

Alabama Archaeology Month 2020

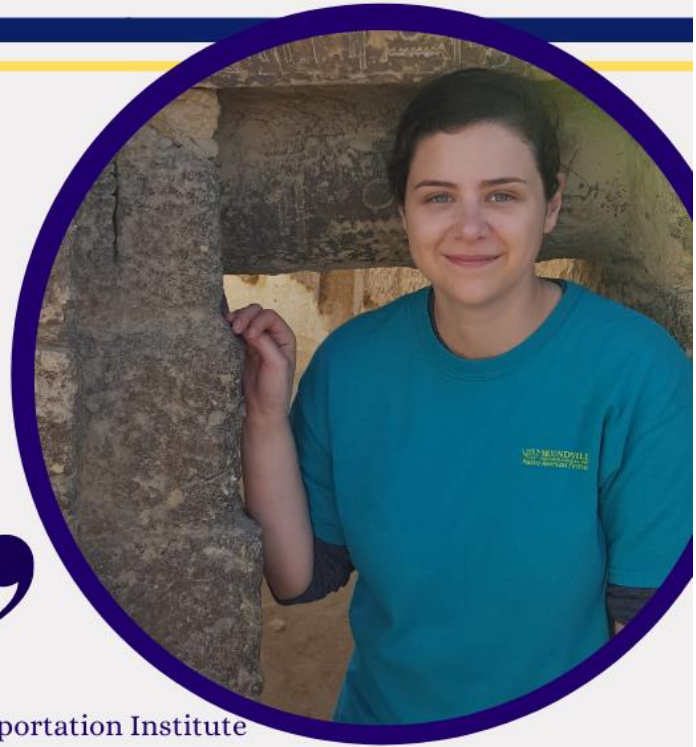
Interviewing Women in Archaeology



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Bouran Mozayen

Research Associate at the Alabama Transportation Institute
at The University of Alabama

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Saluting Women in Archaeology



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1. What is your educational background?

Bachelor's Degree in Archaeology and Anthropology with a minor in American Indian Studies from UNC-Chapel Hill. Currently working on my master's degree in Geography with a concentration in GIS

2. What is your primary research interest?

I like the idea of using remote sensing to make cultural resource surveys more efficient and accurate. This requires an in-depth analysis of the landscape and knowing habitation patterns.

3. What motivated you to become an archaeologist or how did you become an archaeologist?

The joke answer I give whenever anyone asks me this question is that I wanted to be Lara Croft, but really, I have always been drawn to archaeology. As a kid I just knew I would be an Egyptologist, but halfway through college I realized that North American archaeology was more intricate than I ever learned in school...and I didn't need two foreign languages to graduate. ☺

4. What is the most interesting archaeological site on which you've worked?

At Moundville, the museum was adding stairs to one of the mounds. There were only three test units placed and the amount of artifacts (and surprises) we uncovered was astounding. Pretty cool for a first "real" job.

5. Who was your most influential mentor? How did they influence your work?

There isn't a specific person; however, I was lucky to work with field archaeologists that had decades of experience.

6. What is your favorite thing about being an archaeologist?

The entertaining stories you collect. These can range from cool sites you happen to stumble into while surveying to the colorful characters you meet on the road.

7. What is your least favorite thing about being an archaeologist?

Never actually learning the why or how of an ancient community. An Egyptology professor told me once that we will never know how an Ancient Egyptian saw her day. That stuck with me because it's true – how could a 21st century woman ever truly wrap her head around a worldview?

8. How do you feel about the Hollywood and/or reality tv portrayal of archaeology?

I REALLY wish it was like that but there is a lot more "cleaning dirt" than the movies will have you believe.

9. What is your least favorite question that you are frequently asked by non-archaeologists and why?

Oh! You dig up dinosaurs?

10. What can the general public do to protect and preserve archaeological sites?

The big thing in Alabama is that walking plowed fields or riverbanks is a family tradition, and that is a hard mentality to break. The best thing we can do is teach children to look for signs of habitation in the landscape but don't touch.

17. Do you think that your gender made it more difficult to become an archaeologist? If so, how?

I don't think my gender made it more difficult; however, archaeology is a boy's club (which is changing) and you learn quickly that being assertive isn't a bad thing.

18. What barriers or challenges unique to women did you encounter?

Archaeology is really physical. There were weeks where I spent 40 hours outside hiking, digging, or forcing myself through unyielding terrain, and if you're not braced for that, it can burn you out quickly.

19. Have you ever found something in the archaeological record that was specifically female? If so what? How did it make you feel?

At a historic house site in Cherokee County, I found a locket at the base of a chimney. Naturally, the archaeologist in me was thrilled, but as I thought about it, I was a little sad. Locketts typically have a lot of emotion and sentiment connected to them, and there was a point in time where there was a lady tearing up the house that used to be here looking for this, and I knew she would never find it.

