



Agenda as of September 11, 2023

2023 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference

Virtual component: October 16-20 (Zoom)

In-person component: October 23-24 (AAAS Headquarters, 1200 New York Avenue NW, Washington, DC, 20005)

Please note: this agenda is preliminary and subject to change.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 16-FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20 (Online only)

The virtual component of the conference will include the following events (dates/times to be announced):

- Panel discussion(s) on the current state of the human right to science and how the right is being applied in different contexts.
- Presentations from [Coalition SciTech and Human Rights FutureGen Scholars](#).
- Sessions on diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and human rights.
- A meetup for students/early career individuals.
- Virtual networking open to all conference attendees.

The Zoom links for these sessions (and to access the conference livestream the morning of October 23) will be sent to all registered participants before the conference begins.

In-person component

DAY 1: MONDAY, OCTOBER 23

8:30 a.m. **Registration and Breakfast**

9:00 – 9:30

Welcome and Setting the Stage (in-person and livestreamed)

Theresa Harris, AAAS Center for Scientific Responsibility and Justice

Theresa Harris, director of the AAAS Center for Scientific Responsibility and Justice, will welcome attendees and frame the goals of the conference.

9:30 – 10:45

The East Marshall Street Well Project: Community Driven Research to Restore Identity and Dignity (in-person and livestreamed)

Content warning: This session describes how medical researchers treated human remains – primarily of African Americans – in an unethical, egregious, and disrespectful fashion, denying these individuals the dignity everyone deserves after death. No pictures of identifiable individual remains will be shown, but attendees/viewers may find the content disturbing. Descendants and community members are actively engaged in the ongoing research project.

During construction of a new building on the Virginia Commonwealth University medical campus in 1994, a brick-lined well, or anatomical sink, was discovered containing human remains. Archival research indicates that these individuals most likely were grave-robbled from local cemeteries of enslaved Africans and poor people between 1840 and 1860, used at the medical school for anatomical dissection and amputation practice, and subsequently discarded in the well. Analyses determined that there were a minimum of 54 individuals, including nine children under the age of 16 years, primarily of African ancestry, in the well. As awareness in the community grew, the Family Representative Council (FRC) was established in 2015 to stand in for the descendant community and set research, memorialization, and interment goals for the Ancestral remains. After some seven years of ongoing community consultations, the remains are undergoing DNA analysis to re-associate the bones into individuals and to establish their ancestry, phenotype, and relationship to people living in the community today. The session will explore the ethical treatment of human remains, the agency of the community in determining the fate of the Ancestral remains and the community's oversight of the research and involvement of scientists. The session will also present the results of the research thus far and the continuing goals of the project.

Kevin Allison, Virginia Commonwealth University

Joseph L. Jones, College of William & Mary and Family Representative Council

Sierra Laveroni, Virginia Commonwealth University/AAAS Future Gen Scholar

Amber Mundy, Virginia Commonwealth University/AAAS Future Gen Scholar

Filipa Simao, Virginia Commonwealth University

Tal Simmons, Virginia Commonwealth University

Baneshwar Singh, Virginia Commonwealth University

Stephanie Smith, Family Representative Council

10:45 – 11:15

Break

11:15 – 12:30 p.m.

The Right to Science 101 (in person and livestreamed)

We come to this meeting with various levels of familiarity with the right of everyone to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications (or the human right to science). The right is outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and most recently, a United Nations General Comment, but tends to be not well-known or understood. This session will be a refresher (or an introduction) to the right to science, why it matters, and how the Coalition and the scientific community can work to advance it.

All subsequent conference events will be for in-person attendees only.

12:30 – 1:30

Lunch

1:30 – 2:45

Concurrent Sessions

Breaking Down General Comment No. 25

In 2020, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights published [General Comment No. 25](#) on the right to science. While not a perfect document, the General Comment is a capstone in decades of effort – in which the Science and Human Rights Coalition played a significant role – to better articulate what the right to science means and how we can build a world where everyone can enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications.

What are the core obligations outlined by the General Comment, and what comes next? This session will explore these key components of the

right to science and lay the groundwork for how the Coalition can take them forward in its work.

Lessons Learned from the East Marshall Street Well Project

The East Marshall Street Well Project began as a community consultation forum throughout the summer of 2015, when individuals met in facilitated discussions about the historical significance and fate of the human remains discovered in 1994 during construction of a building on the medical school campus of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). The Family Representative Council (FRC) was formed to take on the role of the descendant community and, in 2018, presented [final recommendations](#) to the EMSW Project Planning Committee and the Richmond community. These recommendations included memorialization and internment as well as research. Some of the research goals included: DNA and microbial analysis of the Ancestral Remains for the specific purposes of: (1) reconstructing regional genetic ancestry; (2) assessing molecular sex of juveniles; (3) reconstructing health environments; and (4) identifying possible biological relationships with a targeted sample of living descendants. The Ancestral Remains were brought home to Richmond from the Smithsonian Institution in 2019 and received with ceremony. In order to address the research goals, the Ancestors were transferred to the VCU Department of Forensic Science in December of 2021, where attempts to reconstruct individuals from the commingled remains, ascertain genetic ancestry and phenotype, and connect the individuals to the living community are underway.

This workshop will explore the educational, emotional, and spiritual challenges experienced by all East Marshall Street Well Project participants when undertaking the process of this research.

Stephen Davenport, Virginia Commonwealth University
Joseph L. Jones, College of William & Mary and
Family Representative Council
Tal Simmons, Virginia Commonwealth University
Stephanie Smith, Family Representative Council

2:45 – 3:15

Break

3:15 – 4:45

Taking Action to Advance the Right to Science: Forming New Coalition Working Groups

How will we make the right to science real? Attendees will split into five working groups and begin discussing the actions they will take. The planned groups (subject to change) are:

1. Rapid Response (human rights of scientists)
2. STEMM Culture (diversity/equity/inclusion/accessibility; ethics; actions to promote human rights within STEMM societies and the workplace)
3. Education (developing a community, clearinghouse, tools for connecting STEMM education with human rights education)
4. Advocacy (e.g., action/submissions at the UN)
5. Community Collaborations (bringing together scientific, human rights, and community expertise for mutual benefit)

Each group discussion will be led by a facilitator. By the end of this session, each group will have sketched out some initial thoughts that they will expand upon on Tuesday.

- 4:45 – 5:00 **Reconvene/Wrap-up**
- 5:00 – 6:00 **Networking Reception**
- 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. **Offsite dinners** for in-person attendees (optional)

DAY 2: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24 (in-person only)

- 8:45 a.m. **Breakfast**
- 9:15 – 9:30 a.m. **Day 2 Welcome**
- Theresa Harris, AAAS Center for Scientific Responsibility and Justice**
- 9:45 – 11:00 a.m. **Working Groups Meet**
- The newly formed working groups will meet again to build on the discussions from the previous day. By the end of this session, each group will have a roadmap of agreed-upon actions.
- 11:00 – 11:30 a.m. **Report Out and Wrap-up**
- Representatives of each working group will share their planned actions.
- 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. **Coalition Council Lunch and Meeting** (Coalition Council members only)

1:00

Adjourn

Thank you for attending this year's conference!