

Decolonization: It's a Little Bit General

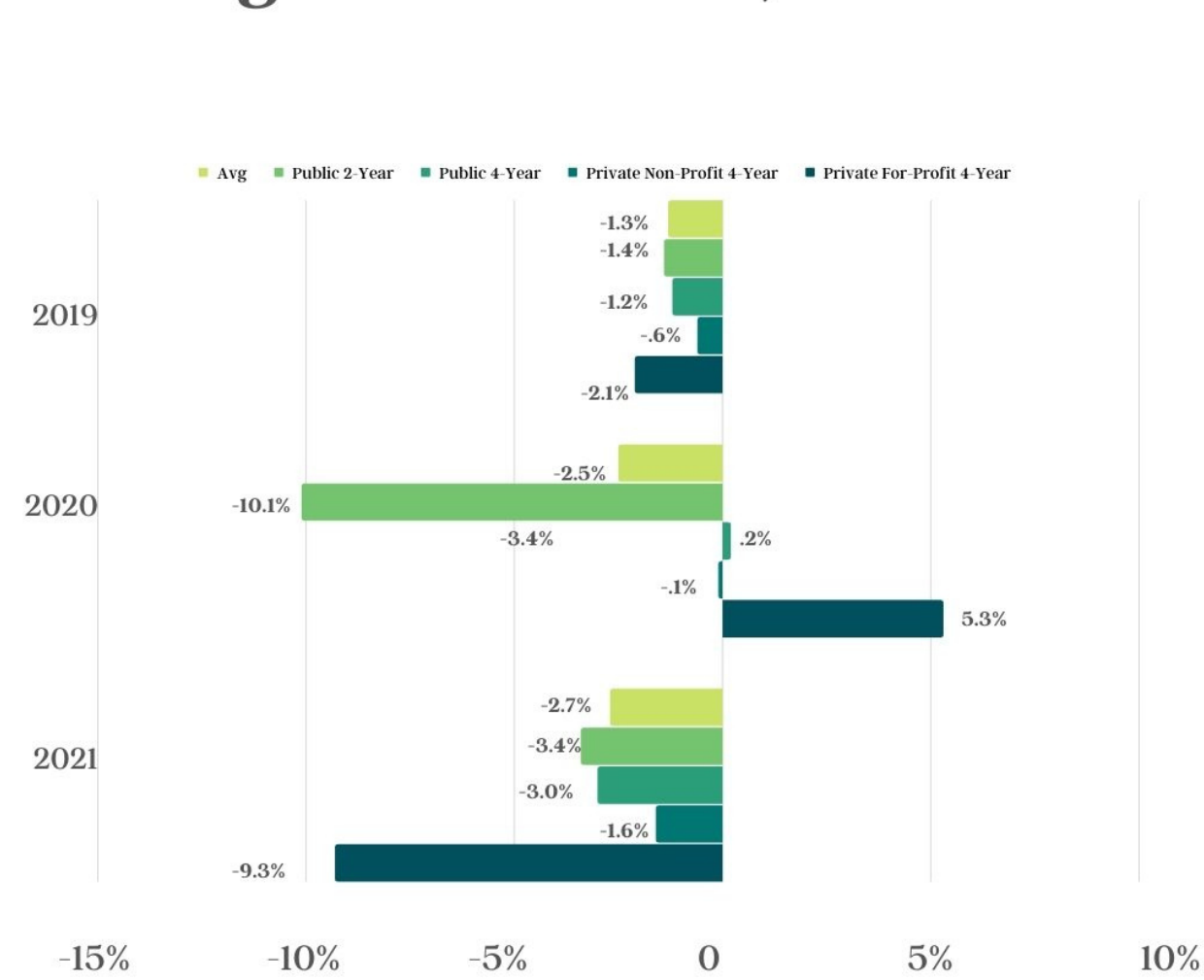
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The diverse student population and faculty of the Archaeology Southwest / University of Arizona Upper Gila Preservation Archaeology Field School (UGPA) is one example of a larger shift in our field; archaeology is becoming increasingly diverse through the inclusion of marginalized peoples and through the critique of canon narratives that often occlude or erase the perspectives and cultural nuances of marginalized groups. Diversifying includes ensuring accessibility and executing outreach projects that encourage a public perception that archaeology can have clear impacts for local community members and not just archaeologists. Such progress can be made through current public interest in how history and archaeological efforts are discussed in classrooms, efforts to disseminate academic findings in more nuanced language, and an awareness of the lack of representation of marginalized persons in archaeology.

Within the Context of a Decolonizing Nation:

- Archaeology has become increasingly diverse, in large part because of the diversity and inclusivity in colleges and universities (Atalay, 2006, p. 290).
- But
- There are more than 1 million fewer students in undergrad in 2021 (Nadworny, 2022) than there were in 2020. That's a 6.6% decline and the biggest drop in enrollment rates in 50 YEARS (National Center for Education Stastics [NCES], 2021).
- That 6.6% is a whopping 13% for community colleges (Nadworny, 2022). And I do mean Whopping.

College Enrollment, 2019-2021



We need to KISS.

That's right. All archaeologists should just gather 'round and smooch it up. That was a joke . . . Actually, when we KISS, we

Keep
It

Simple . . . please

- Many of us may consider outreach, at its most basic level, to be a matter of dispersing knowledge to a community, especially if that community has a vested interest and is directly affected by our findings.
- This is great. More than great, it's fantastic. It's important, but it's meaningless if the community you're talking to does not understand what you're saying.
- In 2020, approximately 54% of Americans aged 16-74 could not be considered literacy proficient (or able to read above a 6th grade level) (Rothwell, 3, 2020).
- Also, big words can be intimidating. Therefore, KEEP IT SIMPLE. Cut back on the jargon and esoteric language where you can. Where you cannot do so, don't be afraid to cut loose, maybe define a few words, make up a few words. Shakespeare did, and that's the excuse everyone always uses, which is contradictory to the point of this poster.
- Don't be like Shakespeare.



Killmonger (Left) vs. Indiana Jones (Right)

- Do NOT make the same mistakes, which is easier said than done. They say if you touch a hot stove once, you won't do it again. From personal experience and several hospital visits, I can tell you this is not true.
- Killmonger walks alongside a White curator, who goes about, running through the stories and histories of artifacts, assuming that her retelling is absolutely true. Spoiler, she is wrong. Killmonger tells her so, "It was taken by British soldiers in Benin, but it's from Wakanda" (Coogler, 2018).
- Though Wakanda does not exist (probably), that stories from a community often go untold, go unasked for, is very much a concern and a detriment to everyone involved.
- "[W]hat is involved here is not a matter of bias, but the issue of authority and control over interpretations of the past" (Epperson, 2004, p. 103).
- Now that first part can be written off: bias is definitely a concern, but authority and control over one's story? That's key. Representation matters just as much as the willingness to listen and look outside of master narratives. Speaking of representation, let's discuss Indiana Jones. This has less to do with decolonization and more to do with needing to talk about how terrible he is as an archaeologist.

1. He destroys artifacts and sites.
2. He pays no mind to the Indigenous communities who are quite obviously against his being there (and for good reason. HE DESTROYS ARTIFACTS AND SITES.)
3. He is also a teacher, but he's never there to teach. Be like Killmonger. Don't be like Indiana Jones.

CHICKITY CHECK

Integrate practices of Indigenous Archaeology: that doesn't mean that only those born from a specific culture can study said culture. This practice only asks that one respects, listens to, and integrates the teachings and stories of the descending community (Atalay, 2006, p. 300). One does not do so without a critical gaze, but a not so eurocentric or ethnocentric gaze might be nice.

- One need not necessarily be a member of a culture to study it, to respect it, to learn from it, but one should understand the culture, or strive to understand the culture, and the significance of their research for both the specific community and for archaeological research. Here's the therefore:
- Chickity check thyself before ye wreck thyself . . . and, since your research is likely to have an impact on how the community is perceived, and because of the tendency towards universalism, albeit unconsciously ...
- Chickity check thyself before ye wreck future intra- and interpersonal relationships with said descending community.

There is a question I absolutely cannot answer but will try to. Here are a few:

You use community quite a bit, and your project seems to replicate the othering of certain implied but unnamed groups. Is this not a concern?

Answer: It is.



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