

To the State Preservation Board:

July 6, 2021

We at the Texas Institute of Letters—the Officers, Council Members, and ex-Presidents—stand with TIL Member Bryan Burrough, and co-authors Chris Tomlinson and Jason Stanford, of *Forget the Alamo: The Rise and Fall of an American Myth*, who decry the cancellation of their book event at the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin, Texas on July 1, 2021. Because of the direct intervention by Lt. Governor Dan Patrick of Texas, who sits on the board of the Bullock Museum along with Governor Greg Abbott, the event for *Forget the Alamo* was cancelled.¹



The TIL believes that authors with controversial messages should be heard and read. *Forget the Alamo* challenges what its authors label as the “Heroic Anglo Narrative” of the state-sponsored Texas history of 1836, when 200 White settlers (Texians) and Tejanos fought against thousands of Mexican soldiers led by Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna at a Spanish mission in San Antonio, Texas. Among the many points that upend the “Heroic Anglo Narrative” (popularized by Hollywood and Disney) are these: Mexico had nominally outlawed slavery, and the Texians were partly fighting to preserve slavery for their agribusinesses; Tejanos fought with Texians, but Tejanos were ignored and later betrayed by Texians; Davy Crockett surrendered and was probably executed; and Jim Bowie and William B. Travis were slave traders. According to the authors, other details and analysis by historians have long shown that the “Heroic Anglo Narrative” was mostly a propaganda effort by the State of Texas. For years, Texas children were taught a version of this narrative, which resulted in encouraging xenophobia and racism against Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Texas. Now the majority of public school children in Texas are Mexican-American, which authors Burrough, Tomlinson, and Stanford also point out.

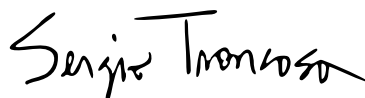
The question at the heart of this matter is this: Should elected politicians be cancelling discussion, debate, and historical analysis at any state institution (including a museum dedicated to history, or a state university, for example) simply because they don’t like the facts or analysis presented by *Forget the Alamo*, or any other book? This is what is most troubling about Patrick’s book event cancellation at the Bullock Museum: the pursuit of the truth and a free discussion about Texas history have been cancelled in order to preserve state propaganda. This is happening not in Russia, or the old U.S.S.R., or in China or Iran, but in the great state of Texas.

Texas has never been great because of its propaganda; our state has been great because of its people, *all* of its people. The understanding of Texas history has evolved in part because those who have often been left out of its history books are now telling their own stories. We should

¹ Dan Patrick on Twitter, July 2, 2021: “As a member of the Preservation Board, I told staff to cancel this event as soon as I found out about it.”

not be afraid to debate and face historical truths, to make a new peace with history as we understand it with every generation, and to strive for a community and citizenry that includes all the people and their voices. The Bullock Museum should live up to its mission to “engage the broadest possible audience to interpret the continually unfolding Story of Texas through meaningful educational experiences.”

Respect each other. Let’s work together. Read as if your life depended on it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sergio Troncoso". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sergio Troncoso
President
Texas Institute of Letters
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