

## Viewpoint: US museums, universities and federal agencies still possess the remains of over 100,000 Indigenous Americans. It's time to give them back

The numbers are astounding. ProPublica reported this year that museums, universities and federal agencies still possess [the remains of 110,000](#) Native Americans, Native Hawaiians and Alaska Natives. If we include other groups — such as Black Americans, and Filipinos whose brains were sought by Smithsonian anthropologist Ales Hrdlicka, [as The Post reported](#) last month — the numbers are even larger. The Natural History Museum has at least 30,700 human bones and other body parts. Responding to The Post's reporting, Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III asserted that “all the remains, all the brains, need to be returned if possible.”

That “if possible” might give us pause. What is the challenge here, when faced with a problem as seemingly clear as the existence of so many ancestors in our “nation's attic”?

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As Peruvian communities learn of the Andean mummies and skulls in U.S. museums, many might, like other descendants around the world, call for a return similar to what Peru achieved for the remains [excavated from Machu Picchu in 1911](#). Or, they might guide U.S. museums' research, collaborating with Smithsonian curators committed to the remains' care. Americans who benefit from the Smithsonian (and have benefited it, through contributions and taxes — which is just about all of us) need to support these efforts.

[\*\*This is an excerpt. Read the full article here\*\*](#)