



July 15, 2020

The Honorable Judge James P. Nilon, Chief Judge  
Eighth Judicial Circuit of Florida  
Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center  
201 East University Avenue, Room 409  
Gainesville, FL 32601

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Re: Request for Mural Removal

Dear Chief Judge Nilon,

As indicated in the public statement released this week, the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers is requesting the removal of the mural that contains images of the Ku Klux Klan from the Baker County Courthouse. Although a part of history, the KKK was not an organization that promoted justice. To the contrary, the KKK notoriously denied justice to many and terrorized certain segments of society. They did not and do not represent the ideals of our justice system.

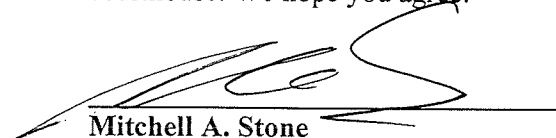
This mural may have historical significance as a work of art, so our objective here is not to have it destroyed. Our objective is to have it removed from the courthouse and displayed in a more appropriate place such as a museum. History is important and artworks that contain historical images are important to create discussion, debate and understanding. However, a courthouse is where all people must be treated equally and with respect.

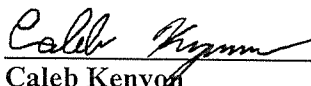
To some, this imagery may suggest otherwise. Imagine how an American would feel in a foreign court system if a mural glorifying the terrorists that were responsible for 9/11 were to be displayed in the entryway of the courthouse where they are to be judged. Certainly, that would create a feeling of angst and hopelessness.

Some courthouses contain artwork and displays about historical trials or events that occurred that relate to the justice system. Although this mural has historical significance, the particular images and the artist's own commentary suggest a romanticized and glorified view of the KKK as somehow promoting law and order. That is a false narrative and to display such art in the courthouse suggests to some that those who are dispensing justice within those halls may share those beliefs.

You must consider how all those who are brought into the courthouse will perceive their experience in the criminal justice system if such imagery is displayed upon their entry. You should also consider whether you would have this mural prominently displayed in your chambers or at your home. The art we display reflects upon us.

We simply ask that you use this opportunity to demonstrate that the judiciary is concerned about perception and understands that inherent bias and systemic racism will not be tolerated. It starts as we enter the courthouse. This painting should have a place where it can be viewed and where it can create conversation and debate. That place is not in the courthouse. We hope you agree.

  
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