



Daniel G. Roberts Award for Excellence in Historical Archaeology: Christopher Fennell

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Christopher Fennell (Fig. 1) is the 2020 recipient of the Daniel G. Roberts Award for Excellence in Public Historical Archaeology. The award recognizes outstanding, sustained accomplishments in public historical archaeology by individuals, educational institutions, non- or for-profit firms or organizations, museums, government agencies, and private sponsors. Professor Christopher Fennell's long-term commitment to the public archaeology of the New Philadelphia Project, his enhancement of the *African Diaspora Archaeology Network and Newsletter*, his founding of the *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage*, and his sustained support for antiracism work in the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) are significant contributions to developing excellence in public historical archaeology.

In 2003, Fennell took a leadership role in helping to develop a long-term public archaeology project to study New Philadelphia, a multiracial town that developed on the Illinois frontier in 1836. The archaeology project developed through an invitation from the local community. By building connections with local institutions, the project developed into an important civically engaged program that used a public forum to address questions about race and racism on the Illinois frontier. The project initiated a weekly seminar series for the public during the summer, addressing issues such as race and migration, and the seminar series continues today. The



Fig. 1 Christopher Fennell.

archaeology was a major factor that enabled the placement of the site on the National Register of Historic Places. It is also designated as a National Historic Landmark.

As editor of the *African Diaspora Archaeology Network and Newsletter (ADANN)*, Fennell transformed its use and readership. When he became editor in 2005, he changed the newsletter from a paper to an electronic version. This new form helped to increase the newsletter's readership. While he turned over the editorship to other professionals, *ADANN* has become one of the most frequently used resources for information related to African diaspora archaeology, and it has global readership as well as many international authors. The

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newsletter now attracts scholars from closely related fields. He also founded the new *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage*, from which the publisher often makes articles available on an open-access basis for broad public discussions. Fennell's work has transformed the topic of African diaspora studies, and he has helped to make it an important and significant part of scholarship in historical archaeology.

The vitality of a public historical archaeology can be greatly enhanced by addressing the biases of structural racism that inhibit a fully and civically engaged archaeology. Over the past several years, Fennell has worked within the SHA Gender and Minority Affairs and Development committees to organize and sponsor annual antiracism workshops that reveal to professionals the ways in which structural racism impacts the field's ability to engage in fully collaborative research and public engagement in understandings about America's past and present. He succeeded in raising the necessary funds to support these antiracism workshops, including regular sponsorship funding contributed by his university. As a result, SHA was able to conserve budgetary resources that could then be expended on numerous

other and vitally important public-outreach and -engagement missions. Fennell similarly advances a fully engaged public archaeology by teaching antiracism initiatives to graduate and professional students at the University of Illinois and the University of Chicago.

Professor Fennell's background and expertise make him an ideal recipient of the Daniel G. Roberts Award for Excellence in Public Historical Archaeology. He is one of the well-established scholars in the field who continues to make an impact on public archaeology.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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