June 26, 2023

**Statement on Threats to Inclusive History**

A foundational principle of the Organization of American Historians is that understanding the reality and complexity of the American condition is only possible through the exploration and telling of multiple narratives of the history of our nation. Current events and those from the recent past make clear the relevance and urgent need for a new commitment to grappling with the lessons of our national history and American democracy, which has always been imperfect and incomplete.

Earlier this month, OAH learned that the Museum of the American Revolution would host a scheduled Moms for Liberty event during the upcoming Joyful Warriors national summit in Philadelphia. This is a group that pushes dangerous racist, homophobic, and transphobic falsehoods. It is an organization that is actively engaged in efforts to ban books by and about LGBTQ+ individuals as well as individuals of color, and that rejects the importance of inclusive history and historical scholarship in teaching and understanding American life.

As the largest professional organization of US historians in the country, the OAH expresses, unequivocally, the organization’s opposition to the actions of M4L and groups like it that seek to distort history and historical practice. There are multiple harms at the center of the agenda of these groups: harm to accurate and inclusive history, harm to the work undertaken everyday by our community of historians, and harm to individual historians—especially in the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities. We condemn these groups that threaten by word and action the ability of teachers to teach, students to learn, scholars to produce and amplify histories of systemic discrimination, and the safety of individuals for whom that discrimination still reverberates today. The increasing normalization of these groups in the national public discourse is an outrage.

The OAH reiterates the organization’s ongoing support of public historians and institutions that continue to take meaningful steps to present diverse and inclusive histories; including of those who have been marginalized in and throughout our nation’s history. Our public history colleagues are interpreting the nation’s complex story for the public in a particularly fraught moment in our civic life. This work and gains that have been made in this space are in many respects fragile, and must be vigorously defended. The alternative is reverting to overtly incomplete historical narratives, or to narratives that willingly and intentionally exclude individuals and communities that make up the vibrant history of the United States.
Democratic societies are not and cannot be built upon a foundation of selective depictions of the past, but rather demand critical examination of the historical record. The Organization of American Historians remains committed to excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and presentation of American history, and thus encourages all historians to stand for inclusive history and against threats to it—in this and in other instances where harms and false narratives about American history may be perpetuated. We do so in order to equip students, colleagues, and public audiences with the tools and knowledge needed to understand how we came to our present moment, why it matters, and what is at stake.

On Behalf of the OAH Executive Committee,

Anthea M. Hartig, President

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