

Type of presentation: Poster presentation

Student prize entry: no

Presentation title: Cultural identity and forensic anthropology in the refugee crisis: The impact of local cultural practices, and beliefs in the collection, analysis, and identification of the remains of refugees.

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Abstract:

The enlistment of forensic anthropologists in investigations of human rights violation cases has increased during the past decades (Ubelaker *et al.* 2019); this includes cases pertaining to refugees. Forensic anthropologists enlisted in refugee fatalities primarily aim to generate biological profiles and ascertain events prior to death by collecting post-mortem data concerning sex, age, stature and ancestry, as well as trauma patterns and sequencing, pathological lesions, and personal identifying skeletal markers. However, the local cultural traditions of a population can directly impact the work of forensic anthropologists by either facilitating identification or incommoding the recovery and analysis of their remains, and should therefore always be taken under consideration. This poster aims to highlight the way in which the cultural background of refugees as well as that of the population local to the area of discovery may affect identification. This is accomplished through the presentation of five case studies, where the impact of certain cultural practices is evident: a) culturally enforced dental modifications among refugees from Latin American populations (Birkby *et al.* 2008) and populations in Sub-Saharan Africa (Wandera and Kaumba 2017; Edwards *et al.* 2008), b) culturally specific material objects, c) refugees on the greek island of Lesbos being buried in anonymous graves and exhumed years later according to Greek Orthodox customs (Kovras and Robins 2017; 2016), d) refugees deceased while crossing to Gibraltar being buried according to Catholic traditions, while also being misidentified on their tombstones (Perl 2016), and e) the concept of adulthood among the Hazara in Afganistan (Monsutti 2007).

Key words: refugees, cultural practices, identification of human remains, human rights violation cases, forensic anthropologist

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