



The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT EMERITUS ALUMNI

August 24, 2018

**STATEMENT ON THE REMOVAL OF SILENT SAM BY FORMER STUDENT BODY
PRESIDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL**

Carolina students, faculty, and staff have a long and rich history of fighting injustice through direct action. The fight for racial integration, the speaker ban, the food worker strike, the fight for a free-standing Black Cultural Center, the housekeeper's movement, and the removal of the name "Saunders" from Carolina Hall were all movements where students confronted injustice head on - and changed the history of our University for the better.

With the removal of Silent Sam, this generation of Carolina students accomplished what many before them were unable to do, despite many years of diplomacy, organizing, and protest. Although some say the statue simply commemorated alumni who died fighting for the Confederacy, Silent Sam was dedicated almost 50 years after the end of the Civil War by a Carolina Trustee to honor those who "saved the very life of the Anglo-Saxon race in the South" and celebrated the "pleasing duty" of beating a "negro wench" just yards away from where the statue was erected. As many historians have noted, a wave of statues like this were erected across the South during the Jim Crow era as a show of strength designed to perpetuate white supremacy.

Is it any wonder that for students of color, Silent Sam represented a stifling daily reminder of hatred and oppression? As alumni, donors, and members of the UNC community, we are proud of the students, faculty, and staff past and present who have worked tirelessly to secure the removal of Silent Sam. **There is no place on our campus for white supremacists or their symbols of hate.**

In 2015, the General Assembly enacted a law preventing the removal of confederate statues without approval from the NC Historical Commission. The General Assembly passed this law amid nationwide racial tensions, only weeks after the racially motivated killings of 9 black church goers in South Carolina and at a time when other government officials were removing similar vestiges of hatred around the country. The 2015 law was enacted for reasons as thinly veiled as those given for keeping Silent Sam and worked

toward the same purpose: to exert dominance and to disenfranchise those who may have had the ability to remove the statue.

We are indeed a nation of laws. However, Thomas Jefferson, said that "If a law is unjust, a man is not only right to disobey it, he is obligated to do so." Acts of civil disobedience are often, by their very nature, unlawful. Acts of civil disobedience are often unacceptable



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to those in positions of power, dangerous to those participating in such protests, and incomprehensible to those resistant to change.

We stand against unjust laws that disproportionately affect students of color. We are proud to stand with the students who, despite what some view as controversial methods, finally removed a symbol of hatred that has haunted generations of Carolina students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. **May it never return.**

As with injustices that past Carolina students have tackled, today's students have created an opportunity to once again change the arc of our University's history for the better - this time with dialogue and action that honors a more complete portrayal of our history and reconciles a more truthful representation of our complicated past.

Hark the sound!

The undersigned Student Body President Emeritus,

Henry Bowers, 1951-1952	Matthew Heyd, 1991-1992	JJ Raynor, 2008-2009
Robert S. Powell, Jr., 1966-1967	George Battle, III, 1994-1995	Jasmin Jones, 2009-2010
Robert M. Travis, 1967-1968	Cal Cunningham, 1995-1996	Hogan Medlin, 2010-2011
S. Alan Albright, 1969-1970	Reyna Walters-Morgan, 1998-1999	Mary Cooper, 2011-2012
Carlisle Ford Runge, 1973-1974	Brad Matthews, 2000-2001	Will Leimenstoll, 2012-2013
Kevin Monroe, 1983-1984	Justin Young, M.D., 2001-2002	Bradley Opere, 2016-2017
Bryan Hassel, 1986-1987	Jennifer Daum, 2002-2003	Elizabeth Adkins, 2017-2018
Bill Hildebolt, 1990-1991	Matt Tepper, 2003-2004	