

Mr. Porter:

My professional background is neither in art or art history. However, I have been fortunate to be around artists for my entire life because my Father is an artist and respected Elder in throughout the Caribbean, who had devoted over 55 years of his life to art and art education. My specific experience with the Murals at the Ariel Rios Federal Building are based on emails I have received over the past few years, and approximately 4 visits to the Ariel Rios Building. I have seen the murals in question, and feel that they are not appropriate for a Federal building. The images portray hostility by both the Native Americans and European Settlers. What is even more disturbing is they serve to reinforce stereotypes of Native Americans and Native people in general. As a Native South American, I am offended by seeing those images in a Federal Building. I can imagine both the frustration, embarrassment, and anger that some people may face daily when they enter Ariel Rios. Being subjected to work in this type of environment can create a hostile discriminatory work environment for some EPA employees.

I understand the historic nature of the murals, however, I think that as a society, we have come far enough to know that the historic experience of some races and ethnic groups in the US or throughout the World have not always been equitable or appropriate. I do not approve of these murals, just as I would not approve of murals that depict some of the suffering of other ethnic groups, for example, Somalians, Mayans, Jews, or Albanians. What is more important than these murals being deemed as historic is being sensitive to the brutality that Native Americans endured. If I had any choice in the matter, I would say that these murals may be better served in a museum, where one would not be subjected to their hostile and stereotypic images daily, and where the murals can become a tool of learning, understanding, and reconciliation.

The author has request their comments be posted anonymously