

Cultural Daily

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Writers and Readers Respond to Dismissal of ALOUD's Director and Co-Director

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In response to the LA Times' August 29th report that Louise Steinman and Maureen Moore “are no longer with the ALOUD reading series at the LA Public Library,” a group of concerned community members have organized a petition in protest of this decision, delivered today to the Chair and the Board of the Library Foundation, as well as Mayor Eric Garcetti.

The petition includes signatures from 800 individuals, and includes at least one Nobel Laureate, Pulitzer Prize-winning authors, Poets Laureate, MacArthur and Guggenheim Fellows and a Who's Who of the national and local literary community. Among the signatories are Viet Thanh Nguyen, Rachel Kushner, Robin Coste Lewis, Jonathan Lethem, Rachel Cusk, Geoff Dyer, Mohsin Hamid, Mona Simpson, Aimee Bender, Anne Carson, John Rechy, Pico Iyer, Janet Fitch, Eileen Myles, Luis J. Rodriguez and Sapphire. Many writers, readers, and members of the team here at Cultural Weekly have also signed. A link to the petition and its signers appears here: <http://bit.ly/foraloud>.

In the Times' article, Library Foundation communications director Leah Price is quoted as saying, of Steinman, who founded ALOUD, “...at this point in time she is not part of our new direction.” Though the Foundation has said that the series will continue, it has offered neither details nor transparency about what this means.

The petition calls for more just recognition of the contributions of Steinman and Moore, who were let go without warning, and a commitment to maintaining the strengths Steinman and Moore unwaveringly brought to the program. It asserts that the signers are “stakeholders” of the program—as presenters, attendees and financial contributors—and asks for “a place at the table as the Library Foundation discusses what happens next to ALOUD.” Members of the Los Angeles literary community hope to engage in dialogue regarding:

- the status of Steinman and Moore;
- concerns about the intent of program managers who terminated the ALOUD program directors without explanation, on the cusp of an announced season, with confusion and trauma to presenters, audiences and staff;
- the Foundation's plans for the future of ALOUD and other literary programming;
- ways to generate additional financial support for those programs.

The ad hoc group who developed the petition came together through a series of informal

conversations. They are Héctor Tobar and David Ulin, who will act as spokespersons, Donna Frazier, Lynell George, Reed Johnson and Terry Wolverton. “We launched this petition because of the great respect we have for Louise Steinman and Maureen Moore and all they’ve given to the city of Los Angeles,” said Héctor Tobar, a Los Angeles-born author and journalist. “Their ALOUD program has brought powerful ideas and great literature to Los Angeles, and it’s helped make the city a better and more interesting place to live.”

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