

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the historic murals in the Ariel Rios North Building in Washington, DC.

I am a white, male attorney employed in the Air and Radiation Law Office of Environmental Protection Agency and I work in the Ariel Rios North Building on a daily basis. My office is on the 7th floor, and I frequently attend meetings on the 4th and 5th floors. My principal client office, the office of Air and Radiation is base on the 5th floor and the immediate is office of the General Counsel is on the 4th floor. I use the elevators and stairs adjacent to several of the murals in the North building on a daily basis to attend meetings on these floors and to enter and exit the building on my way to the Federal Triangle Metro station or local lunch spots.

Perhaps once every two weeks, I pass he mural entitled “Dangers of the Mail” on the fifth floor. Currently, the image is blocked by displays that prevent me from seeing this image as I pass from the elevator to relevant offices. I find this mural disturbing and do not believe it should be displayed in the workplace, regardless of any historical value it may have. What is most striking about this mural is the graphic nature of its depiction of an attack by Native Americans. While I do not object to presenting this history and the dangers that were faced by earlier mail deliveries, the brutality reflected in this picture is disturbing and not something I wish to observe on a regular basis in the workplace. I am particularly disturbed by the apparent depiction of women in the mural without clothing while they are under attack or while they lay dead or wounded. These individuals are not painted in particular detail, so it’s not necessarily the nudity itself that I find disturbing. It’s the nudity in the context of the larger image (while the men under attack are clothed) that makes the image seem especially gratuitous and inappropriate for a workplace environment. The image suggests that some form of sexual assault was committed by the attackers. To the extent such an assault has any historical significance; I do not believe it is appropriate to display it on a daily basis in my workplace. I would support continuing to maintain the displays that obstruct this image or a permanent removal or alteration of the image. I have not taken the opportunity to review the displays. However, to the extent there is a historical explanation for the nudity in the image, I would appreciate seeing some explanation of this in the display if the image is to remain in place without change.

I view the mural entitled “covered Wagon Attack by Indians: located on the 7th floor on a daily basis. I am not particularly disturbed by this mural. Although it reflects a violent scene that I would prefer not to see in the workplace on a daily basis, the image itself is not especially brutal or gratuitous. To the extent the depiction of the Native Americans in the mural is considered by historians to be an accurate depiction of this time period and is not an inaccurate caricature or stereotype, I do not object to retaining it in its current location without obstruction or alteration.

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