

# BECCA PEIXOTTO, Ph.D.

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## EDUCATION

**American University, Washington, DC**

**Ph.D. in Anthropology, Archaeology Specialization, 2017**

Dissertation: “Against the Map: Resistance Landscapes of the Great Dismal Swamp”

Dr. Daniel O. Sayers, supervisor

**M.A., Public Anthropology, Archaeology Specialization, 2013**

Thesis: “Glass in the Landscape of the Great Dismal Swamp”

Dr. Daniel O. Sayers, supervisor

**Universiteit van Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands**

**M.A. (with Honours), Discourse and Argumentation Studies, 1999**

Thesis: “Refugees in Press: The Otherness of Kosovan Refugees in Five British Newspapers”

Prof. Teun van Dijk, thesis supervisor

**University of Alabama-Huntsville, Huntsville, AL**

**B.A., Slavic Area Studies and Mathematics (cum laude), 1997**

## CURRENT POSITIONS

**Henry M. Jackson Foundation/Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, JBPHH, Hawai'i**

*Project Archaeologist* (2020-present)

- Collaborate with external and internal partners to plan and execute archaeological activities with the goal of recovering US servicemembers lost in past conflicts around the world.

**American University, Washington, D.C.**

*Adjunct Professorial Lecturer* (2017-present)

- Teach face-to-face, hybrid, and online undergraduate courses (Human Origins; Early America: The Buried Past; Undergraduate Research Methods).

## TEACHING AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Perot Museum of Nature and Science, Dallas, Texas**

*Director and Research Scientist, Center for the Exploration of the Human Journey* (2018-2020); *Curator, Origins: Fossils from the Cradle of Humankind* (2018-2021)

- Develop, coordinate, implement Museum programs related to paleoanthropology, archaeology, and allied fields through a Center of Excellence dedicated to communicating the stories of our shared human journey.
- Cultivate collaborative relationships around outreach and research with Prof Lee Berger, University of the Witwatersrand and other researchers and institutions.
- Serve as museum's content-area expert for exhibitions, outreach efforts, and educational programs.
- Maintain an active field and research presence.
- Curate temporary exhibition (October 2019-March 2020) *Origins: Fossils from the Cradle of Humankind* in collaboration with Wits University and National Geographic.

**University of the Witwatersrand/National Geographic, Johannesburg, South Africa**

*Advance Cave Scientist* (2013-2021); *Honorary Research Fellow* (2016-present)

- Excavate early hominid fossils in a remote chamber of the Rising Star cave system and ensure safe transport of fossil specimens to the surface.
- Use 3D scanning technology, photogrammetry, and traditional paper methods to document the site, the specimens, and each step of the excavation.
- Collaborate with colleagues on the surface in person and via audio and visual communication systems to assess site conditions, and develop and carry out excavation plans.

- Conduct outreach through invited talks about *Homo naledi* and the expedition in a wide range of venues including schools, museums and universities.

**American University, Washington, D.C.**

*Archaeologist-in-Residence* (2017-2018); *Research/Teaching Assistant* and *Adjunct Instructor* (2013-2017); *NEH Great Dismal Swamp Landscape Study Laboratory Assistant Supervisor* (2012-2013)

- Oversee archaeology lab operations, supervise student volunteers, provide instruction to students on basic lab tasks such as washing, identifying and cataloguing artifacts.
- Develop and implement organization plan for the lab following the move of more than 30 years' accumulation of research and teaching collections into a new, smaller space.
- Coordinate transfer of select collections from the university to the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory, Virginia Museum of Natural History, and other repositories for long-term curation.
- Teach face-to-face, hybrid, and online undergraduate courses (Human Origins; Early America: The Buried Past; Undergraduate Research Methods).
- Secure month-long loan of portable X-ray Florescence (pXRF) device; organize training session by outside provider for students and members of the local archaeology community; oversee analysis of artifacts with the device.

**Maryland Historic Trust, Crownsville, MD**

*Intern* (2015-2016)

- Prepare archaeological collections for curation by the state of Maryland with emphasis on Biggs Ford 18FR14, a Middle and Late Woodland village site.
- Organize and supervise lab volunteer program for undergraduate students.
- Coordinate analysis and processing of artifacts with representatives and specialists from the state of Maryland, the Archaeology Society of Maryland, American University, and Towson University.

**Archaeological Society of Maryland, Frederick, MD**

*Field Assistant* (2013-2015)

- Provide support to Principal Investigator during educational field session; work with volunteers to ensure completed, informative, organized unit and feature paperwork; track artifact bags throughout the session and create a master list linking bags to excavation units; utilize optical transit to establish units and take elevations.
- Oversee field laboratory operations; supervise experienced and new volunteers in washing, sorting and basic identification of artifacts.

**OTHER EXPERIENCE**

**Archaeological Field Technician Positions**

2017	<b>Gray and Pape</b> , Providence, RI
2014-2017	<b>AECOM (URS)</b> , Germantown, MD
2013-2016	<b>Ottery Group</b> , Silver Spring, MD
2014-2015	<b>Applied Archaeology and History Associates</b> , Annapolis, MD
2013-2014	<b>New South Associates</b> , Stone Mountain, GA
2013-2014	<b>Landmark Archaeology</b> , Altamont, NY
2013	<b>John Milner Associates</b> , Alexandria, VA
2012	<b>Michael Baker, Jr., Inc</b> , Moon Township, PA

- Perform duties of an archaeological field technician including 1x1 test units, shovel test pits, unit excavation.
- Assist with geophysical survey including GPR and magnetometer.
- Participate in Phase I-III excavations including highway projects, cemetery excavation, mitigation, and public outreach.

**Outward Bound**

*Various Positions* (2006-present)

- Serve as Instructor for programs in California, Maryland, and Pennsylvania
- Lead wilderness expeditions for youth and adults in mountain, desert and river environments.
- Facilitate teambuilding programs, including climbing and ropes course, for professional groups.
- Served as Associate Program Director in Midpines, California, 2006-2011

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

### *External*

2020 AAAS/IF THEN Ambassador Outreach Grant  
 2016 The Explorer's Club Washington Group Exploration and Field Research Grant  
 2016 Archaeology Society of Virginia Graduate Student Research Scholarship  
 2016 WINGS WorldQuest Flag Carrier Award

### *American University*

2016 Dissertation Research Grant  
 2016 College of Arts and Sciences Mellon Graduate Student Research Support  
 2014 College of Arts and Sciences Mellon Graduate Student Research Support  
 2012, 2017 College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Student Travel Funds

## PUBLICATIONS

### *Under Review and In Preparation*

- (n.d.) **Peixotto, B.** The Biggs Ford Site 18FR14: Methods and Summary Results. *Maryland Archaeology* special issue The Biggs Ford Site 18FR14, under review.
- (n.d.) Elliott, MC, Makhubeka, T, [and 14 others, including **Peixotto, B.**] Results of new explorations and excavations in the Dinaledi Subsystem, Rising Star Cave. *Paleoanthropology-Physical Anthropology*, in preparation.
- (n.d.) **Peixotto, B.** Where Their Feet Can't Touch Hard Ground: Searching for Forgotten Place Names in the Great Dismal Swamp. *Southeastern Geographer*, in preparation.
- (n.d.) Sayers, DO, Feathers, J, Goode, CV, Greene, L, Lynch, DP, **Peixotto, B**, Riccio, JM. Morass Estrangements: The Diasporic Political Economy of the Great Dismal Swamp, 1500-1860. *American Antiquity*, in preparation.

### *Peer Reviewed*

- 2021 Montgomery, A, and **Peixotto, B.** Explore Paleoanthropology Fieldwork: A Virtual Expedition to Rising Star Cave (South Africa) with DinalediVR. *American Biology Teacher*, in press.
- 2021 **Peixotto, B**, Klehm, C, Eifling, K. Rethinking Field Sites as Wilderness Activity Sites. *Advances in Archaeological Practice* special issue Health and Wellness in Archaeology: Improving Wellness and Response, in press.
- 2020 **Peixotto, B**, Elliot MC. Meet Neo: Your Ancient Cousin. *Frontiers for Young Minds* 7:155. doi: 10.3389/frym.2019.00155.
- 2020 **Peixotto, B**, Elliott, MC, Hawks, J, Berger, LR. A Closer look at the distribution of hominin fossils at Pin 8, Hill Antechamber, Rising Star Cave (Abstract). *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Volume 171, Issue S69: 213.
- 2020 Elliott, MC, **Peixotto, B**, Elliott, MC, Jaskolski, C, Broad, K, Van Rooyen, D, Ramalepa, M, Tsikoane, M, Warren, K, Hawks, J, Berger, LR. Test of high-frequency GPR for identifying hominin skeletal deposits in the Rising Star Cave (Abstract). *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Volume 171, Issue S69: 78.
- 2020 Anderson, KL, Santoyo, O, Montgomery, A, **Peixotto, B.** Introducing hominins and building bridges: The Origins Community Art Project (Abstract). *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Volume 171, Issue S69: 7.
- 2019 **Peixotto, B**, Montgomery, A, Garcia-Martinez, DG, Hlophe, Nompumelo...Berger, LR. Caves in the classroom: Explore hominid fossils with virtual reality in DinalediVR (Abstract). *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Volume 168, Issue S68: 188. doi: 10.1002/ajpa.23802.
- 2018 Berger, LR, Elliott, MC, **Peixotto, B**, Morris, H...Hawks, J. A new naming scheme for the Dinaledi Chamber and associated antechambers and passages of the Rising Star Cave System, South Africa (Abstract). *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Volume 165, Issue S66: 25.
- 2018 Elliott, MC, **Peixotto, B**, Morris, H, Feuerriegel, EM,...Berger, LR. Hominin material recovered from the base of the Chute in the Hill Antechamber, in the Dinaledi Chamber System of the Rising Star Cave (Abstract). *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Volume 165, Issue S66: 76.
- 2018 Hawks, J, Elliott, MC, [and 10 others, including **Peixotto, B.**] New fossil material of *Homo naledi* from the Dinaledi Chamber, South Africa (Abstract). *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Volume 165, Issue S66: 114.
- 2018 Tucker, SJ, Kruger, A, Elliott, MC, **Peixotto, B**,...Berger, LR. 3D mapping of the hominin-bearing deposits and associated passages and chambers of the Rising Star Cave System, South Africa (Abstract). *American Journal of*

*Physical Anthropology*, Volume 165, Issue S66: 278.

- 2017 **Peixotto, B.** Wetlands in Defiance: Exploring African American Resistance in the Great Dismal Swamp. *Journal of Wetland Archaeology*. doi: 10.1080/14732971.2017.1371429
- 2017 **Peixotto, R.** Against the map: Resistance landscapes of the Great Dismal Swamp. PhD dissertation, American University. PhD dissertation, American University, AUDAR <http://hdl.handle.net/1961/auislandora:68616>
- 2017 Hawks, J, Elliott, MC, [and 37 others, including **Peixotto, B**]. New fossil remains of *Homo naledi* from the Lesedi Chamber, South Africa. *eLife* 6:e24232. doi: 10.7554/eLife.24232.
- 2015 Dirks, PHGM, Berger, LR, [and 22 others, including **Peixotto, B**]. Geological and taphonomic context for the new hominin species *Homo naledi* from the Dinaledi Chamber, South Africa. *eLife* 4:e0956. doi: 10.7554/eLife.09561.

#### SELECT CONFERENCE PAPERS AND POSTERS

- 2018 Paths of Connection: Wetland Watercourses as Indigenous and Maroon Landscape Features [Poster]. *Society for American Archaeology*. Vancouver, BC.
- 2017 Snake Chaps and Shapefiles: Public LiDAR as a Tool for Archaeological Exploration of Mid-Atlantic Wetlands [Poster]. With Ella Beaudoin and Emily Duncan. *Society for American Archaeology*. Vancouver, BC.
- 2017 Uneven Landscapes, Uneven Histories: Maroons in the American Historical Narrative. With Mary E. Ibarrola. *Society for Historical Archaeology*. Ft. Worth, TX.
- 2016 Waders and Snake Chaps: Targeted Exploration and Ground Truthing in the Great Dismal Swamp. *Society for Historical Archaeology*. Washington, DC.
- 2014 A Gizmo, A Swamp, Some Artifacts: The Use of Portable X-Ray Fluorescence as One Tool for Understanding a Landscape. *Society for Historical Archaeology*, Quebec City, QC.
- 2013 The Great Dismal Swamp Landscape Study [Poster]. With Jordan Riccio and Justin Uehlein. *Society for Historical Archaeology*, Leicester, UK.
- 2012 Ephemeral Topography, Mapping and Space/Place. *Public Anthropology Conference*, American University, Washington, DC.

#### SELECT INVITED TALKS

*Rising Star/Homo naledi*

- 2020 Exploring Our Ancient Relatives. *TEDxSMU*, Dallas, TX. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtFgdgmrZil>
- 2018 *Homo naledi* and Adventures in Human Origins Research: A South African Saga. Featured Seminar. *Texas A&M University College of Dentistry*. Dallas, TX.
- 2016 HOT (Human Origins Today) Topics: Discovering *Homo naledi*. *Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History*, Washington, DC.
- 2016 *Homo naledi* Fossils and Open Science. *Geological Society of Washington*, Washington, DC.
- 2016 Rising Star Expedition and *Homo naledi*. *Adventures in Biology*. National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD.
- 2015 Rising Star Expedition: *Homo naledi* Fossils and Open Science in the Cradle of Humankind. *Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History*, Santa Barbara, CA.
- 2014 Cool Jobs: Archaeologist. *World Science Festival*, New York, New York. with Hannah Morris. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FECIEtNGPE>

*Great Dismal Swamp and Other Archaeology Topics*

- 2019 Mapping Landscapes of Resistance and Finding a Way Forward for an Archaeology of Marronage in the Great Dismal Swamp. *Virginia Academy of Sciences*. Norfolk, VA.
- 2017 Waders and Snake Chaps: Exploring Resistance Landscapes in the Great Dismal Swamp. *26th Annual Workshop in Archaeology Maryland Historic Trust and Archaeology Society of Maryland*. Crownsville, MD.
- 2015 Brief Status Report on the 2013, 2014 and 2015 ASM Field Sessions at Biggs Ford Site. *Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Society of Maryland*, Cockeysville, MD.
- 2014 A World Where Apes Evolved from Men? A Roundtable on the Planet of the Apes Film Franchise. *Mid-Atlantic Popular & American Culture Association*, Baltimore, MD. With Rebecca Stone Gordon, Tiffany A. Bryant and Eric Gordon.
- 2013 Activist Landscape Archaeology and the Great Dismal Swamp. *Meeting of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Maryland*, Derwood, MD.

## SELECT MEDIA APPEARANCES

### *Rising Star/Homo naledi*

- 2021 The Discovery of Homo Naledi: Dr. Becca Peixotto, Season 2, Episode 1. *CBS Mission Unstoppable*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5y28uIPtCY>
- 2019 The Cave of the Underground Astronauts. *Tumble Science Podcast for Kids*.  
<https://app.kidslisten.org/ep/Tumble-Science-Podcast-for-Kids-The-Cave-of-the-Underground-Astronauts>
- 2018 The Dinaledi Chamber Experience. *Fox 4 News*.  
<https://www.groovejones.com/fox4-the-dinaledi-chamber-vr-experience/>
- 2015 Trove of fossils from a long-lost human ancestor is greatest find in decades. *PBS Newshour*.  
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/new-family>
- 2015 *Dawn of Humanity*. NOVA/National Geographic, Season 42, Episode 15.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzLJAa5X4Fo>
- 2014 Wrapping up Round Two. *National Geographic Blog*, April 1, 2014. Guest Post.  
<https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/2014/04/01/wrapping-up-round-two/>

### *Great Dismal Swamp*

- 2019 A bug-filled journey through the Great Dismal Swamp. *WFAE Public Radio Our State*, by Jeremy Markovich.  
<https://www.wfae.org/post/bug-filled-journey-through-great-dismal-swamp#stream/0>
- 2018 *Escape to the Great Dismal Swamp*. Smithsonian Channel.  
<https://www.smithsonianchannel.com/shows/escape-to-the-great-dismal-swamp/0/3456593>
- 2017 Life in the Great Dismal Swamp. *American Archaeology Magazine*, Spring 2017, by David Malakoff.  
<https://www.archaeologicalconservancy.org/great-dismal-swamp/>

## OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Ambassador, AAAS IF/THEN Women in Science program, 2019-present
- Fellow, The Explorers Club, 2019-present (Term Member 2016-2019)

## RELATED SKILLS

- Rock climbing, telemark/backcountry/cross-country skiing, desert and alpine backpacking, rowing/coxswain, whitewater kayaking and canoeing (Class II-III), snowshoeing, canyoneering, caving, Wilderness First Responder
- GIS (QGIS software), Agisoft Photoscan, pXRF, Artec and NextEngine 3D scanners

