

Artists group launches boycott of New York cultural center 92NY over support for war, genocide

Sandy English
23 April 2026

On Tuesday, daily literary website *Literary Hub* announced the formation of an artists' group 92NO that calls for artists and the public to boycott events at the 92NY cultural center, formerly known as the "92nd Street Y," because the latter has censored artists who opposed the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza and promoted speakers who support war and genocide.

92NO's statement argues:

This stage and venue are tainted by 92NY's actions throughout the genocide-like canceling its entire literary season over a single writer's opposition to the genocide in Gaza, firing employees for wearing and displaying symbols with support for Palestine, or hosting events with Israeli politicians and military officials and other public figures who justify the genocide, dehumanize Palestinians, and call for war on Iran and Lebanon.

92NY is—or was—a significant cultural institution. Its speakers have included novelists James Baldwin, Nadine Gordimer and Toni Morrison—Truman Capote debuted his landmark work *In Cold Blood* there in 1966—and poets such as T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Robert Frost and Langston Hughes. Musicians Andres Segovia, Stephen Sondheim and Yo-Yo Ma have performed or spoken there. Alvin Ailey premiered important dance works at the venue and legendary dancer-choreographer Martha Graham taught at the Y. Meryl Streep and Daniel Radcliffe, among others, have spoken there about acting.

The Y has also featured its share of bourgeois politicians, including war criminals (Donald Rumsfeld and Ari Fleischer, for example) and founders of the Zionist state (David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir). An increasing orientation to criminal types became apparent when 92NY hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2022.

The "Y" began institutional life as the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) in 1872 to serve the social needs of younger Jews in New York City. Following the establishment of the Israeli state, at the expense of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, the 92nd Street Y's officialdom became absorbed into the general stream of American liberalism, which supported the Zionist project.

After the Israeli military launched its genocidal campaign in Gaza in October 2023, the Y made a pronounced and public right-wing turn that had been prepared by the commitment of most of the institution's leadership to the Israeli state. On October 20, 2023, it abruptly canceled, or "postponed" as it claimed, an appearance by Vietnamese-American Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Viet Thanh Nguyen because he had signed an open letter published in the *London Review of Books* that called for a ceasefire in Gaza and was critical of Israel's actions.

Other writers canceled their appearances at the Y in protest of this act of censorship in the days that followed, including Christina Sharpe and Saidiya Hartman, scholars and authors of creative non-fiction, and poet and novelist Dionne Brand. Poet Paisley Rekdal also decided against appearing at the venue because of 92NY's censorship of Nguyen.

Within 48 hours, key leadership at 92NY's Poetry

Center resigned in protest at the censorship, including director Sarah Chihaya and senior program coordinator Sophie Herron. They cited a breach of the center’s mission to be a space for open literary dialogue.

92NY reacted by changing its policies about political expression among its front-facing staff, prohibiting them from “expressing any personal views about politics or social issues.” Some staff were fired.

Shortly after this, 92NY was forced to cancel its entire 2023 Fall program. Since then, the institution has sought to “recoup” by inviting some of the most deplorable figures in public and corporate life. As 92NO notes:

92NY’s Center for Culture and Arts calendar has featured an extraordinary number of war criminals, genocide apologists, corrupt billionaires, police commissioners, and right-wing pundits promoting US aggression abroad. Recent speakers include Palantir CEO Alex Karp, columnists Bret Stephens and Thomas Friedman, and CBS News chief Bari Weiss, all of whom consistently and unashamedly express anti-Palestinian racism.

The group’s statement adds:

92NY’s longstanding policy of vetting speakers with an ideological litmus test is now enshrined in their bylaws, which assert that they will block speakers who “question the legitimacy” of the State of Israel. We refuse to give our labor to an institution that explicitly silences Palestinian voices and those who support Palestinian self-determination and an end to genocide and apartheid.

The figures mentioned are all advocates of war with Iran and apologists for American imperialism. Karp, whose firm Palantir produces the Maven Smart System as a central AI component of US military operations in Iran, has called for a return to “hard power,” the reinstatement of the military draft and an end to the

“postwar neutering” of nations like Japan and Germany to meet the Iranian “threat.” Stephens advocates seizing Iranian oil tankers to starve that nation of revenue.

The *Times*’ Friedman called the war’s initial results “good for the Iranian people, given how many have been killed by the regime controlling that power, and it is good for the region.” And Weiss, the loudmouth Zionist media thug, has promoted Iranian “dissident” CIA assets at CBS News as part of Washington’s effort to overthrow the current regime.

The open defense of genocide by 92NY officials was initiated under the Biden administration, but expresses the same attempts to dismember culture and suppress opposition that have gained great force under Trump, carried out not simply by the fascist administration but by formally liberal institutions that have signed on for war, mass murder and repression.

These assaults are not aesthetic quibbles: they are policy *and class* choices tied to austerity, warfare and the consolidation of state power, and 92NY is a central part of this anti-cultural realignment—one might even say the institution has helped pioneer it.

The boycott of 92NY reflects the understanding by many artists and writers that things cannot go on as they have since the start of the Gaza genocide and the installation of Trump, that cultural institutions that side with the policies of war and genocide must be confronted and exposed.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact