

The New-York Historical Society, founded in 1804, occupies an impressive building at the corner of Central Park West and Richard Gilder Way. A compliant city recently renamed 77th Street after Gilder, the Society's executive committee co-chair and major funder -- a wealthy New York broker, ideologue and founder of the right-wing think tank, the Manhattan Institute. With this honor to Henry Kissinger, the N-Y Historical Society becomes the overt instrument of the Manhattan Institute's politics.

Many of the historians protesting the honor to Kissinger have spent hours and weeks (as we have, starting a half century ago) in its magnificent library, using its invaluable archives. But in recent years we have noticed a change in the Society's mission. A landmark in this change was the 2004 exhibit on "Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America," which was a shallow paeon to the values of George W. Bush. Now with the honoring of Henry Kissinger, the cat is fully out of the bag. With this, the Society throws away 200 years of distinction, sacrificing its standing, subverting and junking a major historical institution by politicizing it. While N-YHS has a right to its politics, there's no doubt that in bestowing this honor on Kissinger those politics are vile. The trustees of this once-great Society should resign, leaving Richard Gilder afloat amidst the wreckage that he has created. We need a new New-York Historical Society.

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