

# Ancestry Estimation: Is it Ethical?

Scientists and anthropologists have been questioning the way forensic anthropologists do their work since we've entered the 2020s. The side that opposes the original process of ancestry estimation considers it racist and that it suggests that "race is biological" which we know that it is not. The risks of doing this are that we're still putting everyone in racial categories still. These categories are harmful because sometimes these labels are not what define us; they were built with clouded intentions too, the United States doesn't even consider Latinx people a racial category. An interesting point in the article was that "the criminal justice system might give less attention to remains when they are classified as members of marginalized groups." That immediately made me think: this really might be racist.

The other side argues that this is our reality so we have to abide by these rules in order to get the work done. They stress that identifying someone's race is helpful to get their remains back home to their family and without that they can't be helpful.

From my point of view, there's no way forensic anthropologists just cannot identify the race of a skeleton. Yet, they could be a bit more mindful and try to go past the American racial categories and dig deeper into identifying the ethnicity. They seem to have that knowledge and skill to recognize certain populations. For example if you identify the race of a skeleton to be Asian and leave it at that, what good does that do? There's all kinds of Asian people so I do agree with the fact that sticking to those categories is harmful. As for the criminal justice system and remains of marginalized groups' argument, I would say unfortunately there's no way around that. If we look at what our society was built off of and how racial injustice has persisted for centuries--it's hard to say that things will change.

Ancestry Estimation is unethical but I would say it would be hard to make it ethical. The best I can do is suggest a compromise where the forensic anthropologists go beyond the American race categories when analyzing skeletons. At the end of the day ancestry has been useful most of the time and has helped families get remains of their loved ones. The society we live in will have to completely renovate itself in order for us to see a change in all areas, including anthropology.