

András Schiff, Neil Young, U.K. Subs and more

Musicians, artists, scientists and others collide with Trump administration's police-state policies

Hong Jian, David Walsh
8 April 2025

The Trump administration has set about establishing a dictatorship in the US. This attempt includes attacks on immigrant students and workers in which masked ICE agents kidnap individuals off city streets and bundle them into unmarked vans to be disappeared into the for-profit immigration gulag that now exists in the US or perhaps to a concentration camp in El Salvador. In addition to those open and illegal acts of violence, the government is endeavoring to intimidate and terrorize opposition by excluding critics from even setting foot in the country.

Classical pianist András Schiff, folk-rock musician Neil Young, the British punk rock band UK Subs and romance novelist Ali Hazelwood are among the disparate individuals and groups affected.

Schiff, the Hungarian-born British pianist and conductor, issued a statement March 19 canceling all his engagements in the US for the 2025-2026 season. Schiff is known for his anti-fascist views, criticizing both the far-right Viktor Orbán regime in Hungary as well as reactionary Austrian governments. He gave up his Austrian citizenship to become a British citizen in the early 2000s. In 2012 he insisted he would never again set foot in his home country because of the Orbán government's racism, antisemitism and neo-fascism.

Schiff said in a recent statement he was "morally obligated to withdraw from all engagements" in the US. His statement continued,

Some people might say, "just shut up and play." I cannot, in good conscience, do that. We do not live in an ivory tower where the arts are untouched by society. Arts and politics, arts and society are inseparable. Therefore, as artists, we must react to the horrors and injustices of this world. Have we learned nothing from the course of history—as recently as Europe in the 1930s? Perhaps not.

Young, who originally hails from Canada, but is a dual citizen, commented on his website last week he fears he may be barred from returning to the US because of critical comments he has made against Trump in the past and those he may make on his upcoming European tour.

The 79-year-old musician indicated he was worried that, "When I play music in Europe, if I talk about Donald J. Trump, I may be one of

those returning to America who is barred or put in jail to sleep on a cement floor with an aluminum blanket." He noted that attacks on those criticizing the Trump administration are becoming commonplace and also pointed to the fact that other nations were issuing new advice about traveling to the US. In another post March 31, Young added bluntly, "If you don't agree with our government, you are barred from entering or sent to jail."

Young's earlier works include the powerful "Ohio" (in response to the gunning down of Kent State students by the Ohio National Guard in May 1970), "Southern Man," "Long Walk Home" and "Keep on Rocking in a Free World." He has been all over the map politically, including some very bad locations, such as the anti-Russian, pro-Ukrainian campaign. Schiff has climbed on that disreputable bandwagon too, but the two musicians are right to point to the authoritarian character of Trump's policies.

Last month, several members of the British band U.K. Subs (originally formed in 1976) were denied entry into the US after being detained for hours. According to the *Guardian*, bassist "Alvin Gibbs ... along with bandmates Marc Carrey and Stefan Häublein, were deported back to the UK following their detainment. Only vocalist Charlie Harper had been allowed entry. Harper ended up playing the band's scheduled show in Los Angeles with a group of stand-in musicians."

Gibbs, in a Facebook post, explained that US immigration officials in Los Angeles told him he had been "flagged,"

which required my being taken away for questioning. There were two issues: 1) they said I didn't have the right visa for entry and 2) there was another issue, which they wouldn't disclose, both of which prevented me from being allowed into America—I'm now wondering if my regular and less than flattering public pronouncements regarding their president and his administration were a factor.

He continued,

I was then taken by two police officers to another part of

LAX and escorted to a very cold holding pen where I discovered Stefan and Marc in situ along with some Colombian, Chinese and Mexican detainees. My luggage, phone and passport were all taken from me.

Eventually, Gibbs was “escorted onto [a return flight to Britain] by two police officers at 8pm the next day—at that point I’d been in the holding room for 25 hours without sleep and with only a pot noodle and a couple of cups of tea to sustain me.”

The K-pop band KARD recently canceled its US tour due to visa issues. The promoter explained online that

despite submitting all necessary documents in a timely manner, the working visas for both the artists and staff have yet to be issued. With little time remaining before the start of the tour, we deeply regret having to make this unfortunate announcement.

The CBC reported April 3 that there had been

multiple reports of people being detained at the border, denied entry or locked up for weeks at detention facilities while attempting to leave or enter the U.S. since Trump took office on Jan. 20. Several high-profile incidents of tourists and visa holders being stopped at U.S. border crossings, or arrested within the U.S., have made headlines in the last few weeks.

Astonishingly, for example, the folk music duo Cassie and Maggie MacDonald, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, were stopped in a rental car in Ohio and subsequently questioned by a state cop about whether they preferred Canada or the US. “I certainly didn’t feel like saying Canada would have been the answer they were looking for,” Maggie MacDonald told CBC Nova Scotia.

Award-winning Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha also announced he has canceled his upcoming 16 events in the US, scheduled over five weeks at several American universities, including Stanford, Columbia, New York University and Cornell.

Romance novelist Ali Hazelwood, born in Italy but who lives in the US, cancelled her April book tour in the UK over fears like Young’s. She commented on Facebook:

It breaks my heart to do this, especially so last minute, but I have decided to cancel my April events in the UK. This is because of several complicated reasons that mostly boil down to the fact that, things being what they are, it’s not possible for me to safely travel outside and then back inside the US.

As reported by numerous outlets, British graphic artist and tourist Rebecca Burke underwent an ordeal when, after traveling across the US for six weeks, she tried to visit Vancouver, British Columbia. Canadian officials told her she had the wrong visa.

The *Guardian* account continued:

They sent her [Burke] back to the U.S., where American officials classed her as an illegal alien. She was shackled and transported to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Ice) detention centre, where she was locked up for 19 days—even though she had money to pay for a flight home, and was desperate to leave the US.

An unnamed French research scientist, on assignment for the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) to attend a conference near Houston, Texas, was denied entry into the US in March after immigration officers searched his cellphone and found messages critical of the Trump administration. *Le Monde* reported March 19 the comment of Philippe Baptiste, France’s minister of higher education:

This action was allegedly taken by the US authorities because the researcher’s phone contained exchanges with colleagues and friends in which he expressed a personal opinion about the research policy pursued by the Trump administration.

Le Monde explained that a “diplomatic source”

reported that messages discussing the Trump administration’s treatment of scientists were found. He [the scientist] was accused of posting messages “that reflect hatred toward Trump and can be described as terrorism.” His professional and personal equipment was reportedly confiscated, and the researcher was sent back to Europe the next day.

This is how an authoritarian regime or a military dictatorship operates.

The US government’s policies have led to fears within professional sports, especially Major League Baseball, that many of its professional athletes in both the major and minor leagues will be affected. Also, during the past week, four Zambian women soccer players who play in the US withdrew from an international tournament in China due to fears about being able to return to the US. The Trump administration has also issued a blanket ban on transgender athletes entering the country.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact