. Of course, the question is subversive, but above all it was exciting. Its answer found an economic and political place for beauty. I was able to connect the economics and politics of beauty to the American Revolution and to its celebration in a museum setting in the heart of a state capital. I was really happy.

MS: Is what you are sketching here a kind of realpolitik for archaeology? You are talking about something quite distinct, which are the realities of a kind of discursive politics . . .

ML: I want to make my life as a professional look like it does not have intellectual coherence so that I can show you that the intellectual outsides of archaeology have a relationship to a person based on the fact that I got ticked off at, or overcome by, some things and I decided to make a statement and do something. Forget the intellectual history of archaeology. Instead, remember, how you have used your feelings. Some feelings you have to avoid in
public, some feelings you have to swallow, and at some point you are going to have to make a choice as to what you want to intercede with, and then you can go ahead.

MS: I’m interested here in how what you are describing now connects with your intellectual program? Never mind the coherence . . .

ML: Good.

MS: Because I don’t mind about the issue of coherence and you are making a great point here as far as I’m concerned. But as you have presented very coherently there are various motivating factors in terms of using critique as a way of channeling your motivations into a program, whether it is effective or non-effective. But this has to do with an intellectual context of Marxist ideological critique, consciousness raising, and working with communities to provide them with histories that were otherwise hidden and to develop them further. Now here is a way that you connected what you were saying with a coherent program.

ML: And here it goes. All of this comes because you gave me time to think about these issues, and so that is where the coherence comes from. I found that I was really very disappointed with the fact that evolutionary theory doesn’t work. Aside from human evolution, evolutionary theory just doesn’t work in historical archaeology, the archaeology of modern times, and their origins. Let me underscore: I was really committed to the theory.

MS: Yes, you were. I just want to stop you here Mark. Why were you disappointed with evolutionary theory?

ML: Evolutionary theory in anthropology as I learned it as a graduate student is strong, indeed, unique in its ability to deal with human origins. I am not talking about that, however. I am talking about the evolutionary theory carried into the New Archaeology that was accompanied by ecological and systems theory. Used to understand extinct prehistoric societies, this combination was, and remains, scientifically productive. This set of ideas does not, however, deal with the bands, tribes and chiefdoms as they were colonized and swallowed up by industrial capitalism nor with the colonizing process itself. The ideas neither deal with the colonized nor the colonizer. They do not describe, let alone implicate, the society that dominated the theory’s own subject matter or the agents—ourselves as professionals—in the very process of description.

Above all, the biggest problem with evolutionary theory is that it provides no hope as we use it. When used with modern and ancient biological change, evolutionary theory
places its users in a very difficult, existential position in exchange for an effective attack on
the theocratic uses of revealed truth that have caused so much damage to religious freedoms. When moved to understanding the last 500 years, it has almost no useful ideas that can explain modernity, capitalism or the West’s domination of the Earth. Most indicting, however, is the theory’s inability to invoke or inspire the possibility of productive social change. This is why I moved from the ideas used in the New Archaeology to Marx and his intellectual descendents, and to Freud. The move to Marx allowed me to keep an economic and political focus in explanations, which is why I never abandoned the foundations of the New Archaeology.

MS: What about all the recent Neo-Darwinian and post Neo-Darwinian work? There are some fascinating evolutionary approaches . . .

ML: The proof that it doesn’t work is that we don’t read it anymore, certainly not in historical archaeology. People are not biological entities even though all of the work with the human genome is important. I know it doesn’t matter to you that I say that evolutionary theory doesn’t work. It is as dead as a doornail. And given the expressions on your faces as I talk here and watch you, you already know that, but this will impress you: I think that the theoretical basis for a concern with aboriginal and native rights in archaeology is also largely nonsense.

BR: Wow, Mark, that is a bizarre and unusual statement!

**Critical interventions**

ML: Now, I have a reason for saying that. On the one hand, a concern with equal voices and moral relativity is also nonsense. On the other hand, I am passionate about the relationship between archaeology and the present. I am passionate about enhancing democratic processes. These matters may seem contradictory, but they are not. Here is what I did when I saw the arrival of Native American and Aboriginal rights over archaeology.

The first thing I tried to do when I began dealing with modern material culture 30 years ago, was to move from evolutionary theory to critical theory. Among the Marxists, I read Althusser (1971), Lukács (1971), and Habermas (1975, 1984-1987). I became familiar
with Freud, also a critical theorist. What I was particularly interested in were notions of consciousness. I thought that to avoid violence and to deal with the class structure that we have in the United States, and the associated exploitation that you can see in this country. We must talk about the origins of exploitation. I certainly had ample evidence for slavery and unequal wealth in the history of Annapolis.

Annapolis was a deeply exploitative town. Its history can be seen as one of exploitation. William Paca, a Revolutionary leader in Annapolis, had a hundred slaves. The Carroll family, who were not particularly pious Catholics, owned a thousand people in the course of the hundred years before emancipation (refer to Leone 2005, 23). Can you imagine running the lives of a thousand people? Annapolis was a slave port. There are all kinds of descriptions of what life in slavery was like. So, what I was particularly interested in was how you deal with situations like that. It is only leftist theory like Althusser that makes a lot of difference. Moreover, even though Foucault (1973, 1979) was not supposed to be a Marxist, he is all about power and you get a lot of material culture out of him. Accordingly, I moved in the direction of these theorists, but those writers all moved to consciousness as a way of handling change.

MS: I think you are absolutely right. For me as well, when you are mentioning the kind of alliance that you felt with what was happening in Britain . . . was the bigger picture there the rediscovery of these characters? ‘Rediscovery’, because there was a long Western tradition of Marxism and of critical theory, which ultimately was a similar response I think to what you are describing now with regards to the Russian Revolution, the immediate post-war, the twenties and the rise of Fascism. How do you make sense of it? By reevaluating Marxism in the way you described it? So this is a bigger picture?

ML: Well this is stuff that you know, Mike, but to the vast majority of American archaeologists this is mysterious literature. You are never going to find this literature used at either the SAA or the SHA meetings. American archaeologists think this is foreign territory. What I did to get around a conservative field was to move into the media.

I took archaeology to radio, to television, to a lot of newspapers, to GIS on the net, to streaming video (http://anacostia.si.edu/Online_Academy/Academy/academy.htm; http://www.bsos.umd.edu/ANTH/aia/; http://www.bsos.umd.edu/anth/). I trained graduate students to be interviewed by reporters by rehearsing in advance what the storyline was and never to speak metaphorically. Now, we all know you have to speak metaphorically,
but you can certainly avoid saying that the bottom of this pit looks like a bowl of spaghetti, because that’s what is going to be in print. You don’t say things like that. I did a serious guidebook called *Invisible America* with Neil Silberman (1995). I, along with several of my graduate students (Matthew D. Cochran, Paul Mullins, Mark Warner, Timothy Goddard, Jessica Mundt), did web-based guides to Annapolis that you can dial up from here. This was as a way of allowing people to query us. This was a means of making the material available to anyone. That was how I dealt with my disappointment at not being able to get my points across to local audiences or to my colleagues.

I actually feel fairly strongly regarding my fairly provocative statements concerning Native Americans, Aboriginal rights, and equal voices. First, there are certain voices that I would not give much room to other than in the context of the protection of First Amendment guarantees. I think Mormon archaeology is not something that I would give any room to other than what the Constitution or the Bill of Rights say. There are other kinds of destructive archaeology, but Mormon archaeology is what I know from the inside, and I don’t think that it is an important equal voice. Second, I think that it is essential that in our capacity to excavate, and in our capacity to make sense out of stuff that nobody knew about before, archaeologists can actually find something that is a surprise and thus to conclude something that was not known before. And that is what gives scientific primacy and philosophical privilege to our work and places it above unempirical voices.

**MS:** Can I just follow up on this theme of equal voices? You are saying that all voices are not equal, fair enough, I think. But also you are saying that the message that some are carrying is actually destructive. Yes, we must respect people’s right to express themselves, but some of those expressions are really bad . . .

**ML:** . . . they are destructive . . .

**MS:** . . . destructive. Yes, that is the word to use. There’s an issue of censorship here—how do you give them the means to disseminate this? Perhaps the way I want to put it is to ask whether you think you should take them on? Do you think you should say publicly that we have these different voices in archaeology like in any field and you should realize that the message you hear from this quarter is destructive? Is such a course what you think we should do? Engage in a dialogue with them?

**ML:** I think that it is very important that the professional organizations that I used to belong to engage far more aggressively in a fight for their own members’ rights, the rights of
archaeologists to make statements. But I think most archaeologists are so enfolded in the
silly fabric of academic and scientific neutrality that they not only don’t have the practice and
experience of taking on another powerful group; they are so timid they won’t do it.

I think what happened with the SAA is that it folded in the face of NAGPRA
(Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act). NAGPRA didn’t have to
happen, with some of the results we see. Furthermore, while I think that there was a
profound inability to understand what Native Americans thought about material culture
associated with the dead, there was also no capacity to understand how Native Americans
could be worked with so that most people on all sides could be well served. I think
something like Kennewick Man⁶ didn’t need to happen. Now, it did happen and the only
thing one can hope for is that the next time it happens we actually know how to go about
dealing with it so that people are satisfied. I was on the board of the SAA at that time. In
fact, I was the treasurer of the organization, and what I saw was that there was very, very
little willingness or capacity on the part of the professionals to talk with Native Americans. I
think that archaeologists abrogated who they were. I think that lack of action is where I find
their timidity unacceptable. And I’m going to say ‘their’ as opposed to ‘our’.

I think that there is a much better way of getting along with people who have newly
exercised rights and privileges that are entirely legal. I think that the way something like the
African Burial Ground⁷ was done is impressive. In my own work with African Americans
since 1990 in Annapolis we see how we can work with people by answering their questions
in such a way that mutual respect is established. At the same time a certain amount of
power is recognized by everyone (see Chapter 7 for similar views).

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⁶ NAGPRA and the immediately preceding federal law covering the Smithsonian’s
collections made it possible for Native Americans to recover and reburial remains – skeletal
and funerary – of materials directly related to them. The controversy that arose, remains,
and which extends to Kennewick Man’s skeletal remains, involves the scientific use of these
materials, their preservation, and appropriate respect for the dead who are considered
ancestors.

⁷ Over 400 graves were excavated in Lower Manhattan in the 1990s from a burial ground for
slaves, Africans, and African Americans dating mostly from the late 18th through the 19th
centuries. The analysis, curation, and reburial have been carefully done and directed by
Michael Blakey and his team of colleagues.
MS: The archaeologist’s **authority or power lies in expertise.** Or is it in the fact that you have been doing it for the last thirty years? Or that you trained in it; is that the source?

ML: We can produce answers to their questions, which makes them joint questions. Now that isn’t to say that they can’t figure out other answers, but archaeologists provide a special kind of answer.

**MS:** A special kind of answer. So what do you think about those efforts to open up archaeological materials to multiple voices? Do you feel standards have to be maintained? Or that professional authority is crucial? I’m putting thinking about it here in terms of what you have rightly described as working democratically, of listening to other interests, so how do you work through this? **What about authority?**

ML: A democratic process also allows for scientific expertise. The problem with scientists as archaeologists is we did not understand our role in a democratic society. We didn’t understand our role in answering questions posed by other people, because we didn’t understand that we were at their service. We didn’t do that because we didn’t know that we could intervene in the creation of a society. We didn’t know, and I still don’t think we do know, that we are political creatures. Under those circumstances, when an archaeologist understands that there is a series of questions that are external to him/her, then a person can decide when to be passionate enough about democracy or angry enough about the way an issue is going that he can choose to do something about it. But what you use to do it is what you know better than anybody else: archaeology.

BR: **What's the next thing that made you angry?**

ML: That is the list.

BR: **That's a powerful list.**

ML: So to sum up then. If I were going to do an intellectual autobiography, I would not do it from the point of view of my becoming a prehistoric archaeologist focused on Arizona, and then going to a book on Mormonism, and then being interested in American religions, and then becoming an historical archaeologist, and then being interested in doing American landscapes. I don’t think I would be teaching if I did that. But because we all share feelings and because we are all taught at some point in our lives to take the incoherence that feelings are and give them names (Scheman 1980; 1987), then I suggest a person vocalize privately how he/she feels and say that you are going to intervene and interrupt a discourse and
dialogue that is apart from you and join it. Now that’s the kind of autobiography that you in this interviewing process are in the business of finding, and I’m in the business of explaining. That is not to say that I haven’t done scientific work. Obviously, the stuff I publish is.

Archaeology carries you along because it exists outside of yourself. So get carried along. Realize at what point you don’t want to be carried along and shift something by using your reaction to it. Then get carried along again because you have the possibility of making a statement or changing something.

MS: *So you are emphasizing this strategy, this practice . . . intervention. Intervention is the word I am picking up here.*

ML: To go back to your own interests, it is how agency can be expressed.

MS: *That is good. You have a very clear angle on agency in what you are describing.*

ML: I didn’t come to it the way that you British archaeologists came to it, but I certainly respect it. I am not telling you to be a cog in the wheel. The way to avoid being a cog is to use your emotions to make the initial choice. This is the first step. And it can be a private step. One doesn’t get angry in public.

MS: *I hear a couple of messages in what you are saying about the relationship between political intervention and learning from the mistakes, the frustrations and failings of institutions and organizations. There is also a kind of ambiguous relationship with the theory or the thinking. You say that evolutionary archaeology didn’t work for you, so you looked to Marxian thought and, to me, it sounds as if that is thoroughly informing, both the message you are giving out here now and your experiences of what you were doing. You were working with the Historic Annapolis Foundation in certain ways, which to me, is consciousness raising and ideology critique. To me that sounds like a very interesting relationship between theory and what you are emphasizing in terms of the workings of archaeology as a discourse of intervention. Doing stuff on the basis of what motivates you, your political motivation . . .*

ML: That’s a great summary.

MS: *I am interested in the way you put America into all of this. That’s not quite something that I was expecting. You say that maybe you all don’t realize that the United States is based on an illusion or set of illusions . . .*
ML: Certainly the founding of the country is. The fact that people believe in the reality of equal opportunity is an illusion. The fact that people think that there is such a thing as equal justice under law is an illusion. All of those things are illusions. Those are ideologies.

MS: Yes, but I think in your own sense, this is not the route into your historical archaeology. These illusions, in an Althusserian sense, are lived. They are very real. They are lived relationships to this world that you are in.

ML: Yes, I think you probably understand Althusser better than I do. You are correct. You are certainly correct in that ideology is very material.

MS: That is your William Paca. That is your hoodoo. For me, that is where your theory, your intervention is located. You are working with a community doing real archaeology, with a city that has a development program, a planning program and so on. Here, you have a triangulation of theory, CRM, if you like, and the material. Then behind the material is this very real understanding, call it Marxian if you like, of ideology and how it works . . .

ML: American democracy is based on a series of masks, fictions, ideologies, and taken-for-granted. How does one deal with these when they crack? Well, not through violence, not through race riots, but through a conscious recognition that the fictions exist. Hence all of this work with the media. By a display of where they come from, the 18th century origins, or with a public discussion with a group of people who exempted themselves from ideology, through hoodoo, Afro-Christianity, and all the discoveries which I have tried to make available, and which you can read in the Slave Autobiographies. On the streaming video, the work we have done with and through African-Americans in Annapolis, who stand for African-Americans throughout the entire South, one can see what we know about how America works.⁸

MS: You are describing the basis of America as we know it now after the Revolution, with the workings of democracy and all that you are also upholding in what the Constitution is based on in terms of freedom of speech, as an illusion, as fiction and as that which is taken-for-granted. However, you are also saying, ‘hold on though’, in a very real political sense there are limits that we must be savvy about—‘not everything goes’.

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⁸ (ML): The keys but also different approaches to understanding African American Christianity are Melville Herskovits (1958), Albert Raboteau (1978), Theophus Smith (1994), and Yvonne Chireau (2003).
ML: I remember once talking to John Barrett when he was in Glasgow and he was running for Parliament and he was doing it from the left. I am not doing anything different from that. I am not going to go running for office, because I have tried that and it is a waste of time. I mean, if you cannot make something like the SAA work, then running for office will be a waste of your time. Though I admire John for running for Parliament. What I have tried to do within archaeology is to provide some kind of alternative for my graduate students, my undergraduate students, and myself, in the context of the greater Washington area.

MS: Do you think your work with Historic Annapolis has been successful? You have been at it a long time now. You have sketched there a very powerful agenda—do you think it works? Do you think it has worked in terms of the people who have responded to it?

ML: That is the only question you have asked that I don’t have the answer to.

MS: Do you think you will ever know? Is it something that is knowable or is it something that will be embedded in issues that people simply don’t talk about?

ML: It is a wonderful question and I just plain don’t know. I don’t know.

BR: So really, what you are doing here is dealing with everybody as a political actor. You are trying to show them how to use archaeology as a tool in their political actions.

ML: I would go along with that, but I haven’t thought about it that way.

BR: You are not giving any advice about the kind of archaeology to do in your political action.

ML: No, not at all. It has got to be technically correct archaeology.

BR: But within that you are talking about hypothesis testing.

ML: I should be rigorous about how I thought about it. That is why I have front-forwarded Middle Range Theory. In historical archaeology a mistake is made everyday which you can see illustrated on the HistArch listserv: You dig it up, you find out what it is, and suddenly it is not important anymore. That is the wrong way to go.

BR: What about your opinions then on the state of archaeology at the moment? We are in a state of change, given the growth of some sectors within professional archaeology and given the spread of archaeological aspirations globally. With this growth we are witnessing more and more countries, ministries of cultures, hitching themselves onto archaeology and having archaeological programs. How do you feel about these kinds
of things? Do you think there are opportunities for archaeologists or other issues? What do you think might be happening?

ML: If I were training graduate students for work in other countries, I certainly would train them as carefully as possible. For archaeologists to operate in another country, they clearly have to know the artifacts. I don’t just mean the stuff out of the ground in historical terms. I would absolutely not bring an American problem with me.

I would really, truly find out what people want to know about themselves. Because when a country is writing its past, and that has been very many countries in the past 50 to 60 years, people have questions about themselves. I certainly wouldn’t go and create a homogenous national history and therefore forget the ethnic minorities. One of the things that I have spent time on is how I would conduct a dig at Chichén Itzá, given Quetzil Castañeda’s book *In the Museum of Maya Culture*, which is a book that has made a big impact on me. Given the alienation of the modern Maya from Chichén, what I would do is the archaeology of the top six inches of Chichén and much deeper in the surrounding countryside to show how the modern Maya, or the people in the vicinity, can utilize historical archaeology for their own purposes. Not to give them a history, which I think is the wrong way to put it, but to put archeological techniques and methods at the disposal of a group of people who are politically aggressive. The possibility of that kind of class fighting

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9 (ML): African Americans are the only descendant communities I have worked with consistently. The members of Unionville whose great grandfathers were slaves on the Lloyd plantation where we excavate, and who were Union soldiers during the Civil War, and who founded the Unionville town and are buried in the church cemetery, are direct descendents. Many of them want to see the artifacts we excavate, talk to us about their town, and listen to us explain the archaeology, and ourselves. Some want to be there as material comes out of the ground because it’s their heritage. Some want to visit freely the large cemetery for slaves at Wye House. Some want to have a professional role in the archaeological project. Some want their high school and college youngsters trained with us. Some know that archaeology will change nothing. Some prefer to take their archaeological properties to Howard University.

Before we began our work, I asked a senior member of the community what she would want to know if she were in my shoes. “I would want to know about slave spirituality. I would want to know what the Lloyds did for freedom,” were her questions. There are archaeological answers and documentary ones too. But then there is the process of the transfer of knowledge. Just recently, a descendant said to me: “I go into their library (the Lloyd’s at Wye House) and I take my book off their shelves, and I know I have to put it back.” His question is, for how long? (He is a descent of Frederick Douglas and was referring to a first edition of Douglas’s *Life and Times of Frederick Douglas*, 1881).
can be found virtually anywhere. Avoid getting shot—I don’t recommend that at all. Such a place is a good stage for action for a historical archaeologist.

MS: *Historical archaeology is relatively, I suppose, new. It hasn’t been around that long.*

ML: It is brand new. Thirty years old.

MS: *Historical archaeology has got a crucial field of interest. The one you have described, which is central to the way the world is today. On the other hand, in looking at recent histories of the modern world there are all sorts of profound, big questions and important issues. I get the feeling sometimes that historical archaeology doesn’t really connect with those big issues. In the way that you described yesterday, there are hidden histories. There are whole tracts of history in the modern world that have been forgotten, but they can be recovered using archaeology (consider the Praetzellis Cypress Freeway dig (YEAR); see Chapter 7). Why aren’t all historical archaeologists doing this? Why don’t we see more of this in the media? Do you think that it is a failure of the discipline? Or do you think that people just haven’t caught on? Or do you think it is because the discipline is too young?*

ML: Well, first of all, historical archaeology has now made it in a big intellectual way in Britain. The person whose work I respect above all others there is Matthew Johnson’s (1996) who clearly took on the origins of capitalism in Britain shortly after the creation of the nation state in the late sixteenth century. I think that he has done a remarkable job of using historical archaeology to show processes that exist all over Europe, but he has solved the problem of taking historical archaeology that was invented in America as a way of understanding colonialism, then the invention of the first new nation, which we are supposed to be, back to the homeland from which the colonies came. He has done a really good job of sewing together all of the material culture including documents, and of taking capitalism to one of its homes.

The positive reason to take the native voice seriously is the questions that people want to know that they can’t answer except through fantasies, revelations, dreams, and literature, but certainly not through the systematic exploration of what is below the ground. In other words, the questions that I asked came from African Americans: “Do we have archaeology?” “What’s left from Africa?” “Tell us about freedom; we’re tired of hearing about slavery.” I couldn’t have asked those questions. And I certainly couldn’t have asked them if I hadn’t learned in South Africa from a man of Indian descent who said,
“archaeology is a site of struggle,” and that was the single most impressive thing that I heard outside the United States. I thought archaeology was what you just said it to be, historical archaeology, basically disconnected. The primary lesson I learned in South Africa when I taught at the University of Cape Town was that archaeology isn’t disconnected at all; we disconnected it here in the United States.

Althusser, Louis

Foucault, Michel

Habermas, Jürgen

Johnson, Matthew H.

Lukács, Georg