

## **No Place For Transphobia in Anthropology**

*Session pulled from Annual Meeting program*

The AAA and CASCA boards reached a decision to remove the session “Let's Talk about Sex Baby: Why biological sex remains a necessary analytic category in anthropology” from the AAA/CASCA 2023 conference program. This decision was based on extensive consultation and was reached in the spirit of respect for our values, in order to ensure the safety and dignity of all of our members, as well as the scientific integrity of the program.

The first ethical principle in AAA's Principles of Professional Responsibility is to “Do no harm.” The session was rejected because it relied on assumptions that run contrary to the settled science in our discipline, framed in ways that do harm to vulnerable members of our community. It commits one of the cardinal sins of scholarship—it assumes the truth of the proposition that it sets out to prove, namely, that sex and gender are simplistically binary, and that this is a fact with meaningful implications for the discipline.

Such efforts contradict scientific evidence, including the wealth of anthropological scholarship on gender and sex. Forensic anthropologists talk about using bones for “sex estimation,” not “sex identification,” a process that is probabilistic rather than clearly determinative, and that is easily influenced by cognitive bias on the part of the researcher. Around the world and throughout human history, there have always been people whose gender roles do not align neatly with their reproductive anatomy. There is no single biological standard by which all humans can be reliably sorted into a binary male/female sex classification. On the contrary, anthropologists and others have long shown sex and gender to be historically and geographically contextual, deeply entangled, and dynamically mutable categories.

The function of the “gender critical” scholarship advocated in this session, like the function of the “race science” of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, is to advance a “scientific” reason to question the humanity of already marginalized groups of people, in this case, those who exist outside a strict and narrow sex / gender binary.

Transgender and gender diverse identities have long existed, and we are committed to upholding the value and dignity of transgender people. We believe that a more just future is possible—one where gender diversity is welcomed and supported rather than marginalized and policed.