

Portraits of dismissed scientists personalize US government cuts to science

A hurricane researcher. An invasive-insect entomologist. An e-cigarette toxicologist. A biomedical librarian. Those are some of the people included in Silenced Science Stories, a visual storytelling project dedicated to featuring the US scientists who have been laid off from government jobs or had their research grants halted by the Trump administration. Thousands of positions at federal science agencies have been eliminated; grants in health, environmental science, and other research areas have been canceled; and funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives has been rescinded.

Project cocreator Paige Brown Jarreau came up with the idea for Silenced Science Stories in February as she watched her National Institutes of Health colleagues receive dismissal notices. A science communications contractor with NIH's Center for Alzheimer's and Related Dementias, Jarreau began messaging terminated federal scientists on

LinkedIn about whether they wanted to share their experiences. Some scientists responded enthusiastically, she says, whereas others were hesitant to get involved because of ongoing court challenges to federal layoffs. Separately, Jarreau put out an open call for illustrators and received more than 50 volunteers, who were then paired with the participating scientists to create portraits highlighting the researchers' work. Chinmaya Sadangi, a digital marketer with a PhD in neuroscience, offered to colead the initiative with Jarreau and helped build the project's digital presence.

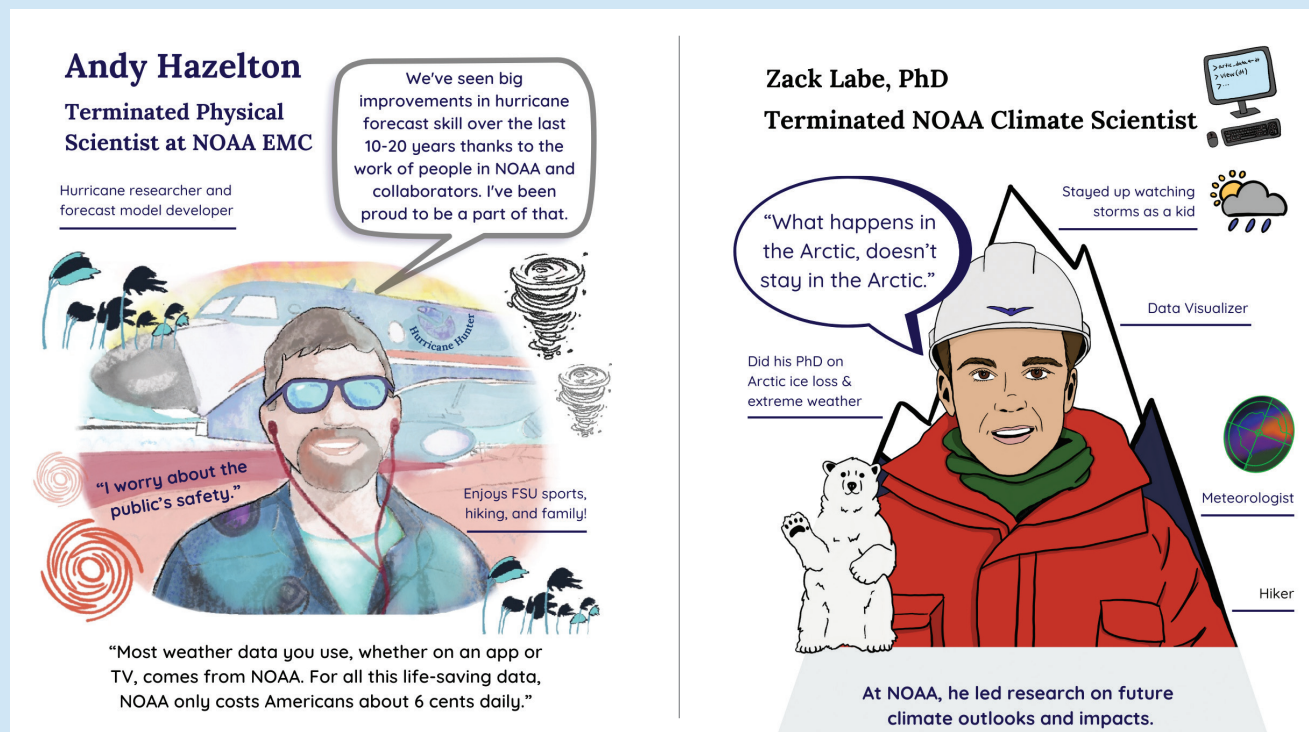
By mid-March, the first illustration was ready for LinkedIn and Instagram, and Silenced Science Stories was born. Within two weeks, the project posted about a dozen portraits on its website and social media; at press time, a dozen more were in production. Some of the featured scientists have told Jarreau that they have since been reinstated and put

on professional leave, and at least one has returned to work after a court order.

Efforts by scientific societies, lawmakers, historians, and others to collect stories of affected scientists are proliferating. The various initiatives post testimonials from scientists on social media, share them with lawmakers, or collate them into archives or maps. Scientists who are interested in being profiled by Silenced Science Stories can reach out on the project's website, <https://silencedsciencestories.com>.

Silenced Science Stories leverages the power of art to help people "talk about very serious and maybe even controversial things" with less defensiveness, says Jarreau. She thinks the portraits could help to promote the scientists while they search for new jobs and to publicize the types of research being shut down. "We're not making political statements in the portraits," Jarreau says. "We're showing [the scientists'] work and their lives."

Jenessa Duncombe



TWO FORMER NOAA SCIENTISTS are among those featured in Silenced Science Stories. The portrait of former Environmental Modeling Center (EMC) researcher Andy Hazelton (**left**) was illustrated by Laura Fitzgibbons, and the portrait of climate scientist Zack Labe (**right**) was illustrated by Melanie Ortiz-Alvarez de la Campa. (Images courtesy of Silenced Science Stories.)