

# Seattle museum workers walk out over exhibition equating anti-Zionism and antisemitism

## Macklemore's "Hind's Hall" a "success on a number of Billboard charts"

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Workers at a Seattle museum walked out May 22 in protest against an exhibition that equated anti-Zionism and antisemitism and suggested that protesters on US campuses support Hamas. The workers' action, in response to one of the great lies of the Israeli and Biden administrations and their apologists, is a significant step.

Approximately half the staff at the Wing Luke Museum (WLM), which focuses on the culture, art and history of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, objected to language in the *Confronting Hate Together* exhibition.

One of the show's panels, from the Jewish Historical Society, for example, asserted that "Today, antisemitism is often disguised as anti-Zionism." The same panel also argued that on "university campuses, pro-Palestinian groups have voiced support for Hamas (which is classified as a terrorist organization by the U.S. government) and a Palestinian state stretching 'from the river to the sea,' a phrase defined by the erasure of Israel."

In a statement, the striking workers explain they walked out in response to the museum leadership's "inability to meet our demands regarding the platforming of Zionist ideology" in the current exhibition.

They demand the removal of "any language in any WLM publication and question any partnerships that attempt to frame Palestinian liberation and anti-Zionism as antisemitism," and insist on an acknowledgment by the museum of the "limited perspectives presented in this exhibition." Missing perspectives, they add "include those of Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslim communities who are also experiencing an increased amount of violence, scapegoating, and demonization as Zionist forces continue the genocide in Palestine."

On Instagram, the protesting workers, wlm4palestine, describe themselves as "a collective of Wing Luke Museum workers" who participated in the walkout May 22 and "have been withholding labor in protest of Zionist language in the new exhibit 'Confronting Hate Together.'"

They continue, "Our solidarity with Palestine should be reflected in our AA/NHPI [Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders] institutions. It sets a dangerous precedent of platforming colonial, white supremacist perspectives and goes against the Museum's mission as a community-based museum advancing racial and social equity."

Connecting the Gaza genocide to "white supremacy" is false. The underlying cause of the mass suffering of the Palestinian population is the imperialist world system, whose leading power, the US, along with its cat's paw, the Netanyahu regime, intends to put an end to popular resistance to its policies through the "final solution" of the Palestine question, ethnic cleansing or extermination.

Nevertheless, the workers were entirely correct to protest and walk out. The action demonstrates that the claims of various governments and the media about the "antisemitic" character of opposition to the Gaza horrors are wearing thin. Fewer and fewer honest people, including Jews, believe that a fascist government and its allies carrying out mass murder have the right to posture as defenders of the Jewish people against discrimination.

As one commentator on Instagram noted, in relation to the exhibition's assertion that "antisemitism is often disguised as anti-Zionism," the museum text "is factually incorrect and bolsters the skewed narrative that anyone who opposes Israeli policies and actions is against all Jews. It's increasingly clear that many Jews reject the notion that the

Israeli state represents or protects them.”

The Wing Luke Museum, established in 1967 and located in Seattle’s Chinatown-International District, is a Smithsonian Institution affiliate and the only pan-Asian Pacific American community-based museum in the US.

The *Seattle Times* reports that although “the conflict between museum staff and leadership reached an inflection point this week, staff began raising concerns about the museum leadership’s approach to discussing the war as early as Dec. 3.” According to the staff group’s Instagram, they were first made aware of the panel May 14.

The protesting museum workers wrote a letter May 19, signed by 26 staff members, in which they pointed out that in the face “of the ethnic cleansing of the people of Palestine, the [museum’s] Executive Leadership has chosen to amplify organizations that frame Palestinian liberation and critiques of Israel as ‘terrorism’ and antisemitism.” When the workers’ demands were ignored, they walked out three days later.

According to *Hyperallergic*, the strikers explain “the walkout was also a response to leadership inaction since workers first expressed concerns over a statement that called Israel’s attacks on Gaza ‘a conflict in the Middle East.’” Reportedly, the statement was signed by museum executives “and other Asian-American organizations belonging to the Asian Jewish Initiative, a coalition of Seattle Asian and Jewish groups co-chaired by 15 organizations including the pro-Israel Anti-Defamation League.”

In other words, the exhibition and its accompanying propaganda are part of an effort, taken behind the backs of museum employees and the general public in Seattle, where opposition to the Gaza crimes is very widespread, to legitimize the Zionist regime and its mass murders.

In another cultural note, hip hop entertainer Macklemore’s “Hind’s Hall” has become “a quick success on a number of *Billboard* charts,” according to *Forbes*.

As the WSWS noted, the song is named for Columbia University’s Hamilton Hall, which was occupied by anti-genocide demonstrators. The students renamed the hall after six-year-old Hind Rajab, a Palestinian child murdered by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the assault on Gaza.

In the song, Macklemore repeats several times, “Block the barricade until Palestine is free,” adding that “peace isn’t the problem, it’s what they’re protesting / it goes against what our government is funding.” The rapper, as we noted, “doesn’t flinch” from confronting one of the key elements of propaganda used to intimidate the protesters, rebutting the claim that these mass demonstrations are “antisemitic.” “I seen Jewish brothers and sisters out there ridin’/ in solidarity and screaming ‘free Palestine,’” he sings.

*Forbes* comments that “Hind’s Hall” “enjoyed a lofty

opening on several lists thanks to very healthy sales figures, which largely powered the standalone tune. Thanks to support from Macklemore’s fans—and likely also from those who endorse his position on the issues of the day—the track has become a notable and important win for the Grammy champion.”

The song is performing well in three of *Billboard*’s categories: Rap Digital Song Sales, the R&B/Hip-Hop Digital Song Sales and the all-genre Digital Song Sales.

As the media has been forced to admit, the song soared to over 100 million views on Instagram after its release, with hundreds of thousands sharing their support across various platforms.

Macklemore first performed the song at a concert in New Zealand earlier this month. *Rolling Stone Australia* described the scene:

At his first of two Wellington shows on Wednesday night, Macklemore performed “Hind’s Hall” live for the first time in front of a packed crowd inside TSB Arena.

“I stand here today and every day forward for the rest of my life in solidarity with the people of Palestine, with an open heart, in the belief that our collective liberation is at stake—that we all deserve freedom in this life of ours,” Macklemore said in a rousing speech almost halfway into his set.

“Yesterday [Tuesday], I put out a song called ‘Hind’s Hall’—can I play it for you guys?” he then asked, much to the crowd’s approval.

When he performed “Hind’s Hall”, a Palestinian flag flashed across the arena, while a video displayed student protestors in the US alongside footage of Gaza.



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