



Civil Rights Organizations Demand Texas State University Reissue Invitation to Black History Exhibition After Politically Motivated Cancellation

Nationally Acclaimed Black History Exhibition Canceled for the First Time in 30 Years

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SAN MARCOS, Texas – The American Civil Liberties Union of Texas and the Legal Defense Fund (LDF), alongside IDRA, today sent a [letter](#) urging Texas State University to reverse its unconstitutional cancellation of a nationally renowned Black history exhibition.

In October, a university official invited Dr. Khalid el-Hakim, founder and curator of the [Black History 101 Mobile Museum](#), to bring the traveling exhibition to campus in February 2026 for Black History Month. Two weeks later, after consulting with “supervisors and the leadership team,” the same campus official abruptly rescinded the invitation. In an email to Dr. el-Hakim, the university cited “[Senate Bill 17 \(88R\)](#), the climate of our State, and certain topics covered as part of the museum” as reasons for canceling the event.

In their letter to Texas State University, the civil rights organizations state that canceling the exhibition misapplies state law, violates the First Amendment, and constitutes viewpoint discrimination. The organizations note that federal free speech protections override state law and that S.B. 17 explicitly exempts guest speakers and short-term performers — making the law inapplicable to this event. They also warn that the cancellation reflects a broader pattern of Texas public institutions suppressing discussions of race and Black history.

“For 30 years, the Black History 101 Mobile Museum has traveled to more than 1,000 institutions without ever being silenced,” said **Dr. Khalid el-Hakim (he/him), founder and curator of the Black History 101 Mobile Museum**. “In today’s national climate of censorship, Texas State’s decision is not only alarming but part of a broader attempt to control which histories can be told. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us, ‘There comes a time when silence is betrayal,’ and students deserve better. I urge the university to stand firmly on the side of academic freedom.”

The Black History 101 Mobile Museum is a nationally recognized [traveling exhibition](#) that has brought more than 15,000 original artifacts to audiences in 43 states. From early freedom struggles to the rise of hip hop, its collection offers a rare, tangible record of Black history in the United States — featuring materials related to slavery, politics, Jim Crow, science, religion, education, music, sports, and civil rights.

“Black history is not — and should never be treated as — too controversial,” said **Charelle Lett (she/her), an attorney at the ACLU of Texas**.

“This cancellation flagrantly violates the First Amendment and misapplies state law. By unconstitutionally suppressing Black history and culture, Texas State University has turned its back on its own student body as a student-centered research institution. University officials must immediately reverse this decision and apologize to Dr. el-Hakim.”

“Texas State University’s decision to cancel the exhibition of Dr. Khalid el-Hakim's Black History 101 Mobile Museum is an unconstitutional violation of his speech, and it tramples on Texas State students’ right to access information and materials that deepen their knowledge and understanding of how race continues to shape our country,” said **Avatara Smith-Carrington (they/them), assistant counsel at LDF**. “Texas State’s decision to cancel an event that centers Black history and culture is part of a growing and troubling trend to censor and eliminate discussions on race across university campuses in the state. LDF joins the ACLU of Texas and other organizations in calling for an immediate reversal of this blatant act of censorship.”

Access a copy of the letter [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.