



NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PUBLIC HISTORY

February 25, 2025

From the National Council on Public History and the Organization of American Historians

NCPH-OAH Call to Action on Threats to Public History

Since President Donald Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2025, the National Council on Public History (NCPH) and the Organization of American Historians (OAH) have grown increasingly concerned about executive actions that undermine the autonomy and professionalism of federal history workers and threaten the accuracy of historical records.

One of the most alarming developments so far is the [dismissal without reasonable cause of Archivist of the United States, Colleen J. Shogan](#), the official responsible for overseeing the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). This action, coupled with the abrupt resignation of Deputy Archivist William Bosanko, represents a significant upheaval within the agency tasked with preserving and providing access to our nation's historical records. Such disruptions jeopardize the integrity of archival records, raise concerns about potential politicization of historical documentation, and impede NARA's ability to fulfill its mandate of making the records of the United States government available to its people. These actions will have repercussions for the archival and historical fields for years to come.

The administration has also instituted reckless mass firings across multiple federal agencies, including the National Park Service and NARA, that are [integral to historical documentation, interpretation, and preservation](#). Thousands of federal employees, including those with responsibilities for collecting, preserving, and interpreting historical materials, have been dismissed without cause, which not only destabilizes the federal workforce but also erodes professional expertise and institutional knowledge. The loss of these skilled civil servants weakens the foundation upon which a nuanced and balanced historical record is built.

These measures are compounded by efforts aimed at censoring discussions of race, gender, sexuality, and other important aspects of US history within educational and public institutions and at historic sites. We are especially concerned about government actions and directives that seek to block open debate and discussion about the history of racism and sexism; erase trans and queer people from historical websites; impose racial, gender, and sexual ideologies that perpetuate and sustain inequality and injustice; and mandate narrow and simplistic approaches to civics, nationalism, and patriotism. Such initiatives threaten to silence diverse narratives and impede the ability of public historians to convey a truthful and inclusive account of our nation's past. The administration's approach is further driven by a narrow, non-evidence-based sense of history that all historians ought to resist.



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The OAH and NCPH call on elected and appointed officials to protect the professional autonomy of public historians, archivists, and educators, ensuring that they can perform their vital roles without fear of censorship or political interference. We ask our members to stand in solidarity with federal historians and reach out to your government representatives to urge them to:

- Fully fund NARA, defend it from a partisan takeover, and ensure vacancies are filled with trained, credentialed professionals
- Challenge unwarranted layoffs that threaten the stability and integrity of civil service
- Object to the unconstitutional expansion of executive power that threatens congressional control over federal spending (the "power of the purse")
- Defy attempts to censor honest discussions of race, gender, sexuality, and other key aspects of US history

To protect our colleagues, please refrain from sending advocacy-related or political correspondence to federal employees at their work emails. We aim to intentionally direct our energy toward congressional representatives via postcards, letters, and phone calls. For the most impact, make sure the postmark or area code matches your representative's congressional district. You can find and contact your representatives here: <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>.

NCPH and OAH invite you to join the NCPH Advocacy Committee for a lunchtime write-in on **Wednesday, February 26, 2025, from 1:00 - 2:00 pm Eastern** via Zoom. Bring your postcard and letter-writing supplies, and we will provide ideas, tips, and company while you write to your representatives. Register by completing the form here <https://community.ncph.org/event/LetterWriting> and we will send you a Zoom link.