



Primer: The National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities Are Furthering the Woke

Agenda

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Background

The National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities is the primary source of federal support and funding for the arts and humanities in the United States.¹ It was established to promote cultural, artistic, and intellectual endeavors nationwide. The foundation was meant to bring American citizens together to celebrate their shared history and culture. Established in 1965, the foundation currently consists of three agencies: the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).² This primer will focus on the latter two components of the foundation.

NEA grants support nonprofit organizations, public arts agencies, and individual writers.³ Since 1965, NEA has awarded more than \$5 billion in funding across the U.S.⁴ The NEH provides grants for education, research, preservation, and public programs; the creation of regional humanities centers; and the development of humanities programs under the jurisdiction of the state humanities councils.⁵ NEH grants are typically sent to museums, archives, libraries, colleges, universities, public television and radio, and individual scholars.⁶ Since 1965, NEH has awarded almost 70,000 grants worth more than \$6.4 billion across the U.S.⁷

Woke and Weaponized

What started out as an initiative to support the cultural enrichment of American citizens has developed into a woke and weaponized scheme to promote identity politics and social engineering. The NEA and the NEH have been responsible for utilizing American taxpayer dollars for woke, wasteful, and bizarre initiatives. The Trump Administration's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has been evaluating the endowments' funding and priorities. On

¹ Loane (November 6, 2024). "National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities: FY2024 Appropriations," *Congressional Research Service*.

<https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48255#:~:text=The%20FY2024%20appropriations%20act%20included,%20480.3%20million%20in%20FY2023%20appropriations.>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

April 1, 2025, the New York Times reported⁸ that the “U.S. DOGE Service, or the Department of Government Efficiency, told NEH managers it was looking to cut as much as 70 to 80 percent of the agency’s roughly 180-person staff.” President Trump has aggressively sought to restore art and humanities programs by purging them of woke and anti-American ideologies. Congress should consider codifying DOGE’s efforts with the NEH and expand them to include the NEA.

NEA — The Standard Operating Procedure of DEI

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has long since abandoned its core mission of supporting authentic American art and cultural promotion. Instead, it has been repurposed as a taxpayer slush fund for advancing the radical left’s ideological agenda to undermine the American founding and cultural heritage. In 2021, under the banner of “diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility” (DEIA), the NEA proudly declared it would “center equity and justice” in all aspects of its operations. Explicitly tying its mission to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, geography, and even poverty is the kind of bureaucratic social engineering that is meant to divide and eventually destroy the nation.⁹ That same year, the NEA rolled out a new strategic plan that openly institutionalized DEIA as the agency’s operating system. Rather than supporting artistic excellence or celebrating our nation’s heritage, the NEA now evaluates art based on ideological conformity. The plan outlines how the agency will track the demographic details of applicants and grantees, including their race and other intersectional identity markers. The end result is a kind of woke quota system rather than merit. Following the money makes this undeniable. In 2023, the NEA launched *ArtsHERE*, a new grant program designed to reward organizations that demonstrate “commitment to equity.” The result? Over \$12 million in taxpayer funds were funneled to 112 left-aligned nonprofit organizations, ranging from \$65,000 to \$130,000, and requiring no matching contributions.¹⁰ These grants do not promote art; they promote woke ideology.¹¹ For example:

- \$130,000 was provided for research to “amplify marginalized voices.”¹²
- \$65,000 was provided for DEIA training in Omaha, Nebraska.¹³

⁸ Kingsberry and Branigin (April 8, 2025). “At least 1,200 grants canceled as NEH cuts target humanities across U.S.,” *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/2025/04/07/neh-grants-canceled-cuts/>

⁹ American Artscape (2021). “Changing the Narrative: Equity and Access in the Arts for Black Communities,” *National Endowment for the Arts*.

<https://www.arts.gov/stories/magazine/2021/1/changing-narrative-equity-and-access-arts-black-communities>

¹⁰ (September 24, 2024). “National Endowment for the Arts announces More than \$12 Million in Grants to Expand Access to Arts Participation in Communities Nationwide,” *National Endowment for the Arts*.

<https://www.arts.gov/ArtsHereGrantAnnouncementSept2024#:~:text=Washington%2C%20DC%20%E2%80%94%20The%20National%20Endowment,access%20to%20arts%20participation%20across>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² (September 2024). “Recommended Grantee Announcement,” *National Endowment for the Arts*.

<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/2024-ArtsHERE-grantees-by-state.pdf>

¹³ Ibid.

- \$65,000 was provided to help empower majority Black and Brown street/club dance artists.¹⁴
- \$117,000 was provided to help serve more transgender and nonbinary youth.
- 130,000 was provided to expand an adult dance training facility in a racially diverse community.

This type of left-wing bias did not originate with the Biden administration or even under Barack Obama. The NEA has a long history of funding controversial and leftist propaganda. As early as the 1990s, it handed \$31,500 to the radical feminist group “Women Make Movies,” which used the funds to create a graphic film promoting lesbian sexual content.¹⁵ Such cultural degradation has been the norm, not the exception. Also, not all the NEA’s grants are culturally degenerate; some are just frivolous. For example, in 2015, the NEA granted \$95,000 for a Shakespeare play with no words.¹⁶ On an even more absurd level, in 2013, Spelman College, a historically black women’s college in Atlanta, won a \$100,000 grant from the NEA to create a video game featuring a black female superhero.¹⁷ The storyline for the game centers on the female protagonist battling the perceived evils of climate change and the patriarchy.¹⁸

It is long past time to return to a government that serves the people, not one that forces them to subsidize the cultural agenda of the progressive elite. The NEA must be reined in, refocused, or defunded entirely.

NEH — Another Woke Propaganda Machine

The NEH’s grant awards and offers of January 2025¹⁹ demonstrate how DEI paradigms and anti-American ideologies have taken complete control over NEH support. Here are some key examples of grant awards and offers that fund initiatives associated with extreme left-wing priorities:

- \$60,000 for a sociological study that explores the race, class, and gender dynamics within an African American hair braiding salon in Las Vegas.²⁰

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Burtka (November 28, 2024). “Trump Can Restore Honor to American Art,” *The Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/trump-can-restore-honor-to-american-art-architecture-humanities-df0a3d8e>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Soave (January 10, 2013). “Tax-funded \$100,000 video game tackles gender, environmental issues,” *The Daily Caller*. <https://dailycaller.com/2013/01/10/tax-funded-100000-video-game-tackles-gender-environmental-issues/>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ (January 2025). “National Endowment for the Humanities Grant Awards and Offers, January 2025,” *National Endowment for the Humanities*.

https://www.neh.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/NEH%20grant%20awards%20January%202025_0.pdf

²⁰ Ibid.

- \$60,000 for research and writing on LGBTQ+ cartoonists in the 1980s and 1990s.²¹
- \$45,000 for research and writing of a book on colonial violence.²²
- \$25,000 for an exhibition on LGBTQ+ history in rural Illinois.²³
- \$25,000 for video interviews with LGBTQ+ elders.²⁴
- \$60,000 for research on the experiences and perspectives of environmentalists of color who attempted to build a racially diverse environmental movement.²⁵
- \$60,000 for research on how race and blackness defined intra-European national identities.²⁶
- \$40,000 for a book on the climate inequalities among New York City residents.²⁷
- \$60,000 for a biography on Latina feminist writers.²⁸
- \$45,000 for research on repression of Afro-Brazilian medicinal practices from the 1880s to the 1940s.²⁹

It is apparent that NEH grants disproportionately favor initiatives that align with left-wing ideology. As far back as 2019, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded funding to groups that have repeatedly attacked President Trump and politicized American history. For example, as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities during President Trump's first term, Jon Peede awarded more than \$208,000 to the American Historical Association. This group repeatedly attacked President Trump, including by publishing a scathing condemnation of his 2021 "1776 Report" on the American founding.³⁰ Furthermore, the association has asserted that "the failure to teach LGBTQ+ history distorts history and harms LGBTQ+ students." The

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Burtka (November 28, 2024). "Trump Can Restore Honor to American Art," *The Wall Street Journal*.
<https://www.wsj.com/opinion/trump-can-restore-honor-to-american-art-architecture-humanities-df0a3d8e>

association has provided vocal support for the teaching of LGBTQ+ propaganda, among other left-wing ideologies.³¹

Conclusion

The NEA and the NEH, as demonstrated above, pollute the promotion of the arts and humanities by prioritizing left-wing, ideologically charged projects, such as those focused on systemic racism and diversity, equity, and inclusion, over projects that promote fruitful artistic or scholarly pursuits. Progressive ideology is the foundation for nearly every action taken by the NEA and the NEH. This has been rooted in grant-making and the operational structure of both agencies. Congress should consider defunding the entire scheme and support the Trump administration in its efforts to purge destructive left-wing ideology from federal support for the arts and humanities.

³¹ (May 26, 2021). “AHA Statement on LGBTQ+ History Curriculum,” *the American Historical Association*. <https://www.historians.org/news/aha-statement-on-lgbtq-history-curriculum/>