



Background Image: Los Frailes Beach in Puerto López - Manabí - Ecuador, courtesy of goecuador.net

ANTHROPOLOGY PROFESSORS VALENTINA MARTINEZ AND MICHAEL HARRIS WORK TO PRESERVE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN COASTAL ECUADOR

MARTINEZ AND
HARRIS WERE
AWARDED A GRANT
FROM THE U.S.
AMBASSADORS
FUND FOR CULTURAL
PRESERVATION
(AFCP)

Valentina Martinez, M.A., and Michael Harris, Ph.D., are in the final year of a three-year grant focused on preparing local inhabitants of southern Manabí Province, Ecuador, in the techniques of managing, curating and administering artifacts, ecofacts and other excavation materials. The \$110,000 grant, awarded by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP), is focused on conserving archaeological materials (thousands of boxes), that have resulted from the excavations of various archaeologists since the 1980s.

(continued)

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"The primary goal of our conservation of archaeological materials is to provide the local community with the infrastructure, skills, and information to articulate with both scientists and citizens as they conduct research and create educational programs that advance the understanding of the region's prehistoric past. Additionally, we are ensuring that the archaeological collections are protected and preserved for future generations as a source and repository for the cultural heritage of the inhabitants of southern Manabí Province. The project is a model of collaboration among scientists, the local community, and government (e.g., the Institute of National Patrimony of Ecuador)."

– Valentina Martinez, Senior Instructor,
Department of Anthropology

Professors Martinez and Harris have been working in southern Manabí Province for more than 20 years. During this time, they have collaborated with local communities to investigate the linkages between the prehistoric past and the present. This region is typified by coastal fishing villages and inland mountain horticultural communities and their research directly implicates a historic (and a deeper prehistoric) connection of contemporary inhabitants to the land and ocean in a trajectory that spans 5,000 years. The work strengthens, and is folded into, issues of native identity, rights and power.

Making archaeological collections available for public appreciation or scientific study is a painstaking process requiring the careful management of artifacts, ecofacts and other excavation materials. The grant will allow local inhabitants to do this work. The project integrates more than 50 women mostly from the community of Salango, a fishing village of about 2500 inhabitants, into the task of creating an archaeological repository, producing an inventory of materials, developing a database, and conserving objects from the region's unique prehistory. The collections are stored at the Salango Research Center and Museum, a community-administered facility that houses prehistoric and historic museum spaces. Martinez and Harris have been instrumental in developing this museum over the past 20 years.

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