



Statement on Graduate Student Organizing

Fueled by pandemic-induced inflation, stagnant stipends, increased fees, and budgetary contractions at campuses across the United States, a surge of graduate student organizing has moved to the center of the national labor conversation. Catalyzed further by long-standing calls for better benefits, equitable and harassment-free work places, and the realities of the shrinking academic job market, graduate students employed by universities in instructional and research jobs are turning to collective action as they seek resolution to these serious issues.

The Organization of American Historians (OAH) recognizes and supports graduate students as integral members of our community of historians. Given their dual status as both historians in training and as workers, the OAH affirms the right of graduate students to organize and bargain collectively in pursuit of improved material conditions of work and equitable treatment at their home institutions.

Graduate students' dedication, hard work, and contributions remain critical to fulfilling OAH's central mission of advancing excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and presentation of American history. History departments across the country employ graduate students to undertake a range of instructional and pedagogical tasks, from grading to directing discussion sessions to serving as instructors of record for undergraduate courses. This is essential labor without which these departments, and indeed university systems writ large, arguably could not fulfill their research or educational missions. For the OAH this extends to our flagship publication, the *Journal of American History*. The production of this journal of record in the field depends in large measure on the work undertaken by our graduate editorial assistants.

While appreciating the very real budgetary pressures faced by university administrations that often shape decision making, the OAH encourages university leaders to engage in solution-seeking dialogue with graduate workers' representatives, and to refrain from pursuing retaliatory actions against student workers who participate in strikes and other work stoppages. The possible ripple effects of pursuing punitive actions against graduate workers—including

cuts in undergraduate courses offerings, increasing difficulties recruiting and retaining students and faculty, and permanent reputational damage—have the potential to further diminish opportunities for academic collaboration, mentoring, and professional development that are essential aspects of graduate education.

The OAH remains committed to advocating for all members of the historical profession, and thus urges university leaders to acknowledge through their actions the value and dignity of the labor performed by graduate student workers in history departments across the country.

On behalf of the Executive Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erika Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Erika Lee, President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Beth English". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name being the most legible part.

Beth English, Executive Director