

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

AMERICAN HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION, *et al.*,

Plaintiffs,

v.

DONALD TRUMP, in his official capacity
as President of the United States and in his
personal capacity, *et al.*,

Defendants.

Case No. 25-cv-03657

DECLARATION OF NATALIA MEHLMAN PETRZELA

1. I, Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, am a Professor of History at The New School.
2. I have been a member of the American Historical Association (AHA) since 2009, and currently serve on its Academic Freedom Committee.
3. I am a historian of political culture in the United States. I am the author of two books, *Classroom Wars: Language, Sex, and the Making of Modern Political Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2015) and *Fit Nation: The Gains and Pains of America's Exercise Obsession* (University of Chicago Press, 2023) and I am at work on two more, one about the educational culture wars and a second on the history of eastern Long Island. I have recently been named both a Carnegie Fellow and a National Endowment for the Humanities Public Scholar, and I contribute frequently to a broad range of media outlets, both for scholarly and popular audiences. I am not a presidential historian, but I still rely on presidential records – a reality that underscores how crucial these resources are to scholars across the discipline of history (and surely, others). In *Classroom Wars*, and in my ongoing work about the culture

wars that convulse both K-12 and university education, for example, I examine many presidential statements and policies that have shaped educational policy, practice, and discourse in the United States. The ability to access and research the kinds of documents now preserved under the Presidential Records Act is vital to this research—including the development of presidential statements and correspondence the President receives.

4. In this vein of research, I just contributed the chapter on education to a new volume of essays by historians offering a first assessment of Joseph Biden's administration (*The Presidency of Joseph R. Biden: A First Historical Assessment*, Princeton University Press, 2026). As records from the Biden presidency become available, I anticipate further research in this area.

5. In *Fit Nation*, the records of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations were especially important, given these two presidents were architects of the presidential councils on fitness that transformed American approaches to exercise. Across both my work in the histories of education and fitness in this country, presidential records play an important role in capturing public opinion in the pre-digital era, given so many Americans, including children, wrote letters to the president. For those of us writing about the history of youth, these records are especially crucial, because evidence of young people's experience is particularly ephemeral.

6. I am currently at work on two books, one about the school culture wars since the 1830s until today, and a second on the history of eastern Long Island. Both of these involve documents that would fall under the purview of presidential records, particularly various multiple infrastructural policies and educational decisions and statements.

7. I hope this statement shows that even I, who am not a presidential historian, consider the availability of presidential records vital to my work. The damage that would be done to historians who specifically work on the presidency is incalculable. Exploring and analyzing the president's relationship to any number of issues, through the archival record, is often one of the most important ways that historians begin to understand the national and federal dimensions of a wide range of concerns. Losing access to these sources would be a major blow to the historical profession, and to our collective understanding of the United States, past and present.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on April 11, 2026 in New York City.

DocuSigned by:
Natalia Mehlman Petrzela
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Natalia Mehlman Petrzela
Professor of History, The New School