

From	▶ Dean Saitta <dsaitta@du.edu>
Sent	Monday, June 16, 2008 7:55 am
To	LMitten@ala-choice.org
Cc	Rafferty@anthro.msstate.edu , SW@upf.com
Subject	Response to Choice Review

Dear Editor:

I appreciate J.E. Rafferty's recommendation of my book, *The Archaeology of Collective Action* in the May 2008 issue of *Choice*. However, I'm puzzled by both of the substantive claims of the review. First, I'm curious as to what's "not particularly helpful" about my definition of collective action as group behavior. Anthropology studies the group life of human beings, and group behavior is certainly accessible in the archaeological record. As Rafferty notes, "artifacts...usually cannot be identified with a particular person." That's precisely why I define collective action as group behavior.

Secondly, the claim that my "agenda" assigns archaeological data "third place behind historical records and interactions of project archaeologists with miner descendants and representatives of the modern labor movement" misrepresents my views. My approach does not privilege documents and politics over artifacts. In fact the reality is quite different. My book offers some examples of how analysis and public interpretation of archaeological material can correct the documentary record while simultaneously improving archaeology's image with citizens who historically have had no use for it. The approach is relational, not hierarchical.

I'm starting to hear from colleagues who have used my book in undergraduate teaching. One reports that his "students were (a) ignorant of the struggles [of the Ludlow miners], and (b) appalled that they were ignorant." If this reaction is typical of undergraduate readers, then the book is doing its job.

Sincerely,
Dean Saitta

Dean J. Saitta
Professor, Department of Anthropology
President, DU Chapter AAUP
University of Denver
Sturm Hall 146-S
2000 East Asbury Street
Denver, CO 80208
Phone: 303-871-2680
Fax: 303-871-2437
Web: <http://portfolio.du.edu/dsaitta>