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Arizona Humanities Halted Its Project Grants. Here's Why That Matters

BY LYNN TRIMBLE

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An Arizona Humanities project grant is helping to fund *The Scottsboro Boys* panel discussions this month.

Phoenix Theatre

The Arizona Humanities Council announced on Thursday, March 30, that it is suspending its project grants temporarily until further notice.

That's because most of Arizona Humanities' funding comes from the National Endowment for the Humanities (or NEH, for short).

Some of those funds are used for awarding grants to Arizona organizations for projects that support Arizona Humanities' goals. Past recipients have included museums, nonprofits doing cultural work, schools, libraries, and community groups. But they also go towards Arizona Humanities events around the state, and basics like staffing the organization.

Last fall, Arizona Humanities awarded 14 project grants. One supported **Beth Ames Swartz's recent "Repairing the World" exhibition**. Another is funding this month's panel discussions exploring race-related issues in the musical *The Scottsboro Boys*.

On March 7, Arizona Humanities announced seven new project grants, mostly to Tucson-based organizations – including Borderlands Theatre and the Jewish History Museum/Holocaust History Center.

But now it's holding off on issuing another call for grant proposals. Basically, Arizona Humanities just hit the pause button in terms of funding local creatives, until Congress approves NEH funding for the current fiscal year – or doesn't.



An Arizona Humanities project grant helped support the exhibition that included this work by Beth Ames Swartz.

Beth Ames Swartz



Jaclyn Roessel got Arizona Humanities funding for her poetry workshop and light rail performance.

Hannah Manuelito

This month, it's celebrating National Poetry Month with a strong lineup that includes Sacred Journeys: A Mobile Poetry Workshop with Jaclyn Roessel, which include Roessel performing on the Valley Metro light rail. Recently, **Roessel left the Heard Museum to focus on her Grownup Navajo project.**

So, what can NEH and Arizona Humanities supporters do to support the cause – beyond participating in various projects and events?

“Call and write your legislators,” Thomson says. Let them know that you care about the humanities, and that you want them to approve NEH funding for the current fiscal year, plus pass a 2018 budget that sustains the NEH.

Then, stay tuned.

If the NEH loses federal funding, Arizona Humanities and other affiliates will need to rely even more on donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations, Thomson says.

Arizona Humanities most certainly would need to scale back the scope and reach of its work, but it won't cease to exist.

“We aren't going anywhere,” Thomson says.