PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON THE ARTS AND AND THE HUMANITIES RESIGNS

Friday, August 18, 2017

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By Members of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH)

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Dear Mr. President:

Reproach and censure in the strongest possible terms are necessary following your support of the hate groups and terrorists who killed and injured fellow Americans in Charlottesville. The false equivalencies you push cannot stand. The Administration's refusal to quickly andunequivocally condemn the cancer of hatred only further emboldens those who wish America ill. We cannot sit idly by, the way that your West Wing advisors have, without speaking out against your words and actions. We are members of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH). The Committee was created in 1982 under President Reagan to advise the White House on cultural issues. We were hopeful thatcontinuing to serve in the PCAH would allow us to focus on the important work thecommittee does with your federal partners and the private sector to address, initiate, andsupport key policies and programs in the arts and humanities for all Americans. Effective immediately, please accept our resignation from the President's Committee on the Arts andthe Humanities.

Elevating any group that threatens and discriminates on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity,disability, orientation, background, or identity is un-American. We have fought slavery, segregation, and internment. We must learn from our rich and often painful history. The unified fabric of America is made by patriotic individuals from backgrounds as vast as thenation is strong. In our service to the American people, we have experienced this first-hand as we traveled and built the Turnaround Arts education program, now in many urban andrural schools across the country from Florida to Wisconsin.

Speaking truth to power is never easy, Mr. President. But it is our role as commissioners on the PCAH to do so. Art is about inclusion. The Humanities include a vibrant free press. You have attacked both. You released a budget which eliminates arts and culture agencies. You have threatened nuclear war while gutting diplomacy funding. The Administration pulled outof the Paris agreement, filed an amicus brief undermining the Civil Rights Act, and attacked our brave trans service members. You have subverted equal protections, and are committedto banning Muslims and refugee women & children from our great country. This does notunify the nation we all love. We know the importance of open and free dialogue through our work in the cultural diplomacy realm, most recently with the first-ever US Government artsand culture delegation to Cuba, a country without the same First Amendment protections we enjoy here. Your words and actions push us all further away from the freedoms we areguaranteed.

Ignoring your hateful rhetoric would have made us complicit in your words and actions. We took a patriotic oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against allenemies, foreign and domestic.

Supremacy, discrimination, and vitriol are not American values. Your values are not American values. We must be better than this. We are better than this. If this is not clear toyou, then we call on you to resign your office, too.

Thank you,

Paula Boggs
Chuck Close
Richard Cohen
Fred Goldring
Howard L. Gottlieb
Vicki Kennedy
Jhumpa Lahiri
Anne Luzzatto
Thom Mayne
Kalpen Modi (Kal Penn)
Eric Ortner
Ken Solomon
Caroline Taylor
Jill Cooper Udall
Andrew Weinstein
John Lloyd Young