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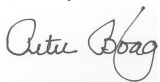
To Whom It May Concern:

I write in strong support of the "Idaho's LGBTQ Community" application that Professor Denise Bennett is submitting to you to match National Endowment for the Humanities grant she has already received. Prof. Bennett's project is an unprecedented project related to Idaho humanities – the collection of oral histories regarding the lives, experiences, and histories of LGBTQ people from across the state, one of the most rural states in the U.S.. The materials and end product from this project will be available to practically anyone through the University of Idaho Library's digital website. It will be a significant source on the history of Idaho, specifically in terms of its understudied history of LGBTQ people, but more generally on society, politics, culture, and law in the state for a wide variety of researchers, journalists, students, and anyone interested in such issues regardless of background and belief. The project's goals, while ambitious, are achievable. I was a resident of Idaho from 1989 to 2002 while a history professor at Idaho State University. What struck me during that time was that however large the state was, it was still a place where many people knew each other, in part because of its relatively small population, but also because a certain sense of old-fashioned neighborliness and connection existed that cut across all sorts of divisions. I strongly believe that not only will this project benefit from long-established networks in Idaho, but it will also reveal the importance of those networks in the creation of community across time and space, which is really what the title and intention of the application are all about.

I would also comment on this project's significance in terms of the information about the lives of the people it is collecting. Still very little is known about the LGBTQ history of Idaho. If pushed, a few more knowledgeable may have heard of the infamous 1950s scandal that rocked Boise and was told in John Gerassi's 1966 *Boys of Boise: Furor Vice and Folly in an American City*. Beyond that, little is known as little has been collected and preserved, though a few scholars and lay people have been researching the subject and Boise State University has recently been collecting in the area. Nevertheless, Idaho's LGBTQ history is rapidly being lost and is in need of collection and preservation. During the years that I lived in Idaho, I met many LGBTQ residents with harrowing stories of growing up in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. I came to know a number who had left the region during these years for more tolerable places to live, but some who, despite adversity, remained or returned because of love of place, family, and friends. Those years when I lived in Idaho were also transitional for LGBTQ people there and in the U.S. more generally. It was a period when the country became increasingly divided over issues about LGBTQ civil rights, marriage, punitive laws, and service in the military. These all mattered a great deal in Idaho and to its residents. The people I met, the experiences they had, the stories they told of suffering and resilience, joy and pain, success and failure are stories of a truly American experience. "Idaho's LGBTQ Community" project would collect these stories from every corner of a remarkably American place. The NEH has already recognized this. Won't you?

I am familiar with the work and credentials of Prof. Bennett and especially Dulce Kersting, Executive Director at the Latah County Historical Society, who is also involved with this project. Dulce completed her M.A. under my direction in American and Public History here at WSU. She has been one of the stars of our program, combining a lovely affability with a sharp mind and excellent writing skills. She produced a first-rate M.A. thesis that one of my colleagues described as a "model M.A. thesis." When I wrote in support of Dulce's application for a position at the Latah County Historical Society as an exhibit developer a few years back, I explained to the organization that I would imagine Dulce would one day become its Director, a predication that in fact came true. She is professional, dependable, energetic, and, as I mentioned before, extremely personable, making her a perfect representative for this initiative.

Sincerely,



Peter Boag, Professor and Columbia Chair