

REWRITING AMERICAN HISTORY:
EXAMINING THE SMITHSONIAN'S EFFORTS
TO RESHAPE THE PAST

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DELIVERING ON
GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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- * Article, *Axios*, “Navajo Code Talkers Disappear From Military Websites after Trump DEI Order”; submitted by Rep. Walkinshaw.

The documents listed above are available at: docs.house.gov.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

- * Questions for the Record: Dr. Anthea Hartig, Ph.D.; submitted by Rep. Burchett.
- * Questions for the Record: Dr. Anthea Hartig, Ph.D.; submitted by Rep. Stansbury.

These documents were submitted after the hearing, and may be available upon request.

**REWRITING AMERICAN HISTORY:
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TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2026

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DELIVERING ON GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Tim Burchett [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Burchett, Cloud, Mace, Fallon, Timmons, Boebert, Burlison, Jack, Gill, Stansbury, Lynch, Frost, Crockett, Subramanyam, and Walkinshaw.

Also present: Representatives Mfume, Pressley, Beyer, and Jackson.

Mr. BURCHETT. The hearing on the Subcommittee on Delivering of Government Efficiencies will come to order. I want to welcome everyone.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time. And I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Before I do so, I just—I am probably out of order here, but I have some friends of mine from Tennessee State Senate. I spent 12 years in that body, and they actually do a lot of great things for the great State of Tennessee. So, thank you all, gentlemen and lady, for being here. You are very welcome.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN TIM BURCHETT
REPRESENTATIVE FROM TENNESSEE**

Good morning. We are here to find out about how a once proud American institution fell victim to ideological capture and how to rescue it.

The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History was open in 1964 to instill in Americans and foreign visitors alike an appreciation of this Nation's distinctive heritage and to celebrate its singular story as a beacon of freedom and opportunity. But the museum has strayed, I believe, from the original purpose for which it exists and receives Federal taxpayer support. I feel like it has become infected by a woke ideology that is seeped into public displays, educational materials, and planning documents.

The American story is the birth and growth of a great Nation founded on powerful ideals on which we aim to fully achieve, but in the museum's current telling, history is just an ongoing power struggle between oppressors and the oppressed. Only the oppressed are celebrated, especially illegal immigrants.

The museum promotes educational curricula and it recommends teachers to avoid using the terms "illegal alien" and "illegal immigrant," while instructing on how to use the terms "gender fluidity" and "gender nonconforming."

It hosts staff discussion groups on how museums can be used to foster social action against White privilege and heteropatriarchy. A museum display even accuses Mickey Mouse of having racist origins.

The many examples of politicization of the museum are well documented in the comprehensive report the White House Domestic Policy Council recently issued on July 4, the Nation's 250th anniversary. The report makes clear that the museum's woke exhibits and materials reflect a broader vision held by the museum leadership, particularly its director, Dr. Anthea Hartig, who is here today with us.

Dr. Hartig proudly takes credit for changing the museum's mission statement, which no longer uses the term "American history" or refers to the infinite richness of that history. The museum is now guided by an interpretive plan that ensures all topics focus on the core issues of our time.

And do we want to guess what they are? Race and identity, gender and sexuality, environmental change, immigration and migrations, and economic inequality top the list.

Also, a center for restorative justice at the museum, created under Dr. Hartig's watch, hosted a decolonization working group to investigate historical harms that result in ongoing systematic oppression.

To remove any doubt about her intentions, Dr. Hartig, in her own words, states that she views history as a prime tool of social justice.

Here is a brief telling video. The director of Museum of American History in her public remarks repeatedly implies Americans are illegitimately occupying their own country.

[Video shown.]

Mr. BURCHETT. With that, I yield to Ranking Member Stansbury for her opening remarks.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER
MELANIE STANSBURY, REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW MEXICO**

Ms. STANSBURY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Today we are here because one of the greatest cultural and historical institutions in the world is under attack and is the target of an ongoing campaign to politicize America's independent and scientific and cultural institutions by this Administration.

Let me be clear. The Smithsonian Institution does not belong to the President. It does not belong to a political party. It belongs to the American people.

For nearly 180 years, the Smithsonian has served as our Nation's museum, our Nation's research institution, and our Nation's ar-

chive. It preserves more than 150 million artifacts and specimens. It welcomes millions of visitors every year from every single congressional district represented by the people in this room. It supports world-class scientific research. It educates future generations of American leaders, and it tells the story of who we are as a people, as Americans. A story that is not perfect. A story that is steeped in, yes, history, tradition, pain, and triumph.

That has always been the Smithsonian's history, to preserve our history, to advance knowledge, and to help the American people understand ourselves using evidence, scholarship, science, and the truth.

The mission has never depended on whether history is convenient, whether it is comfortable, or whether you like it or not. It has always depended on whether or not history is accurate.

But what we have seen since January of last year when the Trump Administration took office is that this Administration has launched an unprecedented effort to interfere in how American history is told, researched, interpreted, presented, and taught, not just in the Smithsonian, but in our schools and our institutes of higher education and through and across the Federal Government.

In March of last year, the President signed an executive order called Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History, directing the Administration to review the exhibit of our beloved museums and Federal historic sites and monuments for what it characterized as improper ideology.

If that does not send a chill through your spine, I do not know what does. And they assign the Vice President, JD Vance, because of his assigned role as the Vice President, as the board of regents for the responsibility of advancing these objectives.

But I want to be clear. This order was not simply about exhibits. It was about exercising political control over historical scholarship. And what we saw earlier this month, which was just referenced by the Chairman, is that this White House issued a 162-page report attacking the Smithsonian American History, accusing museum leadership of extreme political activism, and calls for sweeping changes—calling out individual leaders by name.

That is not policy. That is a political witch hunt.

The Federal Government is responsible for overseeing this independent institution, and this should concern every single Member of this Committee, regardless of party, because when politicians begin deciding what facts are acceptable, scholarship ceases to be scholarship. It becomes propaganda.

Now, we have seen this throughout American history. A lot of people are talking about the roots of what is happening in this country right now is existing in other countries and other places and other authoritarian governments, but we have seen this here in America with the lost cause in the 1920s and the attempt to rewrite American history and to whitewash the Confederacy and slavery.

We saw this in McCarthyism here in this country when a President and a Congress went after American historians, actors, and cultural institutions to rewrite the history of this country.

We have seen it during this Administration as they had frozen grant funding to institutions across the country. They have erased

the history of our American servicemembers on Department of Defense (DOD) websites, erasing the contributions of Black, of Hispanic, of Native American, of women, of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) people who have served this great Nation in uniform.

Now, history—if you are a student of history, which is what the Smithsonian is all about—teaches us why this is so dangerous. And I do not think that it is a mistake that the Majority's witnesses in front of us, in addition to the Director, are associated with the architecture of Project 2025. Because it was articulated in that document and the institutions, and the individuals who are sitting in the White House right now making these decisions, that they want to rewrite the history of this country and take away the resources and leadership of people who have fought, marched, and served this country for generations so that they could lead in this moment and keep moving our country forward. And they understand that when you remove books, when you rewrite textbooks, when you pressure museums, when you silence scholars, you can do so to articulate power.

Now, this is why, today, I am introducing the Smithsonian Integrity and Historical Independence Act. It bars any Federal official, including those in the White House that are trying to do this, from trying to interfere in the independent institutions of this country and the historic interpretation of our Nation's history. And it reasserts our congressional authority over this independent agency.

Now, we have seen this over and over again during this Administration that they are trying to take over the independent entities and to assert executive control, that even the Supreme Court just ruled a few weeks ago they do not have, with the Federal Reserve. And, once again, they are trying to do it again here in the Smithsonian.

But I want to be clear. We will fight. We will stop them. We will push back in the courts. We will push back here in Congress. And we will push back in our communities all across the country, and we refuse to let historians, artists, scholars, and people who love these institutions with their entire hearts, to be punished by an Administration that is trying to exercise political history, political control, and rewrite American history.

So, with that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back, but I am disappointed, after all of the bipartisan work that we have done in this Committee, to see this Subcommittee used once again as a political tool for this Administration.

And with that, I yield back.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you for your heartfelt comments.

Without objection, Representative Carlos Gimenez of Florida; Mr. Frost of Florida; my buddy, Kweisi Mfume of Maryland; and Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts are waived on the Subcommittee for the purpose of questioning witnesses in today's hearing, and others might come in as well.

I would like to welcome—today, I would like to welcome our witnesses. First, we have Dr. Anthea Hartig. Dr. Hartig serves as the Director of the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution.

Next, we have Mike Gonzalez. Mr. Gonzalez serves as the E Pluribus Unum Senior Fellow for the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy at The Heritage Foundation.

Next, we have Dr. Matthew Spalding. Dr. Spalding serves as the Kirby Professor in Constitutional Government and Dean of the Van Andel Graduate School of Government at Hillsdale College's Washington, D.C. campus.

Last, we have Dr. David Blight. Dr. Blight serves as Sterling Professor of History at Yale University.

And I thank you all for joining us, and I look forward to your testimony.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses will please stand and raise their right hand.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[Chorus of ayes.]

Mr. BURCHETT. Let the record show the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

And thank you all. You all may take a seat. We appreciate you all being here today and look forward to your testimony.

Let me remind the witnesses that we have read your written statement, and it will appear in the full hearing record. Please limit your oral statements to 5 minutes. If you go over, I will tap the mic—tap the gavel so you will know.

As a reminder, please press the button on the microphone in front of you so that it is on and the Members can hear you. When you begin to speak, the light in front of you will turn green. After 4 minutes, the light will turn yellow. When the red light comes on, your 5 minutes have expired, and we would like you to please wrap it up.

I now recognize Dr. Hartig for her opening statement. Thank you, ma'am.

**STATEMENT OF DR. ANTHEA HARTIG, PH.D.
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION**

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you, sir.

Chairman Burchett, Ranking Member Stansbury, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I know this Committee has questions about the National Museum of American History, and I welcome the chance to answer them.

As an historian, I have spent my career studying, teaching, and preserving the history of the United States. My family has served this Nation since the Revolutionary War, and I was raised with a deep sense of obligation to it and the democratic ideals that the country asks each generation to build and to uphold.

Since 2019, I have been honored to serve as the Elizabeth MacMillan Director of your National Museum of American History, home of the Star-Spangled Banner. It is a true honor to serve alongside my devoted fellow public servants who staff the museum, and I am immensely proud of our work.

Congress created the Smithsonian Institution in 1846 with an aspirational mission of diffusion and knowledge. Can you imagine? Increase and diffusion of knowledge. It is an independent trust instrumentality outside the executive branch of government and is governed by a board of regents that includes all three branches of government and nine citizen regents appointed by a joint resolution of Congress.

The Smithsonian takes the concerns raised in the White House Domestic Policy Council's report seriously. And as we continue to fact-check the report, we unwaveringly attest that it does not fairly or accurately characterize the full body of work at the museum. There is always room for improvement. But I also know the beauty and the inspiration and the expertise that lies in our collections, our exhibits, and our programming.

When a family walks through the doors of the museum, free of charge, as two million people did last year, they find the desk on which Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence, Horatio Greenough's magnificent statue of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln's top hat from the night he was assassinated, the Greensboro lunch counter, the gowns of the first ladies, and the stories of Americans in uniform. They find the inventions that changed the world and the ordinary Americans who built it.

I have watched ten year olds with their families stand in front of the Star-Spangled Banner with their hands over their hearts. No one told them to. That is the National Museum of American History at its most powerful: patriotism, not instructed, but inspired.

Our work is governed by the Smithsonian standards of scholarship, accuracy, independence, and nonpartisanship. The museum does not take sides in America's political debates. We preserve and document the evidence of American life in all of its breadth so that the public can encounter the past and draw their own conclusions.

We are also always learning. When visitors, scholars, Members of Congress, veterans and teachers, volunteers tell us we have gotten something wrong or only half right, we take it seriously, and we make the changes when the evidence supports them. And when historians talk about reframing a traditional narrative, we do not mean erasing it. We mean adding the evidence, the voices, the objects that earlier tellings left out so that more Americans can see themselves reflected in the national story.

We honor the Declaration, the Revolution, the Constitution, our national symbols, and we tell the truth about the times that the country fell short of its own founding ideals. Telling our story fully is a form of respect for the American people and a commitment to constantly being in pursuit of a more perfect union.

I hope that you will judge this museum the way that the American people do, by what is on its walls and what is in its care. Please accept our sincere invitation, walk the building with me, stand in awe in front of the Star-Spangled Banner. I believe what you will find, Madams and Sirs, is not an institution that has forgotten its country, but one that loves it enough to tell the full sweep of history, our triumphs and our struggles.

I love the United States of America. I consider it the privilege of my career to help preserve its treasures and serve the American people.

I am grateful for the chance to answer your questions today. Thank you.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you.

I now recognize Mr. Gonzalez for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MR. MIKE GONZALEZ
E PLURIBUS UNUM SENIOR FELLOW
KATHRYN AND SHELBY CULLOM DAVIS INSTITUTE
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY
THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION**

Mr. GONZALEZ. Chairman, Ranking Member, Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Following election day 2024, Thomas Frank published an op-ed in *The New York Times* suitably titled, “The Elites Had It Coming.” Here is what Frank, who is a Liberal, wrote:

“Everyone has a moment when he first realized that Donald Trump might well return, and here is mine. It was back in March during a visit to the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery when I happened to read a text beside an old painting. It described the westward advance of the United States as ‘settler colonialism.’ I knew instantly where this Nation was going.

“Some curator at one of the most exalted institutions had decided to use morally loaded academic keyword to address a visitor to the museum, say a family from the Midwest, and teach them a lesson about American wickedness,” unquote.

Teaching lessons about American wickedness is now the mission of the Smithsonian. It is the intent of the leadership and it is precisely what they train the staff to do. Secretary Lonnie Bunch III; Anthea Hartig, the Director of the National Museum of American History and one of today’s witnesses; and other museum leaders have commandeered the world’s largest museum complex and admit that they intend to use it as a tool of societal transformation.

This is not why Americans entrusted these institutions to them. Culture is not passed in the bloodstream. National museums are repositories of a Nation’s collective inheritance so that it can be transmitted to future generations.

However, the Smithsonian’s leadership has subverted this mission. Under Dr. Hartig, the History Museum has erased two words from the mission statement. The first is “history” itself. The word “history” had to go because Dr. Hartig preferred the museum to be, quote, “very future-facing.”

The other word that disappeared in the new mission statement was “America” itself. Director Hartig said the term “America” should include, quote, “the entirety of the Americas, not just our part of North America.” She also said that loving America is complicated.

Dr. Hartig, the Director of the National Museum of American History, has deconstructed the museum’s mission statement to borrow terms of the post-modernists who clearly guide her work.

We are here today, as you said, because on July 4, the White House released the devastating report focusing on Anthea Hartig’s museum and the agenda that she pushes.

Read the report and you will find that it is not just post-modernism that guides the leadership. They see the world in terms of

power dynamics—who has dominance and how to wrest it from them by dismantling the American narrative. This is deeply Marxist and Gramscian.

In fact, the action toolkit that leadership used to indoctrinate staff at the Smithsonian for years even quotes approvingly from the works of the Frankfurt School’s critical theorist, Herbert Marcuse. You can understand why Bunch began his tenure by tying the institution to two ideological and destructive movements: the 1619 Project and Black Lives Matter.

Black Lives Matter (BLM)’s main leader had made clear in 2019 that the group’s goal was to, quote, “keep dismantling the organizing principle of this society,” unquote. Yet, in July 2020, as the country was burning, Lonnie Bunch wrote that he saw a moment of promise and possibility. Bunch said that the Smithsonian would legitimize the 1619 Project, except that historians from both sides of the spectrum decried the shoddy scholarship and inaccuracies of the 1619 Project.

For ideological reasons, Lonnie Bunch put the Smithsonian’s reputation at serious risk, and Director Hartig endorsed all of it, pledging to, quote, “work to reframe the traditional celebratory narrative of U.S. history,” unquote, to force a, quote, “national reckoning.”

National reckoning from a history museum? This erasure of American culture must end now. As Stanley Kurtz wrote last week, “You can say that the economy and foreign policy are more important than these cultural battles. Over the long haul, however, that is simply not true,” unquote.

You need to clean house and relieve all Smithsonian leadership of their duties. Also, deauthorize the yet-to-be-built Latino and women’s museums, which will no doubt become two more incubators of anti-American grievances. We can see this in the precursor exhibits that they have had.

Loving America is not complicated. Dr. Hartig is wrong. I implore you to do your jobs.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, sir.

Dr. Spalding.

**STATEMENT OF DR. MATTHEW SPALDING, PH.D.
KIRBY PROFESSOR IN CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT
DEAN OF THE VAN ANDEL GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF GOVERNMENT
HILLSDALE COLLEGE**

Dr. SPALDING. Thank you, Chairman Burchett, Ranking Member Stansbury, Members of the Committee.

The National Museum of American History is one of the country’s greatest treasures. It contains some of the most iconic artifacts of American history: Jefferson’s writing desk, Washington’s uniform, the great American flag that inspired the National Anthem. But it no longer provides the story that makes those objects intelligible.

Indeed, the National Museum of American History is no longer the Nation’s museum of American history. White House Domestic Policy Report “Saving America’s Story” catalogs in great detail,

over 160 pages and 522 footnotes, the many controversial and objectionable displays at the museum, but those details are evidence of a larger transgression.

The real crime here, premeditated and followed through, is that America's story, the well-established narrative of main characters and key events long at the center of American self-understanding, has been so reframed, jettisoned, decentered, deconstructed, and problematized that it no longer exists in any recognizable form.

America's story has been replaced by an altogether new and controversial approach defined by post-modern theories that see history as processes of oppressive power struggles and use history as a tool to encourage social transformation. Now, that might be an interesting abstract discourse for the faculty lounge, but it should not be the rubric for the Nation's Smithsonian museum.

The report concludes, rightly in my opinion, that the museum has become subject to institutional capture. That is the big picture, the forest we should not miss for all the trees. But do not take my word for it. The current director has said that at the National Museum of American History, we work to reframe the traditional celebratory narrative of U.S. history.

The Center for Restorative History at the museum describes its work as systemic intervention intended to transform the national historical narrative and restructure institutional priorities.

The museum's mission has been changed. Its previous mission was to explore the infinite richness and complexity of American history to help people understand the past. Its new mission is to empower people to create a more just and compassionate future by exploring the complexity of our past. As was noted, American and history are both gone, replaced by our past, and understanding is replaced by empowerment.

This is not a history based on established facts and known reality. Indeed, it is not history at all. This is the very definition of an ideology, a systematic framework for interpreting society, challenging the social order, and instigating political and social action.

This is not the purpose of the National Museum of American History. It is not the mission of the Smithsonian. It is not Congress' legislative intent, and it is not what taxpayers should be subsidizing to the tune of a billion dollars a year.

A National Museum of American History should tell the American national story. It should present the facts of history, what actually happened, as accurately as possible and with minimal present-day bias. American's history belongs neither to Liberals nor Conservatives. It belongs, as we noted, to the American people. It should be told, warts and all, so that visitors understand the basic chronological narrative and see how the Nation got to where it is today.

Nothing integral to that history should be erased or white-washed. But social transformation should not be the objective. The National Museum of American History should tell the story of a Nation and a people driven to overcome injustice and live up to its heritage. A story of imperfection but also overwhelming accomplishment, of tragedies but also great triumphs, of hardship but also heroism.

Over the course of our history, Americans have made choices, taken actions, sacrificed, corrected flaws, made a more perfect union, and struggled to live up to those principles. The outcome was never foreknown, but there remains a certain nobility about it.

A healthy attachment to this country is neither blind to its flaws nor fanatical in believing that America is the source of all good. Nevertheless, each generation should be equipped with the knowledge of America's principles and history, a reverence for their liberties, and reflective love of their country. That patriotism must be strong enough and unsentimental enough to coexist with criticism, dissent, disappointment, and opposition. But it is love all the same. Without the civic foundation supplied by the reflective patriotism of a self-governing people, a republic will perish.

A museum focused on claims of systematic oppression teaches national self-loathing. Why should taxpayers subsidize a museum that teaches contempt for their country and reframes its past to serve ideological purposes? Such a regime is not worthy of a great country, should not receive the imprimatur of Congress, and is unfit to shape the minds and hearts of the American people.

Thank you.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Dr. Spalding.

Dr. Blight.

STATEMENT OF DR. DAVID BLIGHT, PH.D.

(MINORITY WITNESS)

STERLING PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, YALE UNIVERSITY

Dr. BLIGHT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Madam Ranking Member and Members of the Committee. It is a very special privilege as a historian to have this opportunity to defend one's craft.

As historians, we often dwell in the past, and professionally we should. But in the spring of 2025, with President Trump's executive order, Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History, and now with the White House's report, "Saving America's Story," the President has come storming into our work lives with vengeance, and we welcome the challenge. The President is inherently interwoven with the past.

The White House now believes it should pronounce on the nature of history and the presentation of the Nation's treasures at the Smithsonian. The recent report by the White House Domestic Policy Council is nothing less than a declaration of political war on the historians' profession, as well as on the freedom and curiosity of anyone who reads or visits museums. In other words, President Trump has declared war on free minds and free education.

Historians are not voices of the state. We are keepers of memory, and at our best, we are storytellers with trained imaginations. And yet, they declare with such certainty what forms of—and these are the words of the report—heritage, destiny, subtle truths and, indeed, stories that the Smithsonian should instill, one of the report's favorite verbs, in the minds of the public.

Historians are now fighting back in the interest of scholarly history well-told for the broadest possible public. Ours is a beautiful and ancient craft, essential for any society's need for self-understanding. We are equipped with a host of modern methods but

guided ethically by very old rules that no authoritarian political project ought to be allowed to profane.

A historian reads, listens, searches, measures, imagines his or her way into and through all manner of evidence, facts, sometimes cleared, sometimes slanted every which way. We examine, read, accumulate, sift, study these modes of evidence with, hopefully, empathy and humility. Then we rise up from all our data and our sources and all manner of context and fashion all this into a story, into narrative, in order to inspire and take our audiences somewhere. And once we get them there, we are bound by our craft to make an argument about why this all happened and why it matters.

People often comment on how Trumpism would like to return us to some version of the 1950s when America was great. In this report, they have transparently done just that. The report is rooted explicitly in the cold war of the 1950s.

In the founding of the National Museum of American History, its legislation and dedication speeches, the founding words and sentiments understandably breathed the rhetoric of cold war triumphalism. How could it have been otherwise?

The report offers no context for what might have invoked such expressions. The Soviet achievement of the hydrogen bomb, Sputnik, the Korean war, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the march on Washington, and the assassination of President Kennedy. Had the Domestic Policy Council consulted trained historians, they might have provided some context.

They might also have consult with Edward R. Murrow's famous commentary in 1954, the year after the museum was conceived, on Joseph McCarthy and his assaults on free speech. "We can deny our heritage and our history," said Morrow, "but we cannot escape responsibility for the result." Erase McCarthyism, and it will come back. Erase any other 50 difficult aspects of American history, they will come back.

Triumphalist history cannot tolerate nuance, ambiguity, complexity, but they are lifeblood for real historians. Also, in a deep cold war context, James Baldwin wrote in an essay entitled—also 1962—"As Much Truth as One Can Bear," that the problem with the way Americans approach history is that—quoting him—"words are mostly used to cover the sleeper but not to wake him up."

We do not write woke history, whatever that is, but we do try to awaken citizens. In recent decades, we sowed the wind with new kinds of history. Here comes the whirlwind.

If we are not careful, we will end up with what the great writer Toni Morrison called statist history, and it will create what she called sanctioned ignorance. That is what is at risk.

Thank you.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, sir.

Without objection, my buddy, Representative Don Beyer of Virginia, has waived on the Subcommittee for purpose of questioning witnesses at today's hearing.

And is Mr. Burlison—he is not here? Okay.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questions.

Chairlady Hartig, is that what we call you, or Director? Director or doctor?

Ms. STANSBURY. Doctor.

Mr. BURCHETT. You are a doctor? Okay. You have got Director up there. Doctor. I will call you Doctor.

Dr. HARTIG. I am a director and a doctor.

Mr. BURCHETT. You earned it. I will give you the title, how about that? One time I made the mistake of calling a coach Mister, and he reminded me he was coach. So, you earned that title, and you get it.

I do appreciate your constant land acknowledgments that were in the film. I am wondering, have you ever planned on deeding any of your personal property or property of the Smithsonian to any of these Tribes?

Dr. HARTIG. I do not believe that is pertinent to the conversation, sir.

Mr. BURCHETT. Well, I mean, you say that every time you open your meetings, apparently, and I was just curious, of that acknowledgment, if that was something you were planning on doing.

Should the American History Museum be the site that focuses in on what we have in common, the shared national heritage of great ideals and revolutionary events, or focus on what you deemed the issue of the day, which are race, identity, gender, and sexuality? Ma'am?

Dr. HARTIG. Yes, sir. At the National Museum of American History, we strive to create a museum where our visitors will be inspired by the collections, programs, and exhibitions, and they will choose what they each will do to keep our American democracy strong and vibrant, and they will play that chosen part with passion. That is our hope.

Mr. BURCHETT. Okay. I do think that most Americans would disagree with you on what the most important issues are.

How did the museum determine those core issues of the day?

Dr. HARTIG. So, the Smithsonian and the museum are committed to rigorous fact-based museum-quality experiences and to tell the full and rich story of America in a way that enlightens and welcomes every visitor. We use historical evidence, competing perspectives, and acknowledge enduring debates, so that visitors can understand how we have wrestled with democracy and citizenship and liberty and national identity.

So, in our work to document the stories of all Americans throughout time, we really do hope that everyone who comes in can see themselves reflected.

Mr. BURCHETT. Okay. Gender and sexuality are highlighted by your museum. The poster behind me shows an exhibit called Entertainment Nation on display now.

Do you think these exhibits behind me are appropriate for children?

Dr. HARTIG. So, I recognize some of the images from Entertainment Nation and from, I think, some other sources. But let me, I think, tell you what I think is most important—

Mr. BURCHETT. Ma'am, you have pictures of bondage, you have some overtly sexual things up there, you have transgender folks. I assume that is what they are. And some—I do not care who it is. I do not care who it is.

Ms. STANSBURY. You do not know who RuPaul is?

Mr. BURCHETT. Not a fan, I can tell you that. But in another exhibit, a six year old girl asks why she does not have male genitalia.

Do you really think that content is appropriate for children? I mean, do you think little girls have penises? I mean, let us get to the basics of this. Do you think that is appropriate?

Dr. HARTIG. So, sir, I believe the exhibition and project you are referring to is *Girlhood (It's Complicated)*, which was a temporary exhibit in our museum that closed I believe in 2023.

Mr. BURCHETT. Ma'am, I did not ask you that. I asked you, do you think it is appropriate?

Dr. HARTIG. So, in that exhibit, sir, with permission of the author, we shared a 13-year-old's diary, which I believe is what you are discussing. And in that diary, they wrote about sleepovers and Latin class and math exams—

Mr. BURCHETT. Ma'am, do you think that is appropriate?

Dr. HARTIG [continuing]. And also their—also their—

Mr. BURCHETT. I appreciate this. We are limited on time, ma'am. Do you think that is appropriate? Do you think that is appropriate for a child to see? Yes or no?

Dr. HARTIG. I understand your question, sir, but—

Mr. BURCHETT. No, you do not. You are not answering. You are just running on, ma'am. And I appreciate your hospitality, but the reality is you are not answering the questions.

You are funded by taxpayers, and the taxpayers would like to know, is that appropriate?

Dr. HARTIG. So, sir, *Girlhood (It's Complicated)* was not designed for children. It had a label in the beginning of the exhibition that shared with parents about some of the topics that would be covered, and we do that with exhibitions that we think kind of need that help. So, parents then can come and look at objects—

Mr. BURCHETT. All right. Well, thank you, ma'am. I understand you are not going to answer it, and I am going to run out of time.

But given some of your previous comments, including America was founded based on the supremacy of White men, loving America is very complicated, America's 250th anniversary is worth problemicizing, why should you—do you think you should continue leading the National Museum of American History?

Dr. HARTIG. It is the honor of my career to serve as the Elizabeth MacMillan Director of the National Museum of American History.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, ma'am. We are out of time.

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you, sir.

Mr. BURCHETT. All right. Next, Mr. Lynch from Massachusetts.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I want to thank the witnesses for attending and to help the Committee with its work.

I would like to level set this hearing, though. So, I am going to ask you as—in this discussion about our history.

Dr. Hartig, who won the 2020 Presidential election?

Please, I only have so much time. Is that a tough question?

Dr. HARTIG. Good morning, sir. No, it is not a tough question. Joseph R. Biden won the election, with the electoral college votes.

Mr. LYNCH. Great. Mr. Gonzalez?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Biden was President from 2021 to 2020—

Mr. LYNCH. Who won the election, sir? I am just trying to test where you are coming from.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Biden won the election.

Mr. LYNCH. Excuse me?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Biden won the election.

Mr. LYNCH. Okay. Dr. Spalding?

Dr. SPALDING. Joseph Biden.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

Dr. Blight?

Dr. BLIGHT. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

Mr. LYNCH. Okay. Great. Thank you.

So, you are all keenly interested in preserving American history. I heard from all of you that you care about the facts, the evidence, the narrative.

You know, as an Irish Catholic from Boston, I was in the third grade when John F. Kennedy was assassinated. And the nuns in our school made sure we understood everything about JFK's life. You know, a lot of people do not realize he is the only President to ever receive the Purple Heart because of his heroism in the Solomon Islands during the Second World War.

And, importantly, he and Jacqueline Kennedy were the principal founders of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. And much of the drive came from Jacqueline, to be honest with you. But the President and the First Lady raised all the funding for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

And in his life, you know, and at the end of his life, President Kennedy sacrificed everything, everything for this country. And you know where I am going with this.

The current President came in, having nothing to do with the establishment of that institution, and put his name above John F. Kennedy's on the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. As an Irish Catholic from South Boston, that was stolen valor. That was stolen valor. He had nothing to do with that, and it was distortion of history.

To someone who visited that for the first time, they would not know, they would not know the history of that building and the fact that it is the only building in the United States Capital that honors Kennedy's memory and his legacy. Kennedy sacrificed everything. You know, he inspired me to get into politics.

Dr. Blight, let me ask you, is distorting that and that stolen valor, renaming that building, changing the history of that building with no basis for doing so, is that a distortion of our history as well?

Dr. BLIGHT. Of course it is. Erase it—of course it is. Erase it, and it will come back.

On that day, I was in Mr. Baron's ninth grade civics class when he went to the door to get the information that Kennedy had been shot. And he addressed the class to tell us the President was dead. I will never forget that.

Mr. LYNCH. Yes.

Dr. BLIGHT. And what a great museum does, what a good class does, what a historic site does is it simply inspires a sense of history, why the past matters. You could not have been in a school-

room that day and not had a sense of history. It certainly was part of mine.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

You know, I understand, you know, sometimes political correctness can act as censorship or it can distort—it can distort the history and, you know, the way we view the world. And I understand that. I understand it.

And I understand some of the pushback is about perhaps the censorship that is present in political correctness, but then the facts are the facts. Dear god, you know, the President, you know, continually goes back to 2020 election to say that he won it, and we should stand together and reject that crap.

Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, sir.

Yield to Mr. Cloud from Texas.

Mr. CLOUD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Hartig, I visited, as I have many times, the Museum of American History. And what I think I find most troubling is the fact that you can do a lot with real history. And what is concerning is the distortion, I think, of the truth and in the context.

Just, for example, the American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith; you know, this exhibit, you turn the corner and the first thing you see is this. It is a wall and the two words, of course, that pop out are “privilege” and “slavery.” Is that a part of American history, sure. Should it be covered up, no.

But what makes America unique and exceptional is not, for example, the fact that slavery was a part of our history. It was a part of almost every Nation’s history. What makes America unique is the fact that we worked to overcome it and were leading on the world stage in getting rid of it.

And as I walk through—you mentioned as you walk through the doors, you will see Thomas Jefferson’s desk, you will see, you know, Abraham Lincoln’s top hat. And those are in the museum, yes, but that is not what you see when you walk in. What you see is exhibits to social reform. You will see displays in the end caps or the display—the glass displays on the side of pictures of drag show or pro-abortion language and all these different kind of things.

I am curious—you know, I was really surprised, as we are celebrating the 250th anniversary of our Nation, how did we come up with the 250th anniversary? Like, what are we celebrating in the 250th anniversary?

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you, sir. And thank you for your visit. And we have hosted, I think since January, 25 Senators and House Representatives—

Mr. CLOUD. Ma’am, I know your intention today is to filibuster the entire time.

There is a particular document that was signed on July 4, 1776, for which we celebrate. Could you?

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely, sir. So, when you come into the museum right now—

Mr. CLOUD. That would be the Declaration of Independence, ma’am.

Dr. HARTIG. Yes, sir. And so, when you—

Mr. CLOUD. I was surprised to find that in the Museum of American History, on the 250th year of our anniversary, there is not an exhibit for the Declaration of Independence. Now, sure, there is Jefferson's desk, and it takes up a very small space in a—but you would think, I went through the museum looking for the words “We, the People,” and you would think when you walked in, that would be the biggest, boldest thing, especially on the 250th anniversary.

The idea of E Pluribus Unum, where out of many become one, that is what makes America unique. And yet, your take seems to be to take the uniqueness, the unity of America and to try to divide us up into different things.

Who made the decision not to have a display for the Declaration of Independence on our 250th anniversary?

Dr. HARTIG. So, sir, I am going to go maybe back a few beats and answer, I think, your first question of the four.

So, the Declaration of Independence, of course, signed and ratified on July 4 in 1776 in Philadelphia, appears on a full wall in the Price of Freedom, our history of military on our third floor, eastern wing. It is a blow-up size.

Mr. CLOUD. Yes. It is a standard exhibit, it is there in the back.

Dr. HARTIG. And then it is in the—it is in the—if I may, sir.

Mr. CLOUD. But you have to walk through a bunch of junk to get there.

Dr. HARTIG. No, not exactly.

Mr. CLOUD. And as a matter of fact, right now you would think—

Dr. HARTIG. No. I am happy to answer your question, sir.

Mr. CLOUD. This would have been a great time to pull out all the artifacts. I thought, let me look and try to find something on John Adams, you know. And I am not saying it is not there, but it is hard to find.

John Adams; John Jay; Caesar Rodney; we can talk about Crispus Attucks; Phillis Wheatley, the poet laureate of the American Revolution; all these different kind of things.

What would you say is the most influential book in American history?

Dr. HARTIG. So, if I may go back to your second question.

Mr. CLOUD. What would you say is the most influential book in American history?

Dr. HARTIG. May I go back to your second question?

Mr. CLOUD. You can answer the one I just asked you.

Dr. HARTIG. Well, I—you know, as a historian, it is probably hard to choose which is the most influential book in the United States history. But I can tell you what is the most influential document, and that is the Declaration of Independence, which appears in different ways at least—

Mr. CLOUD. Most influential book.

Dr. HARTIG [continuing]. Four or five times—

Mr. CLOUD. The Founders quoted one book more than any other book.

Dr. HARTIG. The Founders were very well read. And as you know, Thomas Jefferson's library became the core of the Library of Congress.

Mr. CLOUD. Yes. And that book would have been the Bible. Second, would have been "Common Sense" by Thomas Paine. Now, I went to the bookstore. I could not find Common Sense in the bookstore.

I did find, you know, these books. Here is George Takei—it rhymes with decay—a book in which he talks about, you know, one young man lusting after another. I am not sure why this is in our American History Museum, in the kids' section, mind you.

That, you think, is important to have in the American History Museum?

Dr. HARTIG. So, George Takei, as you know, the actor from Star Trek, was incarcerated during World War II as the result of Executive Order 9066, and his children's book, I think, is a beautiful story.

Mr. CLOUD. Who made the decision to put that in there, but not Common Sense?

Dr. HARTIG. Especially with Senator Alan Simpson.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. BURCHETT. Mr. Subramanyam.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So, we are here for a hearing entitled, "Rewriting American History: Examining the Smithsonian's Efforts to Reshape the Past." And this was in response to a Domestic Policy Council report. The Domestic Policy Council is a part of the White House.

And what is interesting is that, I was looking back, this seems to be one of the only Domestic Policy Council standalone reports this year, in fact, perhaps this Administration. The only one I could find, was the last one they did on the national report on paper straws.

And so, this is how our Domestic Policy Council is spending its time, at a time where we have higher costs across the board, where we have a war going on in the Middle East, and where we have people hurting every single day, losing their access to healthcare, losing their access to food assistance because this Domestic Policy Council recommended it be cut. That is where we are right now.

And I think it is really important—Mr. Gonzalez, I want to go back to a quote. You quoted Stanley Kurtz in your opening, saying, "You can say that the economy and foreign policy are more important than these cultural battles. Over the long haul, however, that is simply not true."

Do you stand by that, that these cultural battles are more important than our economy and our foreign policy?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Oh, absolutely, yes. I think it was Lincoln who said no soldier—no foreign soldier can take a drink from the Mississippi—

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. So, you think that this particular hearing on where the Smithsonian is putting Thomas Jefferson's desk is more important than people facing higher utility costs?

Mr. GONZALEZ. That is not what the report is focused on.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Well, that is what you just said.

Mr. GONZALEZ. No, no, no. The report is not—

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. You said that the cultural battles are more important—

Mr. GONZALEZ. Yes.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM [continuing]. To you and more important than the higher cost of living that Americans are facing today.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Over the long-term, they are. And it is not about where——

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Interesting. Because I——

Mr. GONZALEZ [continuing]. Where Thomas Jefferson's desk is.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM [continuing]. I think the President would agree with you. I think this Administration would agree with you, and that is how they have acted.

So, let us just talk about the report since everyone wants to be here to talk about, it seems. The report actually had a lot of things that were not true. For instance, the opening of it talked about how the Smithsonian was not speaking enough about America 250, but I looked at the Smithsonian's website, and the first thing it talked about was America 250.

Director Hartig, did the Smithsonian talk about America 250?

Dr. HARTIG. Yes, sir. We have been planning for years to celebrate the semiquincentennial, and it is an honor to do so.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. The report complained that Thomas Jefferson's writing desk and George Washington's uniform were not on prominent display.

Were they on display at the American History Museum?

Dr. HARTIG. Yes, sir. And then, we are honored that the Jefferson's writing desk went over to the Smithsonian Castle to be part of Secretary Bunch's American Aspirations exhibition.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. And then it said it did not have quotes from the Declaration of Independence. I guess they were nitpicking about one specific sentence.

Are quotes from the Declaration of Independence on full display at the museum?

Dr. HARTIG. Yes, sir.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Okay. So, it seems like it was not a very good report either. But I looked back, and by their admission, it was a month's long report involving multiple staff.

Mr. Gonzalez, how much money do you think that report cost the American taxpayers? Because you are at The Heritage Foundation, so I know you care a lot about American taxpayers.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I have no idea.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. You did not ask about how much the report actually cost? No one looked into that?

Mr. GONZALEZ. I think it would be hard to assess——

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. It would be hard to assess? Okay.

Mr. GONZALEZ [continuing]. Given all the input that went into the report, how much it costs.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I asked AI. They said probably millions, potentially, yes.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Okay.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Because of outside——

Mr. GONZALEZ. I would advise against using AI, however, Congressman. It hallucinates a lot.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Yes, okay. I had to ask somebody because you did not have the answer to the——

Mr. GONZALEZ. Yes. It hallucinates a lot.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Yes. Sounds good. Well, the other thing, do you think there should be mentions of Trump's impeachment at the museum?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Sure. I mean, yes. It happened. It is history.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Do you think there should be a wing of the museum dedicated to President Trump?

Mr. GONZALEZ. I have no idea. I am not a curator. I do not know whether there should be a wing dedicated to President Trump.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Dr. Spalding, do you think there should be a wing in the museum dedicated to President Trump?

Dr. SPALDING. I do not think there should be a wing dedicated to any one President.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Okay. Interesting. Even George Washington?

Dr. SPALDING. I think in the context of what he did in terms of the American Revolution, the Revolution, that kind of thing, yes.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I think what is actually happening, it is not that you do not want ideology in the museum; it is that you want your ideology in the museum. And you want the museum to reflect your values, your specific views on things and not the views of what actually happened, which was the facts.

And so that is what we want, is we want the facts in the museum. We want people to come away with patriotism, because they will if you show them the facts of this great country.

Dr. SPALDING. I completely agree.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. And so, I applaud for everything that has happened in this first 250 years of America, the good and the bad. The bad would not have led to as good as what we have gotten.

Dr. SPALDING. One hundred percent.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. And I look forward to the next 250 years. I look forward to teaching my kids and grandkids the facts.

I yield back.

Dr. SPALDING. We agree.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, sir.

Ms. Mace from South Carolina.

Ms. MACE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Hartig, how many children visited the National Museum of American History last year?

Dr. HARTIG. Hi. Good morning, ma'am. Since——

Ms. MACE. Answer the question. How many kids?

Dr. HARTIG. Good morning, ma'am. Since we do not charge, we do not have that——

Ms. MACE. Are you the Director of the museum?

Dr. HARTIG. I am, ma'am.

Ms. MACE. Okay. And you do not know how—how many people visited the museum last year?

Dr. HARTIG. Two million.

Ms. MACE. How many of those were children?

Dr. HARTIG. Ma'am, I do not have those——

Ms. MACE. You do not even know. Okay.

Dr. HARTIG [continuing]. Exact figures for you, but I am happy to take that back.

Ms. MACE. Do you agree that educating children about American history is a core duty of the museum? Yes or no?

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely.

Ms. MACE. And are images of sexual fetishes appropriate for children? Yes or no?

Dr. HARTIG. So, ma'am—

Ms. MACE. It is a simple yes or no. Is sexual imagery, provocative sexual imagery appropriate for kids? Yes or no?

Dr. HARTIG. Ma'am, we strive to represent all Americans—

Ms. MACE. You strive to represent queer, pedophiles, indoctrination grooming of kids at an American history museum, and it sounds like you are proud of it. You will not answer the questions, probably because you are ashamed. And as a woman, I really cannot believe you will sit here today and you cannot even admit that sexual imagery like this behind me—they tell me, my staff tells me, this little trinket around the penis, this is bondage, discipline, sadism, masochism (BDSM). In a setting where children are walking through? That is disgusting.

Like, what kind of message are you trying to send to kids with BDSM imagery? What are you trying to tell kids? Are you sexualizing children? Is that what your motive is for the museum? Why?

Dr. HARTIG. So, that specific two-piece—

Ms. MACE. Do you know how many kids get raped by adults every year in this country? This kind of thing, when you are dressing men up as women, drag queens, you are putting this kind of crap in front of kids, sexualizes them and makes them more vulnerable to people that want to rape them or abuse them, or when we have men in women settings that want to do harm to women.

You talked about the *Girlhood* exhibit, and you did not want to answer the Chairman's questions earlier, but it was a diary featuring a six year old—a six year old—that reads, "everybody was talking about getting boobs and their period. I pray to God every night for my penis to grow."

Director Hartig, can you tell me—look me in the eye and tell me that that belongs in an exhibit for kids?

Dr. HARTIG. Ma'am, *Girlhood (It's Complicated)* was not an exhibit designed for children.

Ms. MACE. I know. You had the little disclaimer thing, which is sort of a—

Dr. HARTIG. The diary was of a 13-year-old going through puberty.

Ms. MACE. Okay. Do you think that is an appropriate thing to put in an American history museum where there are children walking through? We are talking about American history.

Dr. HARTIG. Right. So, *Girlhood (It's Complicated)* is—

Ms. MACE. Okay. I am moving on because you just—I do not know how much money you spent on getting prep for this hearing. They did a good job because you are filibustering and not answering a single question from a single Republican today.

Do you believe that men can become women?

Dr. HARTIG. Ma'am, as the director of the museum, that is not relevant in this case.

Ms. MACE. It is very relevant. You have got men dressed up as women, and you have them on displays in front of kids. Do you think men can become women? Yes or no?

Dr. HARTIG. So, RuPaul's Drag Race, which is the upper—

Ms. MACE. It is a man. RuPaul is a man who dresses like a woman, literally.

Dr. HARTIG. Right. Correct.

Ms. MACE. What is a woman, Dr. Hartig?

Dr. HARTIG. As a director and as a historian, it is not my opportunity—

Ms. MACE. You sexualize the American History Museum, so this is a fair question. What is a woman?

Dr. HARTIG. So, at the museum—

Ms. MACE. What is a woman?

Dr. HARTIG. We strive to represent and not categorize all Americans.

Ms. MACE. Okay. I have another question for you. There is a glossary at the museum that informs visitors that while American culture traditionally recognizes two genders, other countries recognize three or more.

So, enlighten me this morning. How many genders are there?

Dr. HARTIG. Ma'am, which glossary?

Ms. MACE. Okay. This is a display, and it has a glossary that says other countries recognize three or more genders. So, I would like you to enlighten me today. You are the director of the American History Museum who has sexualized things in front of kids. I want to know—I want to ask you, how many genders are there?

Dr. HARTIG. So, first of all, I am happy to get back to you—

Ms. MACE. How many?

Dr. HARTIG [continuing]. About the glossary.

Ms. MACE. How many genders are there, and what are they?

Dr. HARTIG. I am not sure which glossary you are speaking of.

Ms. MACE. Of course. I know that you do not. You knew exactly what this hearing was about today.

One of your exhibits at the American History Museum says sometimes gender is not revealed at birth. So, when is gender revealed?

Dr. HARTIG. So—

Ms. MACE. When was your gender revealed to you, Dr. Hartig?

Dr. HARTIG. I do not really think that is relevant to the conversation.

Ms. MACE. It is relevant. You have a display at the American History Museum talking about gender is not always revealed at birth. So, when was your gender revealed?

Dr. HARTIG. So, since I am a Ph.D. and—

Ms. MACE. I was not done yet, but I will yield back, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you, Ms. Mace.

Mr. BURCHETT. Mr. Walkinshaw.

Mr. WALKINSHAW. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am actually glad we are having this hearing today of the Subcommittee on Government Efficiency because finally we have abandoned the pretense that this Subcommittee has anything to do with government efficiency. Just like Elon Musk's DOGE was not about efficiency—it was an ideological purge of the Federal Government—this assault on the Smithsonian has nothing to do with efficiency. It is an ideological effort. To quote Mr. Gonzalez, a cultural battle.

But, let us go ahead and talk about rewriting history. Let us talk about it, because that is what the Trump Administration is doing as we speak.

This is Jackie Robinson. Before he stepped onto Ebbets Field, he wore the uniform of the United States Army. He broke major league baseball's color barrier in 1947. He did not just transform a sport, he challenged one of the last great institutions of legalized segregation in America. He helped move our country closer to the promise that talent and character matter more than the color of your skin.

I guess for President Trump's Department of Defense, he was part of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) problem we have heard about today, because he got erased, removed from the website, canceled, restored only after public outcry.

The Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 15,000 combat missions during World War II escorting American bombers over Europe. They did not just help defeat Nazi Germany. They helped to dismantle segregation in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Somehow, they are also part of the DEI problem we have heard about today because they were erased. The Air Force removed a documentary on the Tuskegee Airmen from their course instruction.

Navajo Code Talkers. Young Navajo marines developed an unbreakable battlefield code that Japanese forces could not crack. It helped American forces win some of the toughest battles in the Pacific, save countless American lives; also, apparently, part of the DEI problem because they got erased.

Now, the Trump Administration and my Republican colleagues are focusing their anti-DEI erasure efforts on the Smithsonian. Last week they released this report we have discussed today saying the museum has been captured by, quote, "extreme political activism." It is pretty extreme deleting Jackie Robinson.

Why the report? Because the museum tells the full American story. It examines slavery alongside liberty. It discusses immigration alongside citizenship. It recognizes the struggle for civil rights alongside our founding ideals, and, yes, the flaws of our Founders. But according to this Administration, that is not patriotic.

They erased Jackie Robinson, they erased the Tuskegee Airmen, they erased the Navajo Code Talkers, and now they want to take their big orange eraser to a proud American institution, the Smithsonian. We should reject this effort to erase our history because in America the truth has always been our strength. It is not a weakness, Mr. Gonzalez and Dr. Spalding.

Dr. Blight, can you tell us the damage that is done when history, Jackie Robinson, Navajo Code Talkers, Tuskegee Airmen, is erased from websites, from course instructions? How does that hurt America?

Dr. BLIGHT. Well, if you want inspiration from history, you cannot start any better than this. Delete Jackie Robinson, and he will come back. His name was Hank Aaron, his name was Frank Robinson, his name was Bob Gibson, and I could name a thousand more. Good luck trying to delete anything that people really care about in our history. They are going to find out about it.

And the fact that you can even delete it is something they can take, because they have some faith in institutions like the Smithsonian—which they love and want to go to—will bring that story to them.

What is lost is curiosity, understanding. You know, our job as historians is to understand the dead. Sorry. You become relevant when you are dead. But the reason we want to understand the dead, is so that we can really understand the living. And to delete the dead because, somehow, they do not fit a category that we like in the present, is to soil the present.

Mr. WALKINSHAW. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. BURCHETT. Mr. Gill from Texas, you are recognized.

Mr. GILL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing, and to the witnesses for taking the time to travel all the way out here.

Director Hartig, thank you for being here. Would you say that the goal of history, even if it is not properly carried out, would you say that the goal of history is to be objective?

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you, sir, for the question. You know, I think that there are many goals of history and certainly as you collect, as we do, examine evidence, create scholarship—

Mr. GILL. Is objectivity one of the goals of history?

Dr. HARTIG. We strive to be objective and nonpartisan and not based on any ideology.

Mr. GILL. So, it is one of the goals. Doesn't that seem a little bit concerning? It certainly does to me, because as part of this White supremacy document that your organization has promoted, objectivity is a core and defining aspect of White supremacy culture.

Do you think that it is the goal of the Smithsonian Institution to promote White supremacy culture?

Dr. HARTIG. Sir, do you mind sharing with me which document?

Mr. GILL. White supremacy culture right here. This is part of the MASS Action Toolkit that your organization has promoted for several years now under your leadership.

Are you promoting a White supremacy culture at the Smithsonian?

Dr. HARTIG. Am I promoting a White—

Mr. GILL. Ma'am, is this a difficult question?

Dr. HARTIG. No, sir. I am just thinking about the MASS Action Toolkit. We did not develop it.

But back to your question, no, we are not promoting any ideology.

Mr. GILL. Does it concern you that your goal is objectivity—one of your goals is objectivity, and your MASS Action Toolkit references objectivity as a defining characteristic of White supremacy culture?

Dr. HARTIG. It is not our toolkit.

Mr. GILL. It is your toolkit. You have been promoting it for quite some time.

Dr. HARTIG. We did not come up with the toolkit, sir.

Mr. GILL. But you have been promoting it.

Dr. HARTIG. It is used as a reference, I believe, probably in 2019, 2020—

Mr. GILL. Yes, under your leadership it has been used as a reference.

Is Mickey Mouse racist?

Dr. HARTIG. Mickey Mouse is not racist.

Mr. GILL. It is not racist. According to the Smithsonian Institution, one of your exhibits referenced Mickey Mouse as representing, quote, “vestiges of longstanding traditions of blackface minstrelsy.”

Would you describe that as racist?

Dr. HARTIG. No. The historical trajectory of the origins of Mickey Mouse tie directly to—

Mr. GILL. So, Mickey Mouse is rooted in racism. Is that your testimony?

Dr. HARTIG. No, sir. It is rooted in minstrelsy.

Mr. GILL. Minstrelsy. And you do not think the blackface minstrelsy is racist?

Dr. HARTIG. It has certain and obvious racial overtones that have been well documented and are—

Mr. GILL. Do you think that that is problematic that Mickey Mouse also has those racial overtones?

Dr. HARTIG. It is not for me to determine what is problematic. It is determined to me what is accurate.

Mr. GILL. Is that right?

Dr. HARTIG. Yes.

Mr. GILL. Is it important to be polite?

Dr. HARTIG. Excuse me, sir?

Mr. GILL. Is it important to be polite?

Dr. HARTIG. Yes, sir.

Mr. GILL. Also interesting, because the same MASS Action Toolkit that your organization has been promoting references politeness as a defining characteristic of White supremacy culture.

Ma’am, are you a White supremacist?

Dr. HARTIG. No, sir.

Mr. GILL. You are not? Can you help me square why your organization says that being polite is part of being a White supremacist?

Dr. HARTIG. I am not exactly familiar with that passage of the MASS Action Toolkit, which is not one that we developed.

Mr. GILL. I can show you the passage. It is right here.

Dr. HARTIG. I do not—pardon me?

Mr. GILL. I said I just read you the passage from it.

Dr. HARTIG. And then your question was, sir?

Mr. GILL. We are going to move on.

What is Latina power?

Dr. HARTIG. What is Latino power?

Mr. GILL. Latina power.

Dr. HARTIG. Latina power would be the forces derived from being a Latina.

Mr. GILL. Do you think that it is appropriate for the Smithsonian Institution to sell Latina power paraphernalia? Hats, mugs, other things that say “Latina Power”?

Dr. HARTIG. I believe that the merchandise our store sells tries to reflect—

Mr. GILL. I am asking you if it is appropriate.

Dr. HARTIG [continuing]. Tries to reflect the richness of the communities.

Mr. GILL. So, your testimony is that it is appropriate?

Dr. HARTIG. Those are your words, sir.

Mr. GILL. I am asking you, is it appropriate to sell Latina power paraphernalia? It is a yes or no question.

Dr. HARTIG. I do not have control over what is sold in our stores.

Mr. GILL. I am asking you if it is appropriate. I did not ask you if you have control over it. Is it appropriate?

Dr. HARTIG. I understood you, sir.

Mr. GILL. Yes or no?

Dr. HARTIG. Again, we strive to represent all Americans, and including in our merchandise.

Mr. GILL. Is it appropriate? Yes or no?

Dr. HARTIG. We strive to represent all Americans in our museums, including in our merchandise.

Mr. GILL. Is that right?

My time is up.

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you, sir.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Mfume of Maryland.

Mr. WALKINSHAW. Mr. Chairman, a UC request?

Mr. BURCHETT. Yes.

Mr. WALKINSHAW. I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a *Newsweek* article from March 19, 2025, titled, "Jackie Robinson's Army History Deleted by Pentagon."

Mr. BURCHETT. So ordered.

Anything else?

Mr. Mfume, you are recognized.

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I only have 5 minutes, so I am going to try to make the most out of it by making some very clear points.

Black people across this country are outraged at what is happening now with these efforts to do away with the African American Museum and all of the Smithsonian. They are outraged because they have lived too many years, been through too many struggles, suffered too many bruises, and clearly have very, very, very little to show for that sojourn here in this country.

I want to be real clear about this. If you erase it, we will replace it. It is that damn simple.

We do not seem to learn. If anything, we should be looking at history to learn and to make sure that we are taking advantage of what we have learned.

You know, it was Abraham Lincoln in 1848 who addressed his countrymen in Edwardsville, Illinois, and he said, and I quote, "When you have succeeded in dehumanizing the Negro; when you have put him down and made it but for him to be but as the beast of the fields; when you have extinguished his soul in this world and placed him where the ray of hope is blown out as in the darkness of the damned, are you quite sure," he asked, "that the demon you have roused will not one day turn and rend you."

He said, "What constitutes the bulwark of our freedom and our independence? It is not," said Lincoln, "our crown and battlements. It is not our armies and our navies. It is not our bristling seacoasts. For all those things are not our reliance against tyranny

because they can all be turned against us without having made us weaker for the struggle.”

“Our reliance,” he said, “as Americans is in the love of liberty which God has planted deep within all of us regardless of how we look and where we come from.” He said, “our reliance is in the spirit of freedom which prides itself as the heritage of all men, in all lands everywhere.”

And then he admonished, “Destroy that spirit and you would have planted the seeds of despotism at your own doorstep. Ignore,” he said, “the chains of human bondage, and you prepare one day for your own limbs to wear them. Accustomed,” he said, “to trample on the rights of other people, and you would have lost the creative genius of your own American independence and as such will become the fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you.”

Sound familiar? History taught us and still teaches us that we cannot keep making the same mistakes.

So, I know this is a big discussion about a lot of aspects about the museum. But I am here as a Black man who grew up in segregation, who was not allowed to go certain places, who drank from a water fountain that said “colored,” who found his mother and his father unable to do anything other than basic daywork. And if for no one else, if for them and their spirit and all the other nameless and faceless Black men in this country and Black women who made their bodies bridges, that some of us could get to the university, that some of us could get to a good job, that some of us could get to the United States, if for no other reason, I want this to go out loud and clear, and I am not speaking just on behalf of myself. I know that I speak on behalf of so many people who are not here today.

We will not let you destroy that museum. No matter how long it takes, how many battles are required, how much effort is needed, we will not allow that to happen, unless you find a way to kill all of us and walk over our bodies to change history. That history is too sacred, it is too precious, and it will not be erased because, as I said, if you attempt to erase it, we will continue to replace it over and over and over again.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Mfume.

Mr. Burlison, you are recognized.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Hartig, what do you believe is the core purpose of the National Museum of American History?

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you, sir, and good morning. The beauty, I think, of the museum is to truly take the over two million objects we have, put the best scholarship around them—

Mr. BURLISON. What is your mission? What is the core purpose?

Dr. HARTIG [continuing]. And to tell the richest story of America’s past that we can.

Our mission is to empower people to create a more just and compassionate future by preserving, sharing, and exploring the complexities of our past.

Mr. BURLISON. In your 2024 presentation, you said the museum changed its mission in part to help people get out of the America, quote/unquote, America First mentality.

So, my question is, what is specifically wrong about the America First mentality?

Dr. HARTIG. So, we changed the mission, like most organizations and corporations do, when I came that we had an expired strategic plan, and we fitted a new mission.

Mr. BURLISON. Okay. Is your contention that you just changed it because you just needed to change it under your direction?

Dr. HARTIG. No. Most directors change it.

Mr. BURLISON. I am asking specifically, you made the statement that you have to get out of the, quote/unquote, America First mentality. What did you mean by that?

Dr. HARTIG. I am not sure which of my public appearances you are referring to, sir.

Mr. BURLISON. Director Hartig, let me ask you, are you America First?

Dr. HARTIG. I am a very proud American.

Mr. BURLISON. That is great to hear. Do you love America?

Dr. HARTIG. I love this country unconditionally.

Mr. BURLISON. That is great to hear. At one point you stated that loving America is very complicated.

Let me ask you this. Recently we had visitors all over the globe for the World Cup. What I think is the common thread that we saw across all social media platforms was an astonishment and amazement of things that—preconceived ideas that they had about this country. Some of those preconceived ideas were that Americans were dangerous. That everywhere they would go, there would be shootings and people—you know, all of the crime that would occur. There were preconceived notions that Americans were all hostile and xenophobic, that Americans were—that everyone is living in poverty unless you are rich.

Do you think—after this happened—what do you think caused the rest of the world to believe all of these ills about the United States of America, these falsehoods about this country?

Dr. HARTIG. You know, the World Cup was truly remarkable in terms of how it brought everyone together. I am unsure what they were using as their basis for that, those conclusions, sir.

Mr. BURLISON. Well, somewhere people are spreading false information about the United States, right? And you say you love this country, America's First. You are proud of America's history?

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely, warts and all.

Mr. BURLISON. Okay. So, wouldn't it be nice if the rest of the world saw the history of the United States as being the country that led the world through economic prosperity? Particularly after World War II, with the Marshall Plan, led multiple nations out of prosperity.

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely, sir. And in our Mars Hall of American Enterprise, which tells the amazing story of American business, they would see just that.

Mr. BURLISON. Wouldn't it be great if we had—if the rest of the world saw us as what we truly are, the one country that led the

world and inspired them to eliminate slavery, to eliminate all of the genocides that happened?

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely. And I think when they come to the museum, overwhelmingly, wherever they are from, you know, from Nashville, Tennessee, to Nome, Alaska, they come out, and they say they come out more inspired, more—

Mr. BURLISON. So, what was the origin of that? What was the origin of what created all of these great things that inspired the rest of the world, that lifted people out of poverty, that ended genocides, or at least inspired the world to end their genocides? What was the original precipice of that? What was the original beginning?

Dr. HARTIG. So, the revolutionary era, of course, with its brilliant founding documents, the Declaration of Independence, those two soaring paragraphs is the origin.

Mr. BURLISON. So, I think that what we are trying to compel—what I am trying to convey is that when the rest of the world is having a hard time with disinformation, there are enough negative things that are being said, you would think the one institution that would be trumpeting the great and wonderful things that this country has done, especially at a time where we are celebrating the 250th anniversary of this country, would be to showcase that, to showcase our Founders.

And with that, I yield back.

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you, sir. And absolutely, I agree.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you.

Mr. Frost from Florida, you are recognized, sir.

Mr. FROST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know, I have got to say, listening to this hearing, I think many of my colleagues would benefit from actually stepping foot in the Smithsonian Institutions and maybe not just reading talking points from the White House or reading what they are supposed to say.

I have been in these museums. I mean, talking about the National Museum of African American History and Culture specifically, it tells the whole story, the ugly and how America and Americans came together to get rid of slavery, to fight Jim Crow. But it tells the whole story.

So, maybe this Committee should do like a field trip and actually go through these institutions to actually see the full story be told. Because I would contend that many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have never stepped foot in many of these institutions, at least not in a long time.

Director Hartig, thank you for being here. Can you please share a little bit about your experience as a historian?

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Frost.

I came to history as an undergraduate. I thought I was going to be an English major, but I took my first history class, and I was rowing crew for UCLA at the time, and I hoisted my ten-speed on my shoulder, and I walked up the stairs to the history department, and I declared that I wanted to be an historian.

And since then, as a public servant and as a public historian in which we look at archives and material culture and museum work and historic preservation work, I have been completely motivated to figure out how then I can best serve the Nation. And being the

Elizabeth MacMillan Director of the museum certainly is the highest calling.

Mr. FROST. Yes. Thank you.

Mr. Gonzalez, are you a professional historian?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Actually, I have been paid by publishers to write history, so I am.

Mr. FROST. Okay. How many exhibits have you curated?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Oh, no, no, I am not a curator.

Mr. FROST. Okay. How many exhibits have you curated? It is a separate question.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I have not curated any exhibits because I am not a curator.

Mr. FROST. All right. Thank you.

Dr. Hartig—thank you. You have not curated any exhibits. Thank you.

Dr. Hartig, is your work partisan?

Dr. HARTIG. No, sir, our work is not. We do not seek to advance any political agenda.

Mr. FROST. Yes, ma'am. Does the museum take political sides or have a political agenda?

Dr. HARTIG. No, sir.

Mr. FROST. Does the museum have exhibits that challenge people's views or may make them feel uncomfortable?

Dr. HARTIG. History is incredibly challenging. And by then, its very nature, if we tell it in its richness, we absolutely, I think, have objects that can make people uncomfortable. And, you know, I harken back to Secretary Bunch's words that he was told by a sharecropper that, you know, tell the people both what they want to hear and what they need to hear.

So, I think depending on where you are, certainly there can be a level of discomfort.

Mr. FROST. Thank you. What review process does the museum use before opening an exhibit?

Dr. HARTIG. So, the museum goes through a rigorous scholarly presentation of the way in which exhibit objects and stories and interpretation relate to one another. That is reviewed extensively. Also, depending on the size of the exhibit. Our *In Pursuit of Life, Liberty, and Happiness* exhibition, our 250-object exhibition for America 250, went through exhaustive review with also peer reviews as well. Then it is presented up to the Under Secretaries and often the Secretary in conversation with our review.

Mr. FROST. Thank you. Thank you, Director.

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Gonzalez, who should decide what is in a museum?

Mr. GONZALEZ. I would say that the curator, but also overseen by the leadership of the museum. The taxpayer does spend \$1.1 billion in the Smithsonian, so the Smithsonian is accountable to the American taxpayer.

Mr. FROST. All right. Thank you. I have a yes or no question. Should exhibits capture American history as it happened without bias?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Yes.

Mr. FROST. Was slavery a part of American history?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Yes.

Mr. FROST. Was Jim Crow a part of American history?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Yes.

Mr. FROST. Is it important that museums discuss these topics, at length, so people understand the gravity?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Absolutely, yes.

Mr. FROST. Do you believe that American art should be consistent with the Trump Administration's cultural and political goals?

Mr. GONZALEZ. I have no idea what that is. I cannot comment on that.

Mr. FROST. Do you believe that American art—or do you believe that the Smithsonian's goal should be consistent with the Trump Administration's cultural and political goals?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Again, I do not know how you define that. I cannot answer it.

Mr. FROST. You seem to have a longstanding personal vendetta against the Smithsonian that started well before the White House report. And I asked you those questions because I am concerned about censorship. I am no historian either, just like you, but I know that Nazi Germany weaponized art in museums to demonize certain groups.

Dr. BLIGHT, if Congress or the White House starts deciding historical interpretation, how is that different from political censorship?

Dr. BLIGHT. It is political censorship. And their model may indeed be Joseph Goebbels' Committee on Enlightenment, which is what the Nazis called their committee that tried to control museums.

Mr. BURCHETT. I am sorry, sir. Your time is up.

Mr. FROST. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. WALKINSHAW. Mr. Chairman, I have a UC request.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to enter into the record, ask unanimous consent, a *Reuters* article from January 2025, "Trump's Anti-DEI Order Yanks Air Force Videos of Tuskegee Airmen and Female Pilots."

Mr. BURCHETT. So ordered.

Mr. Fallon of Texas, you are recognized.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Hartig, you hold a very prestigious position. It is an awesome responsibility. We are honoring American history, and we have a rich history in these past 250 years.

In 2019 when you took the—did you take the job in 2019? Is that right?

Dr. HARTIG. Good morning, sir. And, yes, I did.

Mr. FALLON. Good morning. Okay. And what was your pay then? How much did they pay you?

Dr. HARTIG. My starting pay was \$300,000.

Mr. FALLON. And what is it today?

Dr. HARTIG. It is about \$370,000, which is paid from an endowment, not Federal funds.

Mr. FALLON. Okay. But you do agree that you work for the American people?

Dr. HARTIG. Every day, sir.

Mr. FALLON. All right. And all of them, even the ones you disagree with?

Dr. HARTIG. We welcome everyone to the museum.

Mr. FALLON. All of them. All right. Wonderful. Are the majority of the funds for the museum paid for by the American taxpayer?

Dr. HARTIG. So, of the Smithsonian's appropriation, for which we are very grateful——

Mr. FALLON. The majority is?

Dr. HARTIG. Yes.

Mr. FALLON. Okay. Just because we have limited time.

Dr. HARTIG. Yes. So, if I may, sir?

Mr. FALLON. Again, sorry. We have very limited time. But it is the majority. All right. We agree there.

Webster's, I looked up the definition of history, because it is very important in our conversation today. And it is a chronological record of significant events, such as affecting a nation or an institution, often including an explanation of their causes.

And as such, I think we hopefully would all agree that you need to take great care when presenting history. It needs to be fair and balanced and as objective as any human being can be to and for all Americans and not colored with—you know, we do not want to color the museum and our history with your personal beliefs, biases, ideology, and preconceived notions. And I think it is important to take that step back and present a comprehensive look at American history that displays all of it, good, bad, ugly, triumphant, et cetera.

Director, do you believe you have done that these past seven years?

Dr. HARTIG. Yes, sir, to the best of my ability.

Mr. FALLON. John [sic] Smithson, when he donated, I think it was in 1826 when he donated his fortune, he said it was to increase and diffusion of knowledge among men—I think we would all agree “people” now. And the precursor to your museum was the National Museum of History and Technology, and that is important in a minute. And they wanted to always focus on the story of American progress.

Director, do you love the United States of America?

Dr. HARTIG. I do, unequivocally.

Mr. FALLON. Wonderful. I do as well. We agree. And on balance, do you believe the United States has been a force of good in the world, on balance?

Dr. HARTIG. United States is the world's longest consecutive running democracy and——

Mr. FALLON. So, I would take that as a yes?

Dr. HARTIG [continuing]. It is truly remarkable.

Mr. FALLON. Again, just because we have limited time. Yes?

Dr. HARTIG. Yes, sir.

Mr. FALLON. So, two out of two. Okay. And you believe we still are today?

Dr. HARTIG. Pardon me, sir?

Mr. FALLON. And you believe we still are today?

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely.

Mr. FALLON. Yes, wonderful.

So, United States, would you agree with the statement that we are the greatest Nation history has ever known?

Dr. HARTIG. I think that I would refer judgment in terms of—

Mr. FALLON. All right. So, I have got to take that as a no because it is an easy answer. Yes, yes, yes. So, we got three out of four. That is not bad.

Under your leadership, did you direct staff to frame and tie all the exhibits in the museum to seven core social issues?

Dr. HARTIG. No, sir.

Mr. FALLON. You did not? Not on, like, race, gender—

Dr. HARTIG. To the best of my knowledge.

Mr. FALLON [continuing]. Climate change, immigration, economic equality, technical—all right. Well, 250th anniversary, we agree that America is 250 years old?

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely.

Mr. FALLON. As far as a focus and highlight for the 250th, did you have any new exhibits on George Washington?

Dr. HARTIG. So, we have about 25—

Mr. FALLON. Again, I apologize, just because we have such limited time. Did your museum decide to say, hey, you know, it is the 250th anniversary, we are going to feature George Washington?

Dr. HARTIG. We do feature George Washington.

Mr. FALLON. Can somebody take this?

Dr. HARTIG. We feature George Washington—

Mr. FALLON. No, but did you—you are not answering the question. I am so sorry.

Did you have any new—the 250th anniversary, and you decide as a board, we are going to have a new exhibit that highlights and focuses and celebrates George Washington?

Dr. HARTIG. We highlight and celebrate George Washington—

Mr. FALLON. So, you did not have any new ones?

Dr. HARTIG. It is a new exhibit.

Mr. FALLON. You have a new one just for George Washington for the 250?

Dr. HARTIG. *In Pursuit of Life, Liberty, and Happiness.*

Mr. FALLON. Great. How about Thomas Jefferson?

Dr. HARTIG. He is predominantly—both of them.

Mr. FALLON. Mr. Chairman, I reclaim my time. We have very limited time.

How about Thomas Jefferson, did you have a new exhibit on Thomas Jefferson for the 250?

Dr. HARTIG. We had a new exhibit that included Thomas Jefferson, George Washington—

Mr. FALLON. But you did not solely focus on Thomas Jefferson. How about Ben Franklin?

Dr. HARTIG. Pardon me?

Mr. FALLON. Did you have a new exhibit on Ben Franklin?

Dr. HARTIG. We had a new exhibit that included Mr. Franklin.

Mr. FALLON. All right. So, on the Founding Fathers. How about great inventors, great American inventors, any new exhibits on that?

Dr. HARTIG. We had a new exhibit that included many great American inventors.

Mr. FALLON. Brand-new and for the 250th?

Dr. HARTIG. Yes, sir.

Mr. FALLON. Like Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, Nicholas [sic] Tesla, Eli Whitney, John Deere.

Did you also have one that celebrated a 12-day Pride celebration and create a special display honoring a queer Mexican and undocumented man?

Dr. HARTIG. For the 250th? No, sir.

Mr. FALLON. Did you do that this year?

Dr. HARTIG. No, sir, to the best of my knowledge.

Mr. FALLON. You are under oath. You are saying that you did not do that. Okay.

My time is up. I yield back.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you.

Ms. Pressley, you are recognized.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Thank you.

Our shared American history—our shared American history is under attack. Donald Trump is working overtime to turn our museums into instruments of “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) propaganda rather than places where American people and visitors from around the world can encounter our factual history.

I had the privilege this weekend of visiting the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, a Smithsonian affiliate. And what I took in there was factual, it was powerful, it was equal parts devastating and also instructive, which is why people are working so hard to erase it.

And let me just be clear. Try as you might to erase Black history and to erase Black people, you cannot erase us. But I digress.

The work of our museums is so very important. Dr. Hartig, that work deserves visibility, gratitude, protection, not vilification and threats.

Since taking office, the Trump Administration has become synonymous with fascism. While there is no one set definition, historians have generally agreed upon several characteristics.

Dr. Blight, you were selected to be the president of the Society of American Historians, so I am going to ask you to keep me honest on this. Now, what I have learned is that fascism usually includes elements like undermining fair elections, a constant targeting of vulnerable people and labeling them as enemies, and an overwhelming amount of government corruption. Sounds eerily familiar. A damning and devastating déjà vu of the moment we find ourselves in right now.

The element I want to focus on today is the fascist hostility to our history, academia, museums, and the arts. Dr. Blight, looking at history, why do fascists and autocrats attack cultural institutions like museums?

Dr. BLIGHT. Madam Congressman, it is because they believe that is where you can control people’s minds. You can sustain a social order, you can control education, you can control the arts, you can control writing and creativity itself.

It is not just the Nazis. There have been plenty of other neo-Fascist or Fascist regimes that have attempted to do that.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Thank you, Doctor. Yes, this is anti-freedom agenda. They want to control what books we read, what is in our muse-

ums, what we do with our bodies, attack the free press, degrade free speech. It is an anti-freedom agenda.

Dr. Blight, what warning signs do you look for when society starts drifting toward fascism and authoritarianism?

Dr. BLIGHT. First, I look for the breakup of political parties, then I look at—I look for this kind of assault on cultural institutions, on things like the National Park Service, which reaches more students than any of us who teach in universities. I look for attempts to control the media, which is the dissemination of knowledge. And I look for any attempt at the control over free minds, free speech, freedom itself.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Thank you. History gives us a chilling example of what happens when a government decides that it alone will define what counts as good art and acceptable history. I have heard the stories passed down in Jewish families of Germany in the 1930s, as the Nazi regime consolidated political power, it turned its attentions to museums and to galleries.

The regime started with criticism, labeling art as degenerate, and claiming it did not fit with the national culture. But then they started attacking museum directors and curators and, eventually, art pieces were confiscated from museums and locked away or sold. In 1939, Nazis publicly burned thousands of paintings that they could not profit from. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum details much of this history.

Fascist attacks on museums are not just about history. Today the occupant of the White House labels entire aspects of American history as, quote/unquote, “divisive” and uses the power of his office to pressure the Smithsonian to remove, whitewash, and to rewrite our stories.

I am not here to exaggerate, just to educate. And what is spurring this all on? What fuels this? Fear of a Black planet, fear of a multiracial democracy. The occupant of the Oval Office, Project 2025, this cult of MAGA, they are fueled by fear and hate.

Dr. Blight, when people see the warning signs that you mentioned, why is it important that they speak up and take action?

Dr. BLIGHT. It is important because if the people do not stand up, they lose these institutions, and as you just suggested, the black world came to America for the World Cup. I wonder if—I wonder if people noticed that the world is Black and Brown and the teams from European countries were Black and Brown, and we ought to take some lesson from that. And, by the way, to that point earlier, sorry, that they were getting disinformation, who were they getting the disinformation from? And let us remember what fascinates the world about America is our contradictions.

Mr. BURCHETT. Your time is up, sir.

Dr. BLIGHT. Thank you. Sorry.

Mr. BURCHETT. Your time is up.

Mr. Jack.

Mr. JACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My first question is to Mr. Gonzalez. I appreciate your testimony today. We have heard some pretty concerning things throughout this hearing. I am curious from your perspective, what is fueling this ideological takeover of many of our institutions?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Yes. I thank you, Mr. Jack. Good to see you again. I agree with Dr. Blight, fascists try to seize the past to control the future, but it really is a trademark of Marxists. This is what Marxists do. I think that people who want to truly transform the country, seize the cultural institutions in order to mold how people think, this is their own words. The leadership of the Smithsonian says constantly that it wants to use the museum to transform America for societal transformation. They see history itself as a tool, an instrument to change society. So, you only have to quote what they say they want to do.

Mr. JACK. What would you say are the most egregious examples of this takeover that you have seen on display at the Smithsonian?

Mr. GONZALEZ. Well, I think we have gone through many of them here. Let me correct the record, because it was said earlier that the MASS toolkit was not produced by the Smithsonian. On page 64, it says that it was coauthored by half a dozen current and former Smithsonian employees. The fact that the staff of the Smithsonian is trained at—you know, was trained for three years after the Smithsonian apologized. I think that is pretty damning. Trained for four years on how to use history to transform America.

I think the fact that the, for example, on the Franklin exhibit, they pondered whether he had ever done experiments, electroshock on indentured servants or slaves without producing any evidence whatsoever. I think that is pretty shocking. Why smear the Founding Fathers such as Ben Franklin with—by pondering such a really bizarre thing?

Mr. JACK. Well said.

Director Hartig, I am curious, we have heard a lot of concerning examples as just referenced. Do you have any regrets in your tenure thus far of some of the exhibits that have been displayed? Do you regret any of the exhibits? And if so, which?

Dr. HARTIG. Good morning, sir. I am incredibly proud of the work we have done, but we are imperfect, and we surely have made mistakes, but I do not have any regrets.

Mr. JACK. Which mistakes would you say you have made?

Dr. HARTIG. There are always factual errors. One of my favorite, currently, is that one of our volunteers has pointed out that we have been mislabeling a coin in the American Presidency Exhibit for years, and that we were, of course, slightly embarrassed about that, but we fixed it.

Mr. JACK. Have you had any negative feedback from Secretary Bunch or others in leadership about some of the exhibits we have discussed today?

Dr. HARTIG. Secretary Bunch and the members of leadership and I talk about many things, including our exhibitions.

Mr. JACK. Has there been any frustration exhibited about some of the exhibits that have happened under your control?

Dr. HARTIG. We talk about many things and we have talked about the challenges of being an historian in these times, absolutely.

Mr. JACK. So, one of the things I find interesting, and I am going to take that as an evasive answer, and I would submit for the record if you want to say Secretary Bunch is criticizing you, it is helpful for us to hear that, but if not, we will let that go. I am curi-

ous if you can explain for us the 603 review process, and I think this Committee is very interested in exploring that and seeing what feedback has come about some of these exhibits.

Dr. HARTIG. Certainly, sir. Thank you for the question. I think it started in 1995. Smithsonian directive SD603 requires all of our work to go through a really very rigorous review risk assessment. Most recently, it was updated last summer and enhanced by the regents.

Mr. JACK. So, when an exhibit goes on display, it is peer reviewed, there is a lot of input about the exhibit from people that are on staff within your purview?

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely. And then it is reviewed by a higher committee of undersecretaries.

Mr. JACK. Would you be willing to submit some of those review processes and, likewise, some of the content within it, to this Committee for review?

Dr. HARTIG. I am happy to check with our general counsel and get back to you.

Mr. JACK. Mr. Gonzalez, in the remaining time that we have, I am just curious, what do we do going forward? How do we resolve this? How do we fix this? It is clearly a problem that is dividing our country. What is the path forward?

Mr. GONZALEZ. I am saddened to say that you do need to clean out house at the Smithsonian. You have to replace the leadership. I do not think the 603 review process is going to fix anything. I do not think trying to reform with the present leadership is going to do anything. They are committed to the things they want to do. We only have to listen to what they say and look at the evidence they have produced. I think you need to work with the Board of Regents to effect this change.

Mr. JACK. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you.

Ms. Crockett from Texas, you are recognized, ma'am.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the Republicans White pride rally disguised as a congressional hearing. It might be uncomfortable for some people on this Committee to hear about the true history of America, and I hate that for them, but facts are facts. And it is a fact that there is a violent exclusionary discriminatory sexist and racist part of American history where our indigenous populations were forcibly displaced from their land; where thousands of Black people were unjustly lynched; where Black people were denied the right to vote and they are still trying to do it today; where women needed their husband's permission to open a bank account; where people with disabilities were routinely excluded from schools, workplaces, and public life; where four little Black girls were murdered by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) at the 16th Street Baptist Church; and a lot of this was not that long ago. In fact, three of those little girls would be 77 and one would be 74. More than 40 Members of Congress serving right now would be older than them.

Ruby Bridges, who was the first Black child to desegregate an all-White school, is only 71 years old. More than 100 Members of Congress serving right now are older than her. So, attacks on the Smithsonian or any other institution that is willing to tell the true

history of America is not only an attempt to rewrite history, it is an attempt to erase history.

So, Dr. Blight, if Republicans are going to ban books, penalize schools and universities, attack museums, if states continue to change curriculum, where do Americans go to learn about the complicated sometimes racist and violent parts of American history?

Dr. BLIGHT. Thank you for the question. I think they will have to keep going to the same institutions and we have to keep fighting to preserve what we are doing in those institutions. They have to keep going to public schools. They have to keep going to their public libraries. They have to keep going to the great Smithsonian. Look, the purpose of history is to enlighten us, inspire us, trouble us, bother us, sometimes make us angry. I find it hard to believe that a young person could go through the Museum of American History and not come out at least inspired with a single most important thing: a sense of the past, a sense of history. Americans have to keep going to those places they trust. We have to keep those institutions trustworthy.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much. In fact, that takes me to Dr. Hartig. They accuse you and the Smithsonian of sowing division in this country. However, before the White House deleted it, the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security found the biggest domestic threat to the United States is violent White supremacists. So, I have a couple of questions for you. First, to the best of your knowledge, has the museum ever been linked to any violent act that has occurred in the United States or against the U.S. Government?

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you, ma'am. Not to the best of my knowledge.

Ms. CROCKETT. I do not think many of these White supremacists can even read, but to the best of your knowledge, can you identify a single artifact in your museum that would divide the country?

Dr. HARTIG. To the best of my knowledge, ma'am, no. I hope that they unite the country through a shared understanding of our past.

Ms. CROCKETT. Do you think, or do you ask the political affiliation of any of your employees before you hire them?

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely not, ma'am. It is against the Hatch Act of 1939.

Ms. CROCKETT. I am glad that you know the law, but nevertheless, do you ask if they have donated to political campaigns?

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely not, ma'am. It is against the Hatch Act of 1939.

Ms. CROCKETT. We need a briefing in this building, but nevertheless, do you only hire non-White people?

Dr. HARTIG. No, ma'am.

Ms. CROCKETT. In fact, almost 60 percent of the Smithsonian's total workforce is men, and more than 50 percent is White. 90 percent of Smithsonian employees making senior level pay are White, and 60 percent of them are men. I do not understand this fetish that these White guys with fragile egos have with trying to feel oppressed. It reminds me of the same people Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) was referring to when he said, quote, "They believe that American society is essentially hospitable to fair play and to steady growth toward a middle-class utopia embodying racial harmony,

but unfortunately, this is a fantasy of self-deception and comfortable vanity.”

I want to go back real quick, though, Dr. Blight, because you talked about the World Cup, the World Cup that they captured the imaginations of the entire world when they saw all of these people of color that was playing for all these teams, and ultimately, if you recall, the last two teams, it was Argentina and Spain and it seemed like the vast majority of the world was rooting for Argentina—or actually against Argentina, right? And why was that? Just give me an explanation, if you could guess. If you will just let him finish the answer.

Dr. BLIGHT. Spain had the best team. Maybe that is why they were rooting for them.

Ms. CROCKETT. There is also a racist history that exists within Argentina.

Mr. BURCHETT. Mr. Beyer, you are recognized.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Ms. Crockett.

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Chairman, thank you for letting me waive on to the Committee and, Mr. Chairman, thank you for that sort of exaggerated opening video of Dr. Hartig, which I thought simply and respectfully recognized that our European ancestors and the African slaves they brought over came to settle and claim lands that had been home to earlier immigrants, those we call Native Americans that came between 15 and 30,000 years ago. Jared Diamond in “Guns, Germs, and Steel” points out that our virus and bacteria killed the majority of them, and then we proceeded to take their land, killed hundreds of thousands, moved them out of the regions in which they lived to reservations in South Dakota, Arizona, and other places, and we have a Trail of Tears, Wounded Knee, the Sandy Creek Massacre, the California genocide, and the forced boarding schools.

Dr. Hartig, why did you think it was important to offer a small amount of homage to those who had lived here before we came?

Dr. HARTIG. Thank you, sir. It is a practice that I believe in to acknowledge the layered complexity of our land and where we are standing and all those who have come before us and an honor to recognize the first peoples of the United States.

Mr. BEYER. Thank you. Mr. Gonzalez talked about, quote, the erasure of American culture. I feel, especially listening to all the wonderful people today, that nothing would be further from the truth, because it is all an effort to tell all of America’s stories. Dr. Spalding said, tell the American national story. I mean, yes, I love America, Director Hartig loves America, Dr. Blight, Lonnie Bunch, but we do not pretend that we are perfect. It says that we forge toward a more perfect union.

Dr. Blight, you talked—the most memorable phrase today was, “sanctioned ignorance.” What would Dr. Hartig’s museum look like if we suppressed everything that makes us uncomfortable?

Dr. BLIGHT. Well, it would be a nice pleasing stroll through a museum and not much to talk about afterwards at lunch. It is—Frederick Douglas once said, America is its contradictions all made up of its contradictions, and as a former slave, he understood that. The purpose of exhibiting history, representing history, is not just

to show the good and the bad. That is, of course, true, and everyone here has said it, but it is to stimulate our curiosity, to ask a question that we have not asked before, to confront us with evidence we have not seen before, a story we never knew. That is what a museum should do. That is what people will then talk about as they leave. If all they learn is a patriotic story, then frankly, professionally, curators and historians have not done their jobs. We do not serve the state. We serve the practice of the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

Mr. BEYER. Thank you very much.

Dr. Hartig, you have taken a lot of heat today for saying that your love for America is complicated. I would argue that all love is complicated, because we are not perfect and the people we love are not perfect, but can you see your complicated love also being unconditional? And what did you mean by complicated love?

Dr. HARTIG. Sure. Thank you, sir. The placard that was held up in March during the summer of 2020, which I think we can all remember, said loving America is—loving America is complicated, I may be misremembering slightly, and I use that slide in a number of my presentations, because I believe you can do both. I believe that loving America can be complicated as an historian. I also believe that as an individual, my love for America is unconditional.

Mr. BEYER. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, sir.

I now would like to enter “Saving America’s Story” for the record. No objections.

Ms. Stansbury, you are recognized.

Ms. STANSBURY. All right. Well, it has been an interesting hearing, as these hearings always are, and so, I have a lot of ground to cover. I want to just start out by, Mr. Chairman, inviting you to invite the entire Committee to go down to the Smithsonian Museum. The American Smithsonian is a mere two miles from here, and I would also like to invite some of my colleagues. If you want to come over, we can watch drag race, we can have some cocktails. I think you will have a different opinion once you watch it.

Okay. But let us talk a little bit about the museum. I heard the testimony from the Majority’s witnesses today, and I have to say I think probably most Americans, with all due respect, sirs, would have no idea what museums you are talking about, because that is not the museums as they are presented, and I think that as many of my colleagues have stated today, if any of our colleagues had actually stepped foot in these museums in the last few weeks or months, they would actually know what is inside these museums. In fact, I go on a regular basis. I went twice over the last week. And I am curious, though none of my colleagues have stuck around to actually hear the rest of this hearing, how many people in this room have actually been to a Smithsonian Museum in the last month or two? Audience?

Okay. All right. We got some people in here. Unfortunately, my Republican colleagues who felt this hearing was so important to schedule did not even bother to wait until the end to answer the question. Maybe because they could not.

Now, let me take you on a very quick brief virtual tour of the museum since we cannot physically go over there. This is the Star-Spangled Banner. This is the American flag that is famous. It is one of the most prominently displayed exhibits at the American History Museum. This is Abraham Lincoln's hat. This is the desk that the Declaration of Independence was written on. If you have been to the Smithsonian Castle for the 250th birthday, which I was just a couple of weekends ago, it is right as you walk in. So, to our colleagues that did not know it was there, go over to the castle.

This is, of course, R2D2, "Star Wars." We have got some "Star Wars" fans. Ruby slippers. This is the first Wright flyer, the Wright brothers, and of course this is the command module of Apollo 11, which was instrumental in the first landing on the moon.

That is American history, and this is what is featured in the American history and other museums of the Smithsonian. And so, notwithstanding this crazy report that just got added into the record and notwithstanding the insane testimony we heard today, I really do encourage every single person in America and across the world to come visit one of our greatest institutions in this country.

Now, there was a lot of conversation today about what do race, gender, identity, culture, have to do with the American story? That is the American story. We are the greatest nation on planet earth. We are diverse. We are huge. We are filled with every language, every culture, every people on planet earth who come here to aspire to the freedoms that are protected in that Declaration and that Constitution that is featured prominently in the Smithsonian Museum.

But our museums are also keepers of our story and all its complexity and all its pain, and they are there to also reflect who we are as people. So, if there is merchandise that celebrates being Latina, count me in. I want some. I am going to go down and get some. If there is merchandise celebrating the LGBTQ+ community, is that appropriate? Yes, it is appropriate, because this is our country and we all belong here, and our colleagues do not get to decide who belongs and does not belong in this country, and whose history and whose culture and whose identities belong in our institutions. You get to decide that, the American people.

And if my colleagues are so concerned about protecting children from sexualization, how about you arrest some of the criminals in the Epstein case? Maybe the President himself. If you are so concerned about the well-being of children in this country, how about you vote no against the bills that are trying to gut our education system, the bills that are trying to gut food assistance, the bills that are gutting healthcare instead of voting in favor of them? If you actually care about the children and people of this country, then let your vote and your actions speak for you and vote no against the \$95 billion package you are trying to move this week to send more of our children into war in an illegal war.

Now, we do not have time to close out this hearing with a proper closing, but I just want to say to my colleagues who came to share their stories, their hopes, their dreams, and the importance of these institutions, and to all of the American people out there, we

will fight for the independence of the Smithsonian and we will not go back, period.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, co-Chair.

Recognize Ms. Boebert from Colorado.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Hartig, you have said that history is a prime tool of social justice and that the museum works to reframe the traditional celebratory narrative of U.S. history. Isn't that just a polished way of saying that you intend to use a taxpayer funded national museum to push a racial narrative that divides Americans by their skin color and by guilt?

Dr. HARTIG. Good morning, ma'am, and thank you for the questions. I have said in a number of my talks that I grow, I think, increasingly confident that history can be a tool——

Ms. BOEBERT. So, you are using taxpayer funded dollars to divide our country by racism and guilt?

Dr. HARTIG. No, ma'am. I am using the power of history——

Ms. BOEBERT. Madam Director, you changed the museum's mission away from preserving and presenting American history toward empowering people to create a more just and compassionate future. Who gave you the authority to turn the National Museum of American History into a vehicle for progressive political activism?

Dr. HARTIG. So, the Smithsonian is a nonpartisan institution, and we are very proud of that.

Ms. BOEBERT. Who decides what is just, ma'am?

Dr. HARTIG. I hope we can all agree that we want a just and compassionate future. We do so by preserving and sharing the stories of the past.

Ms. BOEBERT. And are you rewriting that history?

Dr. HARTIG. No, ma'am.

Ms. BOEBERT. No? So, you are the one who is over all of this. You are the Director.

Dr. HARTIG. I am, ma'am.

Ms. BOEBERT. And it seems that you have the authority to decide what is just and what is compassionate. What about the tens of millions of aborted babies, the babies that have been killed in America? Where is the justice and the compassion for them?

Dr. HARTIG. Ma'am, I believe in a just and compassionate future.

Ms. BOEBERT. Is it just and compassionate to abort tens of millions of babies?

Dr. HARTIG. I am not here at this hearing to discuss that.

Ms. BOEBERT. Where is their history?

Dr. HARTIG. I am not here at this hearing to discuss that.

Ms. BOEBERT. Is that not a part of our American history? Did that not happen?

Dr. HARTIG. I am not——

Ms. BOEBERT. Or is it only what you care about? Is it only the issues that you care about and you being cushioned by White privilege and being propped up by your Whiteness as you claim? I am paraphrasing. Is that what you care about, just racism and making people feel guilty?

Dr. HARTIG. No, ma'am. I care about the full richness of the American past. Since 1776, there is an estimated three billion people who have been here, so it is the honor of my life——

Ms. BOEBERT. There are over 50 million babies that have been aborted.

Dr. HARTIG. It is the honor of my life to do my best to tell the American stories.

Ms. BOEBERT. Director, you have said that loving America is very complicated. Is it complicated to love your country?

Dr. HARTIG. I love my country unconditionally, ma'am.

Ms. BOEBERT. Okay. So, the 250th anniversary of the Declaration, you said that that should be problematized.

Dr. HARTIG. Yes, I did, and when historians use that, it means to add new stories—

Ms. BOEBERT. What about when you use it?

Dr. HARTIG [continuing]. To think about it different ways. Pardon me, ma'am?

Ms. BOEBERT. What about when you use it, Director?

Dr. HARTIG. When I use it, I mean to add new stories and think of new objects to tell the American story and all its richness.

Ms. BOEBERT. But you are not going to include the babies that were killed? We cannot think of those stories, those new stories to share with the American people?

Dr. HARTIG. Ma'am, we are going to use the two million objects in our collection to tell the American story as fully as we can.

Ms. BOEBERT. There are over 50 billion more you can add to that. I believe when the Director of America's History Museum finds it complicated to love her country and wants to problematize its founding, I believe that that is the definition of undoing the—our shared national story. Would you agree?

Dr. HARTIG. No, ma'am.

Ms. BOEBERT. Your museum has minimized or contextualized the Founders primarily through slavery and exclusion while elevating narratives of conquests, systematic injustice and resistance. Is there any version of the American founding you consider worthy of uncomplicated celebration, or is the entire project irredeemably tainted by your view?

Dr. HARTIG. So, the Founding—excuse me. The founding era of the Nation occupies 25,000 square feet in our museum, so I am incredibly proud that we tell the stories of the founding—

Ms. BOEBERT. Is there any part of it that is uncomplicated or?

Dr. HARTIG. Oh, some of it is incredibly—

Ms. BOEBERT. Or we can celebrate without complication?

Dr. HARTIG. Absolutely, ma'am.

Mr. BURCHETT. Time is up.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Can I ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record an opinion piece authored by witness Professor Blight and titled, "Trump is Bending History to His Will. He Will Fail."

Mr. BURCHETT. So ordered.

At this time, I have been advised not to do this, but I am going to do it because he is my friend. Without objection, Mr. Jackson from Illinois is waived on the Subcommittee for the purpose of questioning the witnesses in today's hearing.

Mr. JACKSON. Thank you, the honorable Chairman, Mr. Tim Burchett, my friend, and thank you, Ms. Stansbury, and all the talents that have come today. I have enormous concern about what

is happening at the museum structure, particularly under the Trump Administration. History is not something that we seek to change or bend. History was taken place before we arrived. History is something that we should learn from, and to the degree that Mr. Trump specifically on the 4th of July 2026, took further attacks at the National Museum of African-American history I thought was very concerning, and he says that it is divisive, that we should show the happier side of America in slavery, that we should show things we have to unify us. I think what unifies us is the truth.

Mr. Blight, I would ask you, Dr. Blight, from your historical perspective, what does it say about a society that cannot reconcile its history, its truth, and where are we now?

Dr. BLIGHT. Well, for one thing, it says it is a mature society. History is never easily reconciled. One example, Members here today have said that America is unique, exceptional, and great because we ended slavery. Actually, it is far closer to a historical truth that America is unique and exceptional in that it took a massive all-out Civil War to end slavery. We are the only country or empire in the world that killed 700,000 of its own people in order to no longer have slavery. We have all become abolitionists now. We all like to celebrate America ending its slavery, but if we do not know the process by which we got to that point, we know next to nothing.

Mr. JACKSON. Well, let me ask you, there is now this attempt, if you will, they are saying that our history is divisive. There were great people, Senator Charles Sumner is a personal hero. Thaddeus Stevens, he was some of the people that were called the great reconstructionists, if you will, that brought about America. When you cancel out African-Americans in American history, you, in fact, do not tell the whole story.

The purpose under Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who started off with African-American history week, then Gerald Ford creating African history month, and even to the dedication of the museum that was allocated the land by George W. Bush. How do we tell the whole story so we can show the progress that we have made and the resilience in America?

Dr. BLIGHT. Well, Congressman, it is not simple. Last fall, with two colleagues at Yale, Beverly Gage and Joanne Freeman, I taught a course called "America at 250, a History." No one teaches this way anymore. No one tries to do the whole story in one course. We had so many people attending the course we had to hold it in the chapel of the university, and it was done under a rubric where Yale allows the community to come. We had 400 local citizens attending every day. We had 400 undergraduates attending every day. We taught the whole national story, the big picture in one course. It was a little crazy, but we pulled it off, and we found there was a deep yearning to know the whole story but through all of the new histories as best we could that we have come to know and understand. It goes without saying that if you erase your past, you will pay for it.

Mr. JACKSON. Well, I would like to say very much thank you and I would like to share this for the record. I was at the dedication of the museum ten years ago, and George W. Bush, I have to say thank you to him. He dedicated this land. He wanted it prominent,

and he also said in his remarks, and I would recommend other people read his remarks, they were about 5 minutes, and this is just one brief section. He says, "this museum is an important addition to our country for many reasons. Here are three. First, it shows our commitment to truth. A Nation—a great Nation does not hide its history. It faces its flaws and corrects them. This museum tells the truth that a country founded on the promise of liberty held millions in chains at the price of our union was America's original sin." I went and I thanked Mr. Bush for, A, having made this a very prominent part of the mall and for having brought truth to the American narrative.

Dr. Blight, I will leave you with any last words?

Dr. BLIGHT. Well, I would only add to that that no less than Lonnie Bunch, himself, thanks President George W. Bush every chance he gets for the support for that museum.

Mr. JACKSON. Thank you, Dr. Blight.

My dear friend, Dr. Tim Burchett, thank you so much for your generosity in letting me share a few minutes. Do not gavel me out. I would appreciate it so much. Thank you, Dr. Timothy Burchett.

Mr. BURCHETT. You are welcome, Chairman Jackson.

In closing, I want to thank our witnesses once again for their testimony. With that and without objection, all Members have five legislative days within which to submit materials and additional written questions for the witnesses which will be forwarded to the witnesses. If there is no further business, without objection, this Subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:16 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

