

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED
SOCIETIES, et al.,

Plaintiffs,
v.

MICHAEL MCDONALD, in his official
capacity as Acting Chairman of the National
Endowment for the Humanities, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:25-cv-03657

DECLARATION OF RACHEL KUO

I, Rachel Kuo, declare as follows:

1. I am a resident of the State of Wisconsin. I am over the age of 18 and have personal knowledge of all the facts stated herein, except to those matters stated upon information and belief; as to those matters, I believe them to be true. If called as a witness, I could and would testify competently to the matters set forth below.

2. I am currently employed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) as Assistant Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and Asian American Studies. I joined UW-Madison in Fall 2024 and had prior positions at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as Assistant Professor of Media and Cinema Studies, postdoctoral research fellow at the University of North Carolina Chapel-Hill and doctoral student at New York University. I have also worked as a communication and programming specialist at UW-Madison in the Multicultural Student Center and New York University at the Center for Multicultural Education and Programs.

3. UW-Madison is both an associate member and a research university consortium member of the American Council of Learned Societies. It has been an associate member since 1992, with its current associate membership running through Fall 2025, and it has been a research university consortium member since assessment year 2019-2020, with its current research consortium membership running through assessment year 2030-2031. UW-Madison is also a member of the American Historical Association.

4. In 2022, NEH invited applications for the Dangers and Opportunities of Technology: Perspectives of the Humanities program. On February 2, 2023, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), where I was then employed, submitted the proposal to NEH, entitled Transnational Disinformation Networks and Asian Diasporic, proposing to bring together archival research and community oral histories to examine the relationship between memory and media and information practices, political ideology, and participation in democratic processes across Asian and Asian American diasporas. This research is a collaboration that includes me, project co-Directors, and the Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (AFIRE) Chicago and Filipino Young Leaders Program (FYLPRO). The goal is to foster shared learning about the histories and contexts of different Asian diaspora populations. NEH issued the award to UIUC on December 28, 2023. With award funds, we piloted community storytelling workshops and trained twelve community volunteers to collect intergenerational and multilingual oral histories.

5. I then moved into my current position at UW-Madison. UIUC relinquished the grant and UW-Madison was willing to accept the administration of the grant. On August 5, 2024, UW-Madsion submitted a revised work and budget proposal to NEH.

6. On January 15, 2025 NEH issued an Official Notice of Action to UW-Madison (Federal Award ID Number DOC-304839-25), setting forth the terms and conditions of the grant award. The performance period of the award was for 1 year and 4 months, from 2/1/2025 through 5/31/2026. The total expected funding was \$149,999.

7. With the awarded NEH funds, UW-Madison has worked with community partners to plan for the implementation of grant activities. We began our oral history cohort program and implemented an in-person storytelling workshop in March. This grant works with two community partner organizations (including four staff members in addition to the two co-directors) that have already committed over a hundred hours of time in intellectually shaping the project, submitting the grant, and developing and implementing a work plan.

8. On April 2, 2025, the UW-Madison Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP) office received an email from Grant_Notifications@NEHemail.onmicrosoft.com informing UW-Madison the grant funding my project was terminated.

9. The notification was addressed to the grant administrator and included the Federal Award ID Number, although it was erroneously referenced as grant application number. It appeared to be a form letter.

10. The notifications included the following:

Your grant no longer effectuates the agency's needs and priorities and conditions of the Grant Agreement and is subject to termination due to several reasonable causes, as outlined in *2CFR§200.340*. NEH has reasonable cause to terminate your grant in light of the fact that the NEH is repurposing its funding allocations in a new direction in furtherance of the President's agenda. The President's February 19, 2025 executive order mandates that the NEH eliminate all non-statutorily required activities and functions. *See Commencing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy*, E.O. 14217 (Feb. 19, 2025). Your grant's immediate termination is necessary to safeguard the interests of the federal government, including its fiscal priorities. The termination of your grant represents an urgent priority for the administration, and due to exceptional circumstances, adherence to the traditional

notification process is not possible. Therefore, the NEH hereby terminates your grant in its entirety effective April 2, 2025.

11. UW-Madison was approximately 2 months into the period of performance when the grant was terminated. The remaining balance of funds committed by NEH to UW-Madison, minus expenses incurred through the date of award termination, is approximately \$130,278.84. With the funding not yet received, we are wasting two years of effort, planning, and financial expenditures already committed to this work. With the remaining funds, UW-Madison would have been able to run at least four more in-person workshops, multiple virtual workshops, at least two more oral history cohorts, and also opportunities to bridge research findings with community presentations.

12. The termination of this grant has had very harmful consequences. This project, which relies on community partnerships to host storytelling workshops and participant oral histories, will not be able to continue at this time without this grant. While we can look for other funding sources, such application requires a considerable amount of time from partner organizations without any guarantee of success. Additionally, university administrative staff have also spent many hours supporting the paperwork processes to successfully implement the grant and I have also spent hundreds of hours in developing partnerships and collaborative research practices – these sunk costs are entirely wasted. In addition, I had expected to hire two graduate students to work on this grant and receive mentorship on this project and will no longer be able to do so. Those are meaningful lost opportunities for those students.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on May 9, 2025 in Madison, WI.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Rachel Kuo", written in dark ink on a light-colored rectangular background.

Rachel Kuo