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Dear Sirs:

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA), the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA), the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), the American Anthropological Association (AAA), the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA), and the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) wish to express our deep disappointment and grave concern about the upcoming National Geographic Channel International's (NGCI's) show, *Nazi War Diggers*. Together, SAA, SHA, AIA, AAA, EAA, and EASA represent more than 10,000 professional archaeologists and more than 600,000 individuals interested in archaeology. Our members live and work in all parts of the world, including the areas ravaged by World War II.

The video and statements introducing *Nazi War Diggers* on the National Geographic Channel (NGC) Web site showed a complete disregard for proper and respectful treatment of human remains and a callous commercialization of the archaeological record. We appreciate that NGC removed the video and incendiary remarks, but remain concerned about the content and format of the four-part show. The reference to Nazis in the title seems more of a device to attract a certain segment of the viewing public than a historical necessity or a central element of the show. The use of the term "Nazi" to describe the excavation of World War II sites, however, is insensitive and objectionable. We strongly urge NGCI to consider either (1) pulling the show entirely or (2) renaming it to strike the reference to Nazis and revising it to comply with accepted archaeological ethical principles and standards of practice.

In response to criticism over the promotional material and video, NGCI issued a statement from representatives from Latvian and Polish archaeological organizations supporting *Nazi War Diggers*. NGCI correctly observes that looting at World War II sites is a major problem. They go on to state that the show will demonstrate the need to recover remains and artifacts in a legal and authorized manner. The archaeological work on the show was all conducted, according to NGCI, under professional supervision and meets professional standards.

Given our experience with the U.S.-based NGC show *Diggers*, we suspect that NGCI's press release may be entirely accurate. Yet, we also strongly suspect that the TV show will leave the audience with the impression that metal detecting and archaeological excavation can be done without supervision and without being part of a larger archaeological team. We fear that instead of encouraging the interested public to work with archaeologists to recover in a respectful and systematic manner human remains, artifacts, and information about critically important and emotionally charged historical events, the show will have the exact opposite effect: to encourage individuals to buy metal detectors and loot World War II battlefields and other archaeological sites. Unless there are major changes to *Nazi War Diggers*, we are concerned that the shows will glorify recovering artifacts without regard to their context, their historical significance, or their value to local communities, descendants, or the public at large.

The retrieval of war dead has been a sacred duty of nations for generations. The promotional video for *Nazi War Diggers* was particularly troubling. The individuals in the film showed an utter lack of knowledge about proper burial excavation technique and human osteology, resulting in the disrespectful treatment of human remains, which has the effect of titillating the audience and sensationalizing the process. If a main objective of the show is to discourage "black digging" as NGCI claims, then this video clip leaves us with very little hope that this goal will be accomplished.

But it doesn't have to be this way. The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), for example, offers a model for how professionals and nonprofessionals can cooperate to recover war dead. JPAC demonstrates that the use of historical documentation to identify probable locations of military events; the development of appropriate recovery strategies to govern archaeological excavation; the proper training of nonprofessionals in archaeological technique; the collaboration of professionals and nonprofessionals in a supervised setting; the proper and respectful handling of remains; the documentation, reporting, and curation of project materials; and the repatriation of human remains and personal items to descendant family members are all integral parts of the process that cannot be left on the cutting-room floor.

SAA, SHA, AIA, AAA, EAA, and EASA want to assist NGCI in creating a TV show that displays the excitement and exhilaration of archaeology at the same time it portrays how professionals and nonprofessionals can work together to gain insights about the past. The show must not only meet archaeological ethical codes of conduct and standards of research performance, but show how these practices are met on screen. If NGCI would like to produce such a show, we stand ready to help. If not, we ask that the show, *Nazi War Diggers*, not be aired.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Altschul, President, Society for American Archaeology
Charles Ewen, President, Society for Historical Archaeology
Andrew Moore, President, Archaeological Institute of America
Monica Heller, President, American Anthropological Association
Friedrich Lüth, President, European Association of Archaeologists
Noel B. Salazar, President, European Association of Social Anthropologists