

Erasing Black history: from Florida's classrooms to a cemetery in the Netherlands

written by Lev Koufax
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A photo of George H. Pruitt, a New Jersey-born telephone engineer who

died in 1945 and whose story was featured on a panel in the visitor center at the American Cemetery in Margraten, southern Netherlands.

Donald Trump's [war on Black history](#) continues as the Netherlands American Cemetery Visitor Center [quietly removed](#) a memorial to Black U.S. soldiers who died in World War II. The move was made without announcement and with little attention from big corporate media. Only CNN and Newsweek covered the story. The New York Times, Fox News, MSNBC, the Washington Post, Bloomberg, the LA Times, ABC, and CBS have all been silent.

More than 174 Black U.S. soldiers are buried or memorialized at the Netherlands American Cemetery in the town of Margraten. These soldiers gave their lives fighting Nazi Germany in the service of a country — the United States — that did not recognize their basic civil and human rights at home. When Black soldiers returned to the U.S., they were met with Jim Crow and apartheid conditions.

Before it was removed, the exhibit “African American Servicemembers in WWII: Fighting on Two Fronts” detailed how Black soldiers enlisted en masse despite brutal systemic racism at home. [Janice Wiggins](#), the widow of Black veteran Jefferson Wiggins, had to fight for the display in the first place. Her husband Jefferson — and hundreds of other Black soldiers in the U.S. Army — dug hundreds of the graves of U.S. soldiers killed in the Netherlands fighting the Nazis.

When the cemetery opened its visitor center in 2023, none of the information or exhibits mentioned Black soldiers' contributions. After a prolonged struggle, the exhibit on Black soldiers opened in 2024. Less than a year later, it is gone.

The dismantling of the display comes at a time when the Trump administration is escalating its mission to erase the achievements of the Black community and hide

the truth about racist oppression. On March 27 of this year, Donald Trump signed an executive order mandating an investigation into “un-American practices” at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. The removal of the Margraten exhibit occurred in this broader climate of repression.

Janice Wiggins was not informed. She learned from two friends in October 2025 that her husband’s legacy — and the legacy of so many Black soldiers — had been erased seven months earlier.

The [war on Black history](#) and the war on honest teaching about U.S. racism have been brewing for years. While the Trump administration has taken up the reins, this assault began in Florida’s neo-fascist laboratory. In 2023, [Gov. Ron DeSantis](#) signed a law blocking African American studies from the state’s course offerings and requiring schools to teach that the Black community “benefited” from slavery. DeSantis repeated this absurd claim many times. Such a policy is especially outrageous in a state with [Florida’s](#) brutal [history of racism and genocide](#).

The Republican Party is not alone in its disdain for Black history or its attempts to minimize U.S. racism. When then-President Joe Biden spoke at the 100-year commemoration of the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, he refused to support the community’s demand for [reparations](#).

Having found success in its Florida experiment, the neo-fascist movement around Trump has now taken the war on Black history nationwide. The working class and the progressive movement must unite to fight back. To erase Black history is to erase the real history of U.S. capitalism — and to erase the proof that the working class can struggle, resist, and win.

