



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

THE CHAIRMAN

July 19, 2016

To: State and Territorial Humanities Councils

From: William D. Adams

Re: New Funding Opportunity—Humanities and the Legacy of Race and Ethnicity in the United States

In the wake of recent events in Dallas, Baton Rouge, and Minneapolis, people across the country are calling for more vigorous and consequential public discussion of the persistent social, economic, cultural, and racial issues that divide our communities. The National Endowment for the Humanities wishes to add its own energy and resources to this call, and to enlist the help and talents of the state and territorial humanities councils in stimulating meaningful community conversations.

It's clear to us at NEH that the humanities have much to offer the country in this time of urgent need. The humanities have the capacity to connect the present to the past and to the ways in which our history has shaped our understandings, predilections, and divisions; the humanities offer multiple avenues for the clarification and articulation of both our shared and conflicting values and principles; and the humanities demonstrate the power of stories to help us know ourselves in deeper ways and to reimagine our relationships.

Over the last 18 months, NEH has dedicated more than \$3.5 million to a special grant program titled "Humanities in the Public Square." The program was designed to bring people together in thoughtful dialogue about the critical questions facing them as citizens and neighbors. In supporting these initiatives, we've sought to demonstrate the potential of the humanities to foster greater understanding and to promote the common good.

At this time of heightened concern, we invite the state humanities councils to build upon these efforts in ways suited to the communities they serve. The humanities councils have been and continue to be highly responsive to the particular concerns of local communities, as exemplified by programs like "Black and Blue: A Conversation on Policing and Race" in Seattle, Washington; "Perspectives on Islam with Samir Bitar" from Humanities Montana; "Voces Americanas: Latino Literature in the United States" from Humanities Texas; "White Frame/Black Frame: The Hidden Roots of Racial Realities" in Milwaukee; and "The Fourteenth Amendment: A Living Document" in Portland, Maine.

In recognition of their capacity to engage their local communities in productive ways, NEH will provide state councils with up to \$15,000 in support of community dialogues, through a newly created program called "Humanities and the Legacy of Race and Ethnicity in the United States". Given the nature of recent events, we are particularly interested in community dialogues that focus on race relations and the relationship between communities and law enforcement authorities. As with past initiatives, we believe that these conversations can and should be informed by humanities materials and scholarship. We also remind the councils that, in keeping with NEH's general grant guidelines, the planning and implementation of these conversations should not engage in partisan positions nor seek to advance a particular political agenda.