



**NORTH CAROLINA
MUSEUMS COUNCIL**

Building Better Museums Together

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June 15, 2022

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5/12/2022

Dear Gaston County Commissioners:

The North Carolina Museums Council (NCMC) supports the staff and programming of the Gaston County Museums of Art and History in their efforts of inclusivity and recognition of all members of their community.

Tragically, it has been decided by elected officials of Gaston County to censor the museum and demand the removal of a photograph by photojournalist Grant Baldwin, of a newly engaged couple kissing at the 2019 Charlotte Pride Parade. NCMC sees this decision as an intentional exclusion of a community representation within an exhibit highlighting the people of Gaston County and surrounding areas. The censorship and removal of this photograph appears to be a decision based on politics and fear.

NCMC strongly opposes any effort of censorship and political interference of cultural institutions in their efforts of enhancing diversity, equality, accessibility, and inclusion for all visitors and members of their community. Through intentional practices, North Carolina museums are places that promote understanding, appreciation, and respect for the values and efforts that embrace diversity and inclusivity in our institutions, organizations, and in the broader community. The decision by Gaston County officials was a pointed effort to minimize the voice and visibility of differing perspectives, ideas, and individuals from diverse backgrounds, while excluding the authentic participation of people from their community.

NCMC asks the Gaston County Manager and the Board of County Commissioners to reverse this decision of removing this work of art and historical record. Censorship and exclusion have no place in our museums. We also encourage them to examine how to create a diverse, inclusive, accessible, and equitable experience and space for everyone, not just for people you can identify with.



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To recognize and acknowledge a community of your neighbors is not the same as advocacy. NCMC supports the museum and staff in their ongoing efforts to highlight everyone who makes up our community. The museum staff are all dedicated professionals who need to have the freedom to curate exhibitions and programs that actively reflect their community.

NCMC asks for political interference to stop and return this photograph to this exhibition.

Signed,

Christian Edwards, President
NC Museums Council
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