

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

April 12, 2019

Mr. Harlan Crow
Crow Holdings
3819 Maple Avenue
Dallas, TX 75219

Dear Harlan,

Thank you for your letter and for hosting the members of our Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship at your home when we met in Dallas. We deeply appreciate your generosity in welcoming our members for a reception and dinner, and for taking the time during the reception to show people around your collection.

One of the central questions that has emerged in the Commission's work over the past year is how we are to come to terms with the persistent echoes of our nation's complicated past. Many of the current challenges facing our society that have driven our discussions grow out of the unhealed wounds of our history.

As you noted in your letter, your collection contains items that shed light on many of these difficult chapters of our past. Several members of our Commission were distressed to find artifacts from Nazi Germany in your collection, which they saw because of your willingness to open your collection to our group. When the Commission discussed the experience, the members who raised concerns did so primarily around the fact that they encountered these items without any context from you or others that would have helped explain how they relate to the other materials on display. We should have done more work in advance of the meeting to understand the scope of your collection.

The conversations occasioned by our experience at your home proved to be of real value to the Commission as we explore how to strengthen the practice of American democracy and the institutions that support it. Our endeavor includes considering how we can curate "shared narratives" connected to our history and how they might help cultivate unity. We would be pleased to keep you updated on our work in this regard, which may be of some use to you and the mission of the Crow Library.

Ultimately, our experience of your collection helped to underscore the essential work of the Commission to recognize the complicated past while working toward a more engaged citizenry in the future.

I have shared your letter with the conference co-chairs, Danielle Allen, Stephen Heintz, and Eric Liu and am copying them, along with Caroline Brettell on this response.

Thank you once again for your generous hospitality.

Sincerely,



David Oxtoby

CC Danielle Allen
Stephen Heintz
Eric Liu
Caroline Brettell