

# AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGISTS

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23 April 2015,

Dear Fellow AAPA Members and Registrants of the 2015 AAPA Meeting,

Meetings can be exciting and energizing places, and as we settle back to our usual routines following the 84<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in St. Louis, we write to follow-up with you. This year we saw some tremendous science as well as invigorating programming on teaching, mentoring and outreach. We left encouraged by the energy and vitality of our discipline.

But meetings can also be challenging places to traverse for a variety of reasons, not least because the important networking opportunities they present often blur social and professional lines, incorporate embedded differences in power, and sometimes include unacceptable, unexpected and unwanted behaviors. At this meeting there was a lot of discussion in the hallways and on social media about inappropriate behaviors that occurred both during sessions and after hours. The main topic on social media related to issues of sexual harassment<sup>1</sup>, but we have also heard about racial insults and disruptive behavior during talks. Despite the power differentials often involved in these situations, we take it as a positive trend that our community is breaking the culture of silence around such behavior, feels empowered to discuss our shortcomings and is motivated to change them. But it will be a vastly better time when we have nothing to report.

Given the issues this year, we wanted the entire community to know about the initiatives on which the AAPA Executive and other committees have been working and those we are developing as a result of this year's incidents. Our goal is to foster a community of inclusion and respect so we can focus all of our attention on our science.

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<sup>1</sup> We point you to a small sampling of social media posts from which others can be found. There is a long, good discussion on BioAnthNews on Facebook, a string of meeting related tweets at <https://twitter.com/hashtag/aapa2015> (not all related to this issue), and a number of recent blog posts one of which is <http://cashp.columbian.gwu.edu/enough-enough>

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The AAPA Code of Ethics<sup>2</sup>, most recently reviewed in 2013, speaks specifically to abuses of power relationships and we urge everyone to reread this document regularly. Last year, the Ethics Committee<sup>3</sup> started work on a specific Statement on Sexual Harassment that outlines appropriate conduct in a variety of settings from field to lab. This statement, which was nearing completion, is being amended to explicitly discuss meetings behavior.

We are working on a Presidential Panel for next year's meetings that will consider what harassment entails, how to dismantle it, what the lines of recourse are and a discussion of Title IX. The panel is co-sponsored by several AAPA committees and is currently in the planning stages. We believe the role of the AAPA is to inform and educate members and so this panel will also begin work on a set of resources that will include information on reporting as well as how to be effective allies to our colleagues both in the moment and afterward. If you have ideas and suggestions for this or other programming or additional ways to move forward, please send them to one of us.

This year's registration for the Atlanta meeting will include a statement concerning appropriate behavior and the role each of us plays in fostering respectful meetings. The statement will cover a range of unacceptable behaviors, including sexual harassment. When you register for the meeting you also agree to play your part in fostering a meeting in which all attendees can participate free from harassment.

The AAPA is our scientific home. The annual meeting is also an important portal through which our student members join the profession, improve their science, and learn the expectations of appropriate professional behavior. Let's make ours an open and inclusive home where everyone can do and share the best science possible in an atmosphere free from intimidation.



Susan Antón, President



Karen Rosenberg, Past-President

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<sup>2</sup> The AAPA Code of Ethics was adopted in 2003 and reviewed by the Ethics Committee in 2013. The code can be found on the AAPA website position statement page at <http://physanth.org/about/position-statements/>

<sup>3</sup> The Ethics Committee can be reached through <http://physanth.org/about/committees/ethics-committee/>