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Christopher Finan
*Executive Director*

**NCAC PARTICIPATING**

**ORGANIZATIONS**

Actors’ Equity Association

American Association of

 School Administrators

American Association of

 University Professors

American Association of

 University Women

American Booksellers for Free Expression

American Civil Liberties Union

American Ethical Union

American Federation of Teachers

American Jewish Committee

American Library Association

American Literary Translators Association

American Orthopsychiatric Association

American Society of Journalists & Authors

Americans United for Separation of

 Church & State

Association of American Publishers

Authors Guild

Catholics for Choice

Children’s Literature Association

College Art Association

Comic Book Legal Defense Fund

The Creative Coalition

Directors Guild of America

The Dramatists Guild of America

Dramatists Legal Defense Fund

Educational Book & Media Association

First Amendment Lawyers Association

Free Speech Coalition

International Literacy Association

Lambda Legal

Modern Language Association

National Center for Science Education

National Communication Association

National Council for the Social Studies

National Council of the Churches

National Council of Jewish Women

National Council of Teachers of English

National Education Association

National Youth Rights Association

The Newspaper Guild/CWA

PEN American Center

People For the American Way

Planned Parenthood Federation

 of America

Project Censored

SAG-AFTRA

Sexuality Information & Education Council of the U.S.

Society of Children’s Book Writers

 & Illustrators

Student Press Law Center

Union for Reform Judaism

Union of Democratic Intellectuals

Unitarian Universalist Association

United Church of Christ

 Office of Communication

United Methodist Church,

 United Methodist Communications

Women’s American ORT

Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance

Writers Guild of America, East

Writers Guild of America, West

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To:

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……. , 2018

Dear ,

The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) and the undersigned organizations are extremely troubled by new policies and procedures aimed that block the release of artworks created by detainees held at Guantanamo Bay. In an abrupt change to practice, which enabled the public to see detainee artworks that had been reviewed and cleared for public release, these new policies amount to blanket censorship of materials that pose no threat to national security and possess clear historical and cultural value. We are especially alarmed by statements by government officials asserting that these materials are U.S. government property that can be confiscated, held indefinitely, and even destroyed.

This policy change was provoked by news of the art exhibition “Ode to the Sea” held at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, in which displays artworks—predominantly watercolors of seascapes—by current and former detainees. Since all art that leaves Guantanamo is subject to intense scrutiny by military officials, the new directive serves no legitimate national security purpose. The only purpose it appears to serve is to block the public’s engagement with detainees’ artistic expression, hence removing an opportunity for discussion, curiosity or any uncomfortable empathy their artworks may inspire.

This baseless directive suppresses documents of historical importance, violating the American public’s right to have access to the full realities of their own government’s policies, as well as the human rights of the detainees under international norms. It uses art as a political football in an effort to prevent these works—and a deeper understanding of those who created them—from informing public discussion of the policies the US government makes in its citizens’ names.

NCAC and the undersigned vigorously assert the American public’s right to access to these artworks, to participate in a national conversation about the US government’s policies in Guantanamo so as to fully examine their government’s policies and their effects. We condemn this attempt to obstruct public discourse essential to a democratic and open society.

Sincerely,



Joy Garnett

Arts Advocacy Program Associate

National Coalition Against Censorship

Cc: