



August 29, 2025

On the night before the start of Fall 2025 semester, facilities workers at UNC-Chapel Hill boarded over and subsequently removed a student- and community-created mural in Hanes Art Center. The mural was initiated and created by several students in the undergraduate course Studio Art 490: Art as Social Action, with help from other students across campus. No Art Department faculty were consulted before the mural was covered and removed, and no one has taken responsibility for this censorship.

The American Association of University Professors North Carolina and the UNC-Chapel Hill chapter of the AAUP call on Chancellor Lee Roberts and Interim Provost Jim Dean to restore the mural and publicly explain how the decision to remove it was made and by whom.

The decision to censor student artwork represents a significant violation of free speech and academic freedom on UNC-Chapel Hill's campus. [Academic freedom](#) protects students' and faculty's rights to "investigate and discuss the issues in his or her academic field, and to teach and publish findings without interference from administrators, boards of trustees, political figures, donors, or other entities." UNC-Chapel Hill's long history of administrators violating students' and faculty's academic freedom and free speech rights is documented in the [AAUP's "Report of a Special Committee: Governance, Academic Freedom, and Institutional Racism in the University of North Carolina System."](#) published in 2022.

The mural was created to celebrate Palestinian resiliency after the disbandment of the [Triangle Gaza Solidarity Encampment](#) and the violent arrest of student protesters in April 2024. In a statement about the mural's removal, Jim White, Dean of the College of Arts and Science, called for "balance," but this call rings false on a campus where the Chancellor looked on as police attacked supporters of Palestine. Dean White also insisted that "a publicly funded institution" like UNC cannot "take an indifferent stance toward any form of antisemitism, whether intended or interpreted." We agree that antisemitism cannot be tolerated, and we remind Dean White (yet again) that neither a celebration of Palestinian resiliency nor criticism of Israel - including calling its war in Gaza a genocide - should be interpreted as antisemitic. Dean White is right that "our responsibility is to protect First Amendment free speech and academic freedom while also ensuring that the educational environment at Carolina is one where all students [are] free from intimidation of any kind." By censoring this mural, UNC administrators have failed on both counts.

UNC Chapel Hill must restore this student-created mural and affirm its commitment to free speech and academic freedom.

Signed:

Belle Boggs, NC AAUP President

Michael Palm, UNC-Chapel Hill AAUP President