

Amy Shira Teitel, Space Historian and Author, Weighs In on NASA's Moon Race: Safety Can't Be Sacrificed

Amy Shira Teitel highlights the politics, risks, and funding challenges of space exploration, stressing careful planning and astronaut safety.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, September 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Space historian and author [Amy Shira Teitel](#) weighs in on recent statements by acting NASA Administrator [Sean Duffy](#), who suggested that safety should not slow NASA's goal of landing on the Moon before China. Teitel emphasizes that while the U.S. has already achieved moon landings, a remarkable accomplishment, such missions are expensive, risky, and difficult to sustain over time.

To purchase copies of Teitel's groundbreaking books, click here: <https://bit.ly/4m9qVqQ>

"What immediately jumped out to me was how dangerous it feels for someone in that Administrator position to suggest that astronauts' safety can be compromised for the sake of beating China to the Moon.

The safety of the pilots and crews must always come first. That has to be non-negotiable. We look to space as an expression of 'American greatness.' Safety has to be part of that," Teitel says.

The competition with China in space is nothing new. Teitel explains that China, barred from collaborating with the United States, has been making steady advances in space for years and even has its own space station, Tiangong. No Chinese astronaut has ever visited the ISS.

Teitel points out that discussions of "beating China" in the current lunar program often overlook the realities of funding and long-term planning. NASA's Artemis program, which evolved from the Constellation initiative, has been over budget and behind schedule, reflecting decades of inconsistent investment.



Amy Shira Teitel

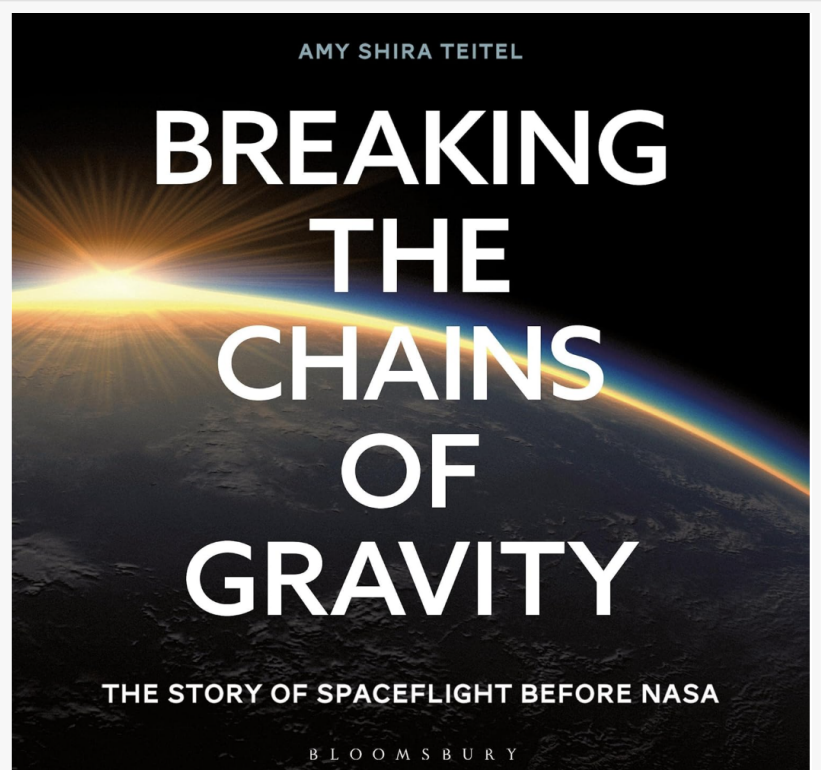
"The narrative of 'beating China' risks prioritizing prestige over people," Teitel continues. "Spaceflight is inherently dangerous. Three missions, Apollo 1, Challenger, and Columbia, ended in tragedy. Each tragedy reinforced that astronaut safety must be the highest priority. No political deadline or race should ever compromise that."

Teitel notes that the current rhetoric of "beating China" emphasizes how deeply political space exploration has always been. While space is often framed as a pursuit for all humankind, NASA was created in response to geopolitical competition rather than purely scientific goals. The Moon race of the 1960s aimed to outpace the Soviets, and today, similar language targets China. Teitel says such political posturing overlooks the realities of funding; going to the Moon is a costly endeavor. She says that NASA's funding has fallen dramatically, from 4.41 percent of the federal budget at Apollo's peak to just 0.3–0.4 percent today, highlighting that political will alone is not enough to sustain serious lunar exploration.

Click here to learn more about the deep interplay between space exploration and politics:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FcuV4hvGDM>

"Exploration should be about pushing humanity forward safely, not rushing to meet political or nationalistic goals," Teitel says. "We've been to the Moon nine times, and each mission succeeded because of careful planning, rigorous safety standards, and adequate funding. That balance is as critical now as it ever was."



About Amy Shira Teitel

Amy Shira Teitel is a historian, author of *Breaking the Chains of Gravity: The Story of Spaceflight before NASA* and *Fighting for Space: Two Pilots and Their Historic Battle for Female Spaceflight*. She is a science communicator known for bringing the human stories behind scientific and technological progress to life. She holds a BA in History of Science and Technology and Classics from the University of King's College/Dalhousie University, and an MA in Science and Technology Studies from York University.

Teitel's fascination with space began in second grade after learning about the Moon landings and evolved into a career focused on World War II and early Cold War science and technology, with a particular emphasis on the Space Race. After leaving academia, she launched [The Vintage Space](#), a popular blog and companion YouTube channel, where she explores the history and culture of spaceflight.

She frequently appears on Science and History Channel documentaries, and her work has been featured in publications including *The Guardian*, *Scientific American*, and *Discovery News*.

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