August 24, 2018

Chancellor Carol Folt
UNC Chapel Hill
103 South Building, CB 9100
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Dear Chancellor Folt:

In light of the recent and welcome removal of Silent Sam from its place of privilege on our university campus, we, the undersigned 35 faculty members of the UNC History Department, wish to affirm our support of all UNC undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and community members who undertook this act of civil disobedience. We are proud of the ways in which graduate students, faculty members, and alumni of UNC’s History Department have led and contributed to public discussions surrounding Silent Sam and other Confederate monuments, using evidence-based methods to illuminate the white supremacist historical contexts of these artifacts from the Jim Crow era, and to advocate for their removal.

Civil disobedience, particularly among students, has a long and storied history in the United States, especially in the American South. The hyperbolic characterization of Silent Sam’s toppling as “lawlessness” and “mob actions” demonstrates a purposeful, obdurate disregard for historical and social context. In your joint statement with other UNC System leaders, you claim to have the “safety and security of the students and community” as a “top priority,” but have consistently ignored the voices of students and faculty alike who felt decidedly unsafe and unsecure on a daily basis, under the shadow of Silent Sam. When legal restraints and the status quo are unjust, as Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us, then civil disobedience is an act of moral responsibility.

Now that Silent Sam has been removed from his pedestal on our campus, let him remain on the ground: he should be displayed as a contextualized, historical artifact within an appropriate educational space, not in a position of honor. The monument is undeniably a part of UNC’s past, but he no longer needs to be part of UNC’s future.
Signed,

Michelle King, Associate Professor
Sarah Shields, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies
Matthew Andrews, Associate Teaching Professor and Undergraduate Advisor
Donald Reid, Professor
Karen Hagemann, James G. Kenan Distinguished Professor and Adjunct Professor of the Curriculum in Peace, War and Defense
Susan Pennybacker, Chalmers W. Poston Distinguished Professor of European History
Lisa Lindsay, Bowman and Gordon Gray Distinguished Term Professor
Cemil Aydin, Professor
Daniel Sherman, Lineberger Distinguished Professor of Art History and History
William Sturkey, Assistant Professor
Malinda Maynor Lowery, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for the Study of the American South
Melissa Bullard, Professor
Kathleen DuVal, Bowman and Gordon Gray Distinguished Term Professor
Chad Bryant, Associate Professor
Emma Flatt, Assistant Professor
Max Owre, Department Lecturer
Iqbal Sevea, Associate Professor
Raúl Necochea López, Associate Professor of Social Medicine and Adjunct Associate Professor of History
Benjamin C. Waterhouse, Associate Professor
Kathryn Burns, Professor
Morgan Pitelka, Professor of History and Asian Studies and Director of the Carolina Asia Center
William Barney, Professor
Louis A. Pérez Jr., J. Carlyle Sitterson Professor and Director of the Institute for the Study of the Americas
Lauren V. Jarvis, Assistant Professor
Jay M. Smith, Professor
Konrad H. Jarausch, Lurcy Professor of European Civilization
Miguel La Serna, Associate Professor
Erik Gellman, Associate Professor
Katherine Turk, Associate Professor and Adjunct Associate Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies
Karen Auerbach, Associate Professor and Stuart E. Eizenstat Fellow
John W. Sweet, Associate Professor
Emily Burrill, Associate Professor and Director of the African Studies Center
Lloyd S. Kramer, Professor
Louise McReynolds, Cary C. Boshamer Distinguished Professor
Flora Cassen, Associate Professor and Van der Horst Fellow in Jewish History and Culture