

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
February 5-6, 2025  
Virtual**

**Title: Response to Archivist of the United States**

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**Executive Summary/Overview (up to 300 words)**

Discussion of the [Open Letter to the Society of American Archivists From Dr. Shogun](#) distributed to the membership of SAA on December 17, 2024

**Contextual Information (up to 500 words)**

At its most recent meeting, the Diversity Committee discussed the [Open Letter to the Society of American Archivists From Dr. Shogun](#) distributed to the membership on December 17, 2024 in response to the October 29, 2024 *Wall Street Journal* article titled "[America's Top Archivist Puts a Rosy Spin on U.S. History](#)." The Committee feels strongly that the open letter, authored in response to SAA Council's request for Dr. Shogun to address concerns surfaced in the article, did not sufficiently do so. She did not actually address any of the issues raised within the article and certainly did not assuage the concerns of the archival community about the sanitizing of our nation's complex history. As other groups, including the [Congressional Black Caucus](#), the [Japanese American Citizens League](#) and the [Native American Collections Roundtable of Northwest Archivists](#), have issued statements voicing their concern about the concerns raised in the article, the Diversity Committee would like Council to consider issuing a similar statement. Additionally, the Diversity Committee would like SAA to respond to Dr. Shogun's open letter to let her know that the organization does not feel she sufficiently addressed our concerns and to request she make herself available to answer questions directly to our membership in a public forum.

**Alignment with Strategic Priorities**

The actions described in the *Wall Street Journal* article amount to an active attempt to effectively whitewash the historical record through the removal of references to the displacement and dispossession of Native Americans, the illegal incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, and the removal of photographs of Martin Luther King Jr. and Dolores Huerta. SAA has identified as a Strategic Goal the need to "provide leadership in

ensuring the completeness, diversity and accessibility of the historical record” (Strategic Goal 1.3) and must challenge attempts to chill such efforts such as those reported in the article.

## **Fiscal Impact**

None

## **Potential Benefits**

An opportunity to publicly support one of the organization's stated Strategic Goals as noted above.

Members will see their professional organization standing up for their professional autonomy and the significance and impact of their work.

The opportunity to enter into a productive dialog with the Archivist of the United States to better understand the larger picture.

## **Potential Drawbacks**

The Archivist of the United States may decline the opportunity to engage with our membership or simply ignore SAA's request.

## **Recommendation (Action Items only)**

Recommendations from appointed groups, staff, and others should be written in such a way that the SAA Council can easily re-word them to form a Council motion.

The Diversity Committee would like Council to consider issuing a statement voicing the organization's concern about the issues raised in the *WSJ* article.

The Diversity Committee would like SAA to respond to Dr. Shogun's open letter to let her know that the organization does not feel she sufficiently addressed the concerns of the archival community and to request her to make herself available to answer questions directly of our membership in a public forum.