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Forensic anthropology, the past, the present and the future

Jerry Melbye

University of North Texas, USA

Forensic anthropology has changed exponentially over the past three decades. We started out as a handful of anthropologists whose main specialty was the study of ancient human populations. We studied the age at death, sex, ethnicity, variation, stature, and pathology of the bones of *Homo sapiens*. In a curious twist of fate we were “pre-adapted” to assist in identification of unidentified victims. Forensic anthropology has become a widely respected profession that takes scientific evidence on the skeleton and applies it in a legal context to be used in a court of law. In 35 years as a forensic anthropologist the author watched the transformation from anthropologist to forensic scientist. However, forensic anthropologists have found little acceptance within anthropology departments. Our research and training has been seriously compromised. As more and more forensic science departments are being formed, we are entering a new era of technological advances.

Biography

Jerry Melbye completed his PhD at the University of Toronto where he taught for 35 years before transferring to Texas State University. While at Texas State, he created the world's largest outdoor human decomposition research facility which has since become one of the most highly respected teaching facilities in the country for students and law enforcement. He is currently a Research Professor at the University of North Texas and Forensic Expert with The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System. He is a Diplomat of the American Board of Forensic Anthropology, and a Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.

Jerry.Melbye@unt.edu