



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

July 15, 2025

Ms. Katherine Maher
President
National Public Radio
1111 N Capitol St NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Ms. Maher,

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) writes to object to comments made by Ayesha Rascoe during her interview with Sam Kean that aired on National Public Radio on July 6 during the Weekend Edition Sunday show. The SAA is delighted anytime archaeologists and their work are featured on the program and we commend the show for highlighting Kean's book. We are less delighted that the host indicated that she championed the theory that aliens built the pyramids. However playfully the host may have intended this comment, the SAA is concerned about fake news and false stories that have misrepresented past human efforts.

The SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With nearly 7,000 members, the SAA represents professional and avocational archaeologists, archaeology students in colleges and universities, and archaeologists working at tribal agencies, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. The SAA has members throughout the United States, as well as in many nations around the world.

Ms. Rascoe's interview focused mainly upon Mr. Kean's work in experimental archaeology, as described in his latest book "Dinner With King Tut: How Rogue Archaeologists Are Re-creating The Sights, Sounds, Smells And Taste Of Lost Civilizations." Toward the end of the interview, however, she asked Mr. Kean about further "ancient mysteries" to be investigated. Ms. Rascoe stated, "I mean, like, I'm rooting for aliens helping with the pyramids myself, but are there mysteries that still fascinate you that you'd want to look into?" This question was an unfortunate lapse by Ms. Rascoe that equated experimental and other legitimate forms of archaeological inquiry with pseudoarchaeology, an all-too common trend among broadcasting platforms in recent years.

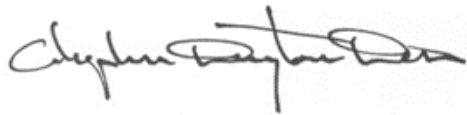
Pseudoarchaeology is the use of artifacts and sites to construct scientifically unjustified interpretations of famous archaeological subjects while rejecting or ignoring the discipline's

time-tested and proved methods of gathering and analyzing data. Our efforts to combat pseudo-archaeology are not new, and the reason is obvious—pseudoarchaeology presents a grossly distorted and inaccurate picture of both the science of archaeology and the places and cultures that archaeologists study. Popular television series such as Ancient Aliens on the History Channel have promoted false claims about the ancient past for many years. These claims frequently rob Indigenous peoples of credit for their own cultural heritage and spread misinformation about important historical events.

The SAA supports its members' work to understand humanity's past through ethically based scientific and humanistic investigation, to promote preservation of archaeological resources and cultural heritage through support of legislation and education, to create collaboration between the profession and descendant communities, and to assist professional growth. The impact of an indirect endorsement of pseudoarchaeology's misinformation, such as the one by Ms. Rascoe, runs directly counter to this effort.

We ask that Ms. Rascoe and the Weekend Edition Sunday show host another segment on the dangers presented by pseudoarchaeology. The SAA would be happy to help them find suitable guests. Doing so would assist us in educating NPR listeners about the true origins, sophistication, and technical knowledge of past civilizations. The monuments and archaeological sites on earth are not evidence of aliens, but important and vital evidence of how past human societies thrived and lived.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Christopher D. Dore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Christopher" being more legible than the last name "Dore".

Christopher D. Dore
President of the Society for American Archaeology