



Photograph by Ulf Andersen

This August, the New York Public Library (NYPL) celebrates the 100th birthday of writer and activist James Baldwin with two exhibitions that highlight his revolutionary thought [1]. As one of NYC's three public library systems, we ask NYPL: **will you also celebrate Baldwin's advocacy of the Palestinian people?**

Baldwin originally conceived of Israel as a homeland for oppressed Jewish people, but as he learned more about Palestine's occupation [2] he became an adamant critic of Israel, characterizing it as a neo-colonial state established not for the safety of Jewish people, but for the advancement of British and American imperialism.

Education was key to Baldwin's shift in perspective, but through suppression, censorship, and silence, NYC public libraries, and NYPL specifically, have failed to educate New Yorkers on Israel's continued assault on Palestine's people, land, institutions, culture, and memory. We ask NYPL to honor the life and activism of James Baldwin:

END CENSORSHIP, MAKE INFORMATION ABOUT PALESTINE AVAILABLE TO ALL, AND BEAR WITNESS TO THE GENOCIDE THROUGH EDUCATION.

"But the state of Israel was not created for the salvation of the Jews! it was created for the salvation of the Western interests..."



click
click
click

JAMES BALDWIN
Open Letter
to the
Born Again,
1979

This is what is becoming clear (I must say that it was always clear to me).



The Palestinians have been paying for the British colonial policy of "divide and rule" and for Europe's guilty Christian conscience for more than thirty years."



Comic by Ellen O'Grady

Email sent by the Director of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library to staff on December 7th, 2023

Hi all,

I just received word that a staff member at another branch created a pro-Palestinian display in the children's area of that branch. The branch has already received numerous patron complaints and local press is aware. Library Administration has made it clear that the display in question does not reflect the views of NYPL.

If any press show up at SNFL and inquire about our own merchandising of collections and materials please refer them to the Media Department.

We should not have any materials on display that could be construed as support in any way/shape/form, so please be mindful when creating or refilling display areas.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Baldwin said: "And look at the New York buildings, rising up like tyrannical eagles, glass and steel and aluminum smiting the air, jerry-built, inept, contemptuous; **who can function in these buildings and for whose profit were they built?**"

-Nothing Personal, 1964

NYPL RUNS ON ZIONIST MONEY

NYPL claims it advocates for free and open access to information for all, but **Stephen A. Schwarzman**, the CEO of the Blackstone Group and an ardent Trump supporter, is NYPL's biggest donor [3]. In addition to funding Republican candidates [4] who target libraries by banning books and supporting groups like Moms for Liberty [4.5], he **pledged \$7 million to Israel** [5]. As Gazan libraries are razed by the IOF, **\$10 million** of Schwarzman's personal money is dedicated to funding the construction of a **National Library of Israel**. [6]



And Schwarzman is not the only one. Through the Howard and Abby Milstein Foundation, NYPL trustee **Abby Milstein** donated millions to the UJA-Federation of New York, which **funds the illegal Israeli settlements** in the West Bank [7]. Additionally, NYPL trustee **James Tisch** was formerly the president of the UJA-Federation of New York and his family donated **over \$5 million** to the UJA-Federation in 2023 [8].

When NYPL accepts Zionist money, it normalizes the brutalization of Palestinians in the name of educating New York City, all while laundering the reputations of those who profit off the oppression of Palestinians.

Settlements in West Bank, Getty Images



Baldwin said: "And so we go under, victims of that universal cruelty which lives in the heart and in the world, victims of the universal indifference to the fate of another, victims of the universal fear of love, proof of the impossibility of achieving a life without love. One day, perhaps, unimaginable generations hence, **we will evolve into the knowledge that human beings are more important than real estate** and will permit this knowledge to become the ruling principle of our lives."

- Nothing Personal, 1964

NYPL SMEARS NEW YORKERS WHO STAND AGAINST GENOCIDE AND SCHOLASTICIDE

In November, when just over 10,000 Palestinians had been killed, protestors marked the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building (SASB) with **anti-genocide graffiti** on Thanksgiving Day to protest Schwarzman's support of genocide [9]. NYPL as an institution, and President Tony Marx as an individual, had nothing to say about the thousands of dead Gazans or the mass destruction of Palestinian libraries, schools, and museums. Library spokeswoman **Jennifer Fermino** characterized this principled political action as merely a "*shameful act of vandalism.*" [9.5]

What is truly shameful is the destruction of Palestinian lives and knowledge.

The IOF continually **targets Palestinian cultural institutions as an act of genocide**, meant to erase any record of Palestinian life or culture. According to the Librarians and Archivists with Palestine (LAP), [10] at the time of the protest, Israel had already destroyed, damaged, or looted:

- **Ataa Library in Beit Hanoun**
 - **Al-Qarara Cultural Museum in Khan Younis**
 - **Rafah Museum**
 - **Samir Mansour Bookshop and Library in Gaza City**
 - **Islamic University of Gaza Library in Gaza City**
 - **Jawaharlal Nehru Library at Al-Azhar University in Gaza City**
 - **Deir Al-Balah Museum**
- ...and the number has only grown since then



Ataa Library, Beit Hanoun



Handprints left on the Schwarzman building to protest Blackstone's complicity in civilian deaths in Gaza

**SHAME ON YOU, NYPL! WE SAY
PALESTINIAN LIVES MATTER
MORE THAN A BUILDING
NAMED FOR A ZIONIST.**

Baldwin said: "But the state of Israel was not created for the salvation of the Jews; it was created for the salvation of the Western interests. This is what is becoming clear... **The Palestinians have been paying for the British colonial policy of "divide and rule" and for Europe's guilty Christian conscience for more than thirty years.**"

- Open Letter to the Born Again, 1979

NYPL SUPPRESSES THE TRUTH ABOUT PALESTINE

Baldwin acknowledges the truth of Palestinian suffering, but **librarians who highlight the same truths are punished.** In December 2023, when a librarian was targeted by Zionists and the New York Post for their book display on Palestine, NYPL called it "unacceptable" and "one-sided." [11]

Then, on February 5th, 2024, **Brian Bannon**, Merryl and James Tisch Director of Branch Libraries and Education, emailed NYPL staff new guidelines on book displays, ultimately discouraging engagement with "sensitive topics" by putting the onus on branch managers to take full responsibility for any displays that result in controversy.

NYPL claimed these guidelines were created to empower library staff, but in reality, these guidelines are so vague that they do not provide any intellectual security for workers to do their jobs.

NYPL has created a climate of hesitation and fear around creating displays, planning programs, or discussing Palestine in any way.

Baldwin said: "No, the question is really a kind of apathy and ignorance, which is a price we pay for segregation. That's what segregation means, that **you don't know what's happening on the other side of the world because you don't want to know.**"

-Quoted in *I Am Not Your Negro*, 2016

NYPL IS BETRAYING ITS MISSION WHEN IT COMES TO PALESTINE

According to NYPL's mission statement, the library aims to "advance knowledge by **providing free and open access to materials and information that reflect New York's global perspective.**" [11.5] When Russia invaded Ukraine, NYPL published reading lists [12] and hosted events [12.5] to educate the public about Ukraine.

But no such attention has been given to the ongoing current event of Israel's continued attack on Palestine. There have been no reading lists or events that highlight Palestinian authors or perspectives.

Instead, over the years, the Live from NYPL event series has hosted right-wing Israeli politician Natan Sharansky [13] along with laudatory programs dedicated to the former Prime Minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin, [14] Zionist author A. B. Yehoshua, [15] and the Israeli theft of Polish artist Bruno Schulz's work. [16]

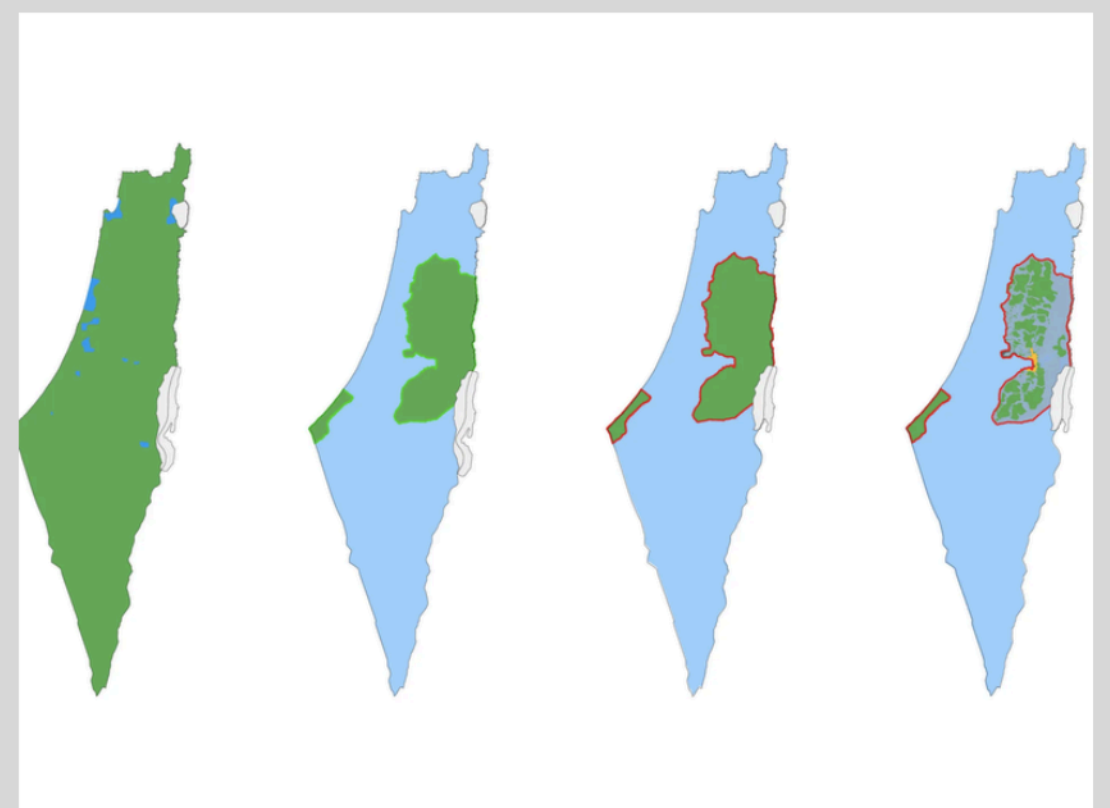
After ten months of assault on Gaza, there has been no acknowledgment of Palestinian authors or history from the Library—only silence.

▶ Refine Your Search

Filtered By: × "[palestine](#)" × [Clear All Filters](#)

0 events found.

Searching for events relating to Palestine on the NYPL website yields no results.



REFERENCES

1. *JIMMY! God's Black Revolutionary Mouth* [Exhibition]. (2024). The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. <https://www.nypl.org/events/exhibitions/jimmy-gods-black-revolutionary-mouth>
2. Verdickt, R. (2023, November 9). 'Imperfectly Realized Analogies'. James Baldwin, Black Lives Matter and Palestine. *Rekto Verso*. <https://www.rektoverso.be/artikel/imperfectly-realized-analogies-james-baldwin-black-lives-matter-and-palestine>
3. Sutton, S. (2024, May 24). Blackstone CEO Steve Schwarzman will back Trump. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/05/24/blackstone-ceo-steve-schwarzman-will-back-trump-00159967>
4. Donor Lookup, Open Secrets. <https://www.opensecrets.org/donor-lookup/results?name=schwarzman%2C+stephen&order=desc&sort=D>
- 4.5 Swenson, A. (2023, June 12). Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics after attacking schools over gender, race. *AP*. <https://apnews.com/article/moms-for-liberty-2024-election-republican-candidates-f46500e0e17761a7e6a3c02b61a3d229>
5. Klein, Z. (2023, October 12). Funds and philanthropists: Diaspora Jews raise hundreds-of-millions for Israel. *The Jerusalem Post*. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-767973>
6. (2018, February 8). Billionaire Trump Adviser Donates to Israel National Library. *U.S. News* <https://www.usnews.com/news/news/articles/2018-02-08/billionaire-trump-adviser-donates-to-israel-national-library>
7. + 8. UJA Federation of New York. (2023). King David Roll of Honor. <https://www.ujafedny.org/api/v2/assets/KDS-Roll-of-Honor-Booklet-2023.pdf>
9. Lane, C. (2023, November 25). New York Public Library facing steep graffiti cleanup costs after protests. *Gothamist*. <https://gothamist.com/news/new-york-public-library-facing-steep-graffiti-cleanup-costs-after-protests>
- 9.5 Nesi, C. (2023, November 25). NY Public Library facing \$75K cleanup after 'shameful act of vandalism' by pro-Palestinian protesters. *NY Post*. <https://nypost.com/2023/11/26/metro/ny-public-library-facing-75k-cleanup-after-pro-palestinian-protesters-vandalism/>
10. Librarians and Archivists with Palestine. (2024, February 1). Israeli Damage to Archives, Libraries, and Museums in Gaza, October 2023–January 2024. <https://librarianswithpalestine.org/gaza-report-2024/>
11. Levine, J. (2023, December 9). NYC couple checks out 5 pro-Palestinian children's books indefinitely to prevent 'indoctrination'. *NY Post*. <https://nypost.com/2023/12/09/metro/nyc-public-libraries-offer-kids-books-on-israeli-apartheid/>
- 11.5 The New York Public Library. Mission Statement. <https://www.nypl.org/help/about-nypl/mission>
12. Horbal, B. (2022, March 3). Understanding the History of Ukraine: Recommended Reading. New York Public Library. <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2022/03/03/history-ukraine-recommended-reading>
- 12.5 Live from NYPL. (2022, June 24). Seeing Ukraine. New York Public Library. <https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2022/06/24/seeing-ukraine>
13. Live from NYPL. (2020, September 10). Never Alone: Natan Sharansky and David Remnick. New York Public Library. <https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2020/09/10/never-alone-natan-sharansky-and-david-remnick>
14. Live from NYPL. (2015, November 14). Nancy Updike | Dan Ephron | Ira Glass: Why the Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin Still Divides Israelis 20 Years Later. New York Public Library. <https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2015/11/05/ira-glass-nancy-updike-dan-ephron-why-assassination-yitzhak-rabin-still>
15. Live from NYPL. (2011, March 28). A.B. YEHOSHUA in conversation with Paul Holdengraber. New York Public Library. <https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2011/03/28/ab-yehoshua-conversation-paul-holdengraber>
16. Live from NYPL. (2023, October 19). Chasing Bruno Schulz: Benjamin Balint with Joshua Cohen. New York Public Library. <https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2023/10/19/benjaminbalint>

READ MORE: JAMES BALDWIN

- *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) (Call # CLASSICS 305.896 B)
- *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son* (1961) (Call # 814 BALDWIN)
- *A Rap on Race* (1971) (Call # Sc 323.173-M (Mead, M. Rap on race) at Schomburg and IE 71-634 at the Schwarzman Building)
- *No Name in the Street* (1972) (Call # B BALDWIN B)
- "A Report From Occupied Territory." Baldwin, James. *The Nation*. July 11, 1966.

"I don't mean I am against the Jews... I mean I am against the State of Israel because I think a great injustice has been done to the Arabs."
-A Rap on Race, 1971

READ MORE: PALESTINE

Borrow material on Palestine from your local library, or request that they get it. Tell NYC public libraries: New Yorkers stand with Gaza!

- *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions* (2011) by Omar Barghouti (Call # 956.054 B)
- *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (2016) by Angela Davis (Call # 323 D)
- *Except for Palestine: The Limits of Progressive Politics* (2022) by Marc Lamont Hill and Mitchell Plitnick (Call # 327.7305 H)
- *My People Shall Live: Autobiography of a Revolutionary* (1973) by Leila Khaled (NYPL doesn't have this title! But it is available via the Wayback Machine at tinyurl.com/KhaledAutobiography)
- *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (2000) by Tom Segev (Call # 956.94 S)
- *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917-2017* (2020) by Rashid Khalidi (Call # 956.9405 K)
- *Our Palestine Question: Israel and American Jewish Dissent, 1948-1978* (2023) by Geoffrey Levin (Call # 973.0942 L)
- *This Is Not A Border: Reportage and Reflection from the Palestine Festival of Literature* (2017) edited by Ahdaf Soueif (Call # 809.9335 T)
- *What Does Israel Fear from Palestine?* (2024) by Raja Shehadeh (Call # 956.942 S)

READ MORE: CHILDREN'S BOOKS ABOUT PALESTINE

- *These Olive Trees* (2023) by Aya Ghanameh (Call # J PIC GHANAMEH)
- *Sitti's Bird: A Gaza Story* (2022) by Malak Mattar (Call # J PIC MATTAR)
- *Homeland: My Father Dreams of Palestine* (2023) by Hannah Moushabek and Reem Madooh (CALL # J PIC MOUSHABEK)
- *Baba, What Does My Name Mean?* (2022) by Reifk Ebeid and Lamaa Jawhari (Call # J PIC EBEID)
- *Counting up the Olive Tree: A Palestine Number Book* (2024) by Golbarg Bashi and Nabi H. Ali (NYPL doesn't yet have this title!)
- *P Is for Palestine: A Palestine Alphabet Book* (2024) by Golbarg Bashi and Golrokh Nafisi (NYPL doesn't yet have this title!)
- *We Are Palestinian: A Celebration of Culture and Tradition* (2023) by Reem Kassis and Noha Eilouti (Call # J 956.94 K)

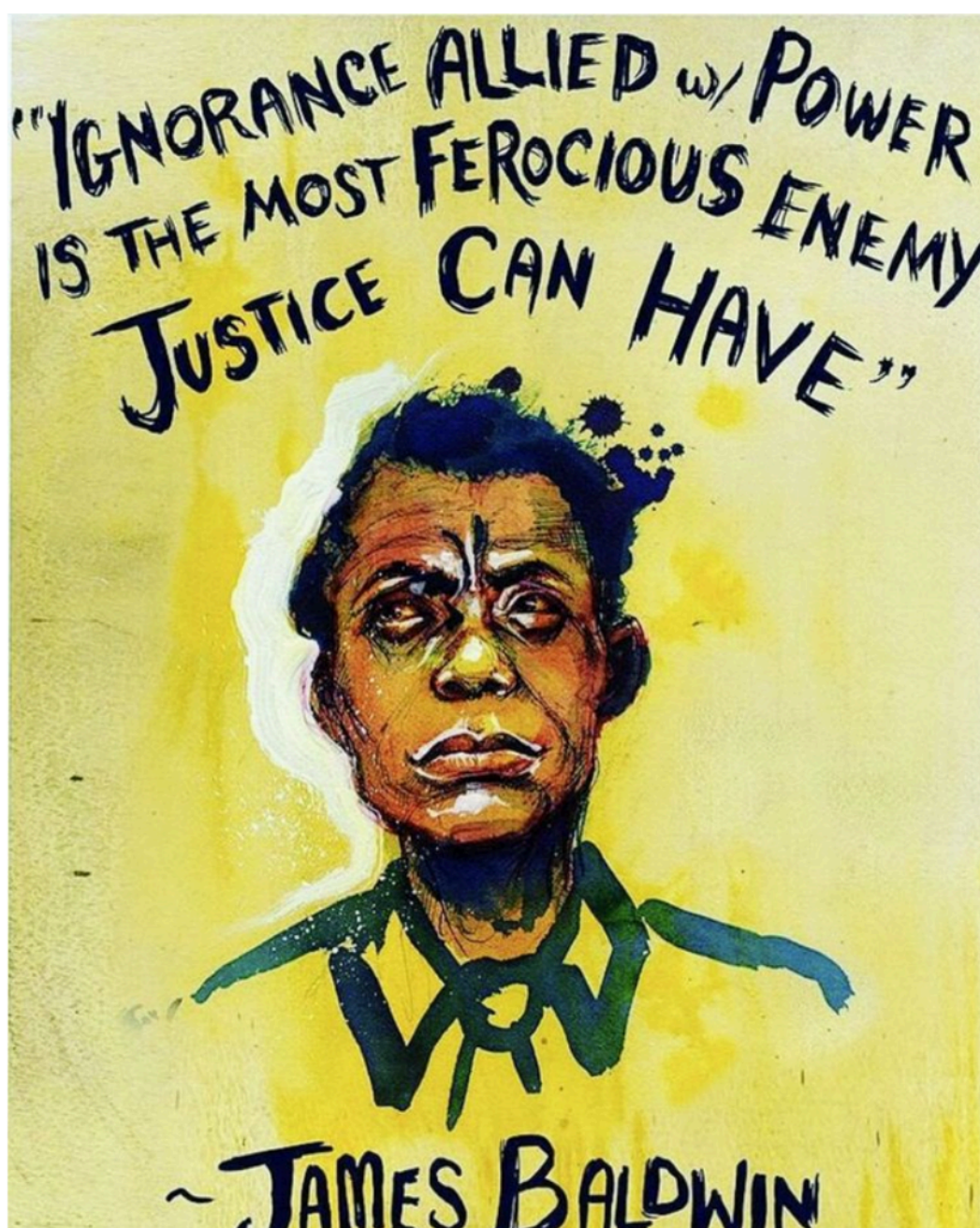


Image by Micah Bazant

NYPL CENSORS DISCUSSION AND INFORMATION ABOUT PALESTINE

Contact NYPL and tell them to fulfill their mission. Educate NYC about the genocide in Gaza and Israel's continued occupation of Palestine:

- **President Tony Marx:** president@nypl.org
- **Board of Trustees:** boardoftrustees@nypl.org
- **NYPL Press Office:** press@nypl.org

SAMPLE SCRIPT

As the library celebrates the centennial of James Baldwin, I ask that you live up to his "legacy of radical truth-telling," as well as your own mission to "advance knowledge by providing free and open access to materials and information that reflect New York's global perspective."

As a patron, I demand NYPL:

1. Invite Palestinian authors and thinkers to the Live from NYPL program.
2. Support staff who create displays, blog posts, and programs speaking to the current genocide in Palestine.
3. Make information about the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestine available to all, as it would be for any other current event.
4. Speak out against the destruction of Palestinian cultural institutions.
5. End partnerships with companies that the Palestinian BDS National Committee has identified as "complicit in violations of Palestinian rights" and divest from Zionist donors who fund and profit off genocide.



bit.ly/BaldwinNYPL

**A zine by NYC public library workers
August 2024**