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Speaker 1 ([00:01](#)):

In our highly charged times, many libraries nationwide are facing pressure about how they run and what's on their shelves. That includes the Library of Congress whose longtime leader, Dr. Carla Hayden was fired by President Trump last month. She speaks with our Robert Costa.

Speaker 2 ([00:22](#)):

It begins on Thursday, May 8th, 2025, Carla,

Speaker 3 ([00:28](#)):

And that's what was so confusing because as many of us have experienced, we get fake emails or people are calling you and different things like that. Since I appeared before you last summer, the library has advanced key initiatives of importance to

Speaker 2 ([00:46](#)):

Last month Congress. Carla Hayden was nearing the end of her 10 year term as Librarian of Congress appointed by President Barack Obama. Hayden was the 14th Librarian of Congress since 1802. She was a history maker, so help me, God, the first woman and first black person to hold the job. Thank you. Then on May 8th, Hayden received an email on behalf of President Donald J. Trump. Her position was terminated, effective immediately.

Speaker 3 ([01:20](#)):

I was never notified beforehand and after.

Speaker 2 ([01:25](#)):

No one's reached out to you from the

Speaker 3 ([01:26](#)):

White House. No one has talked to me directly at all from the White House.

Speaker 2 ([01:30](#)):

No one's given you a phone call from the administration.

Speaker 3 ([01:33](#)):

No. I've received no communication directly except for that one email, Carla. That's it. That's the only communication

Speaker 2 ([01:44](#)):

Official. It ends with one missive that's electronic. That's

Speaker 3 ([01:48](#)):

It. That was it.

Speaker 2 ([01:49](#)):

There have never been any issues between you and President Trump. There's never been a

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Speaker 3 ([01:52](#)):

Few. Oh no. Or any other administration. This wasn't personal in

Speaker 2 ([01:56](#)):

Any way.

Speaker 3 ([01:56](#)):

No, it couldn't. No. No. I don't think it was personal.

Speaker 2 ([01:59](#)):

Do you think it was about power?

Speaker 3 ([02:01](#)):

I don't know what it was about. Frankly.

Speaker 2 ([02:05](#)):

Hayden's firing is seen by many. As part of a broader story, president Trump has been pushing out leaders at cultural institutions and is targeting public media and universities for spending cuts. So I'm going to tell you

Speaker 4 ([02:20](#)):

A little bit about

Speaker 2 ([02:20](#)):

At Washington DC's, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library,

Speaker 4 ([02:24](#)):

Fight for libraries.

Speaker 2 ([02:25](#)):

Hayden's supporters gathered last weekend for a town hall meeting.

Speaker 5 ([02:30](#)):

The firing of our distinguished esteemed Librarian of Congress, Dr. Carla Hayden, make it clear to us that the freedom to read, the freedom to learn, the freedom to express ourselves is under attack. We are simply going to be bold.

Speaker 2 ([02:52](#)):

There are librarians, academics, activists, many people in America who are often seen as the quiet types. They're being loud.

Speaker 3 ([03:01](#)):

They're being loud, I think, and it's so humbling to have that outpouring of support, but what is really, I think part of this feeling is that it's part of a larger seeming effort to diminish opportunities for the general

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public to have free access to information and inspiration. We like to say as librarians, free people read freely, and so there's been an effort recently to quench that

Speaker 2 ([03:34](#)):

You'll hear White House Press Secretary Caroline Levitt has addressed Hayden's dismissal.

Speaker 4 ([03:40](#)):

We felt she did not fit the deans of the American people. There were quite concerning things that she had done at the Library of Congress in the pursuit of DEI and putting inappropriate books in the library for children.

Speaker 2 ([03:52](#)):

Did you feel the White House was smearing you in some way by saying you're putting inappropriate books out there for children?

Speaker 3 ([03:59](#)):

When I heard those comments, I was concerned that there might not have been as much of an awareness of what the Library of Congress does.

Speaker 2 ([04:11](#)):

The library's primary function is to fulfill research requests from members of Congress. It is not a lending library for the general public, the White House Press Secretary using the term DEI, diversity, equity inclusion. When you hear that as one of the most prominent black women in the United States, what do you hear?

Speaker 3 ([04:38](#)):

It's been puzzling in many ways to think about being inclusive as a negative.

Speaker 2 ([04:49](#)):

What's that all about?

Speaker 3 ([04:50](#)):

I don't know. Because when you think about diversity, you can put it to its lowest level. It's wonderful to have options when you go and get ice cream. This one likes strawberry. This one likes pistachio in it. And I would stay with the chocolate, I must say,

Speaker 2 ([05:18](#)):

While Hayden, who's 72 is no longer at the Library of Congress, this library has the feel of home. We met her at Baltimore's Enoch Pratt Free library, which she led for over two decades. You're still Dr. Hayden of Pratt Library that never leaves. Well, they call me Doc.

Speaker 3 ([05:42](#)):

That living room,

Speaker 2 ([05:43](#)):

Hayden's lifetime of reading was sparked by this library book, *Bright April*, the story of a black girl and her family.

Speaker 3 ([05:53](#)):

It was like, oh my gosh, this is me. You

Speaker 2 ([05:55](#)):

Saw yourself in the book.

Speaker 3 ([05:56](#)):

You see yourself, and that's why it's so important for young people to see themselves or to read about experiences that they're having because it validates you, because you're seeing it in a book. Somebody took the time, somebody cared enough. That's what librarians are fighting for, that people will be able to say, here's a book about our family. We have a family that other people might think's a little different. Or here's a book that talks about someone that's just like you. And because it's in a book, it's been published, it means that it's real and it's important

Speaker 2 ([06:37](#)):

For Carla Hayden. Libraries do more than convene people in buildings. They convene Americans around our founding values and she points to freedom to read the 1953 statement by the American Library Association as a guiding light. The freedom to read is essential to democracy. That's what the a statement says, and it adds, it's continuously under attack. Is it under

Speaker 3 ([07:09](#)):

Attack today? Democracy is under attack. Democracies are not to be taken for granted, and the institutions that support democracy should not be taken for granted. And so that's what the concern is about libraries and museums. It's part of a fabric. Think of it as an infrastructure that holds up. The libraries have been called one of the pillars of democracy, that you have these institutions in every community that allow anyone to come in and access knowledge.