

Alabama Archaeology Month 2020

Interviewing Women in Archaeology



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Lindsey Gordon

Education and Outreach Coordinator
Moundville Archaeological Park



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Saluting Women in Archaeology



Lindsey Gordon

**Education and Outreach Coordinator
at Moundville Archaeological Park**

1. What is your educational background?

Double Major: BS in Chemistry and BA in Anthropology from the University of Mississippi

MA in Biological Anthropology California State University Los Angeles

2. Your primary research interests?

Public Archaeology, Biological Anthropology, Forensic Anthropology, Geophysics

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

It was all by accident. lol I attended field school at the University of Mississippi, and I worked on a site called Carson Mounds. It was at that field school that I learned about Geophysics and Biological Anthropology and I've kind of been doing it ever since.

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

- a. Moundville
- b. Midnight Cave Belize

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

Zora Neale Hurston: Taught me the importance of representation in a field of study and she was my introduction into anthropology. "You can't be what you can't see" -Dr. Marian Wright Edelman

Dr. Jay Johnson: He taught me the basics of archaeology and he taught me the importance of meticulous note taking. It's because of him that I keep a journal.

6. Do you work with volunteers? If so, how do interested people become volunteers?

Yes, we do work with volunteers. You can visit our website at moundville.museums.ua.edu for more information.

7. What public archaeological site do you think best handles preservation and interpretation? why?

Is this a trick question? Moundville Archaeological Park.

I love the work that is done to preserve the park and the care that is taken to also include descendant communities in the preservation and interpretation of the park.

Biltmore Estate. I loved going there as a child. Even as a teenage I also thought their interpretive signage and tours were always well put together.

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

I learn something new every single day.

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

Believe it or not, I don't like hot weather. Summer is my least favorite season.

10. Who do you most admire in our field and why?

All of the women that I have worked with and/or I have seen working in the field, seeing them help me become a better archaeologist and gives me hope and it's inspiring.

11. Do you have advice for people who want to pursue a career in archaeology?

Absorb as many skills that you can because you never know when you will need to use them.

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

I really don't like shows that encourage looting.

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

I don't think I have a least favorite question. But I most often get questions that would more than likely need to ask a paleontologist.

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

If you are visiting or come across a site, "Visit with Respect" and leave all artifacts in place. Donate to archaeological sites and intuitions to further their preservation. Make sure to notify an archeologist if you come across a new site

17. What was the professional culture in archaeology like from a female perspective when you began your career?

Most of my colleagues and classmates were female but most of the Professors/Chairs and/or people in "powerful" academic and professional positions were men. I unfortunately did not have a chance to meet another African American female archaeologist until I was in graduate school, so I was typically the only African American in all of classes and represented a small majority at conferences and other archaeology driven talks and events.

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

Being an African American female archaeologist in the state of Alabama has its challenges. Sometimes working with clients, if accompanied by other men, I would sometimes be overlooked as the person in charge or even as part of the crew. It can be dangerous at times. I have to always think about my safety. Racism still exists!

I have also had colleges to believe that because I am a woman, I couldn't get things done. I've had to prove myself over and over again to get where I am and sometimes that can be struggle.

I never let anyone tell me that I can't do something. That is not their decision to make. With practice and tenacity, you can do anything you set your mind to.

19. Does being a woman influence your interpretation of the archaeological sites that you excavate? If so, how?

We all have recognized that we have bias, so yes it may influence.

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

I HAVE, with doing cemetery relocations, I often come across a lot of decorative hair pins/combs. Those that know me, know that I love my hair and I love to put different decorative items in myself. It always amazes me how the past always meets the present.

