

Annelise Orleck

The responsibilities of the AHA have never been greater or more crucial. At a time when History is being weaponized and politicized, when elected officials and ideologically driven private citizens attempt to dictate and limit what we can research, what we can teach, include in libraries, and say on departmental and institutional websites, the AHA must continue to vigorously represent and protect the standards of the Historical profession. If elected, I will seek to maintain partnerships between professors, K-12 teachers, museum curators, public historians and archivists and solicit a range of ideas about how best to preserve the integrity of our profession in the face of these assaults. I will work with fellow officers, members and staff to maintain relationships with elected and appointed government officials. And I will look for ways that the AHA can support and protect those in our profession who are most vulnerable at this fraught time in our history.

We who research, write and teach History face an existential crisis. A capricious federal administration has frozen billions in funds vital to university research. Masked federal agents abduct, detain and try to deport our students. K-12 teachers, college and university professors, public historians, librarians, archivists and museum curators are less free every day to teach what our research tells us is true. Thousands of students, staff and faculty were violently arrested last year for peacefully protesting genocide and scholasticide in Gaza. These harsh realities moved a coalition of AHA affiliates to nominate a slate of candidates committed to addressing these crises. They asked if I would run for President-elect. After much thought, with humility and a searing sense of urgency, I agreed.

I did not know at that time who the other nominees were. I have great respect for Lonnie Bunch III and for George Sanchez. My decision to run is not so much an act of opposition as a promise. Whatever the election results, I will work to infuse the AHA with a fighting spirit and to engage and energize our members.

My approach to building community among historians will be informed by the life I've led – I was a high school History teacher for years before becoming a professor – and the movements I've written about. Immigrant labor organizers, welfare rights activists, domestic workers, farm workers, Walmart workers speak to me now as I try to understand and resist today's assaults on History. Their movements will continue to inspire and guide me if I am elected.

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