

# United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)

**PETER Q. KNOWLTON**  
General President

**ANDREW C. DINKELAKER**  
General Secretary-Treasurer

**EUGENE ELK**  
Director of Organization



October 24, 2018

## **Kisha Patel**

Graduate and Professional School Honor Court Chair  
University of North Carolina  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

## **Courtney Bain**

Graduate and Professional School Student Attorney General  
University of North Carolina  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Dear Ms. Patel and Ms. Bain,

As National Officers of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE), we are writing in support of UNC graduate student and UE Local 150 member, Maya Little.

Generations of anti-racist activists at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) have called on campus administrators to remove the Confederate statue known as Silent Sam. The statue has always been a symbol of the Confederacy and its support for the enslavement of human beings from Africa for the profits of white businessmen. UNC administrators have continually refused to remove this offensive and deplorable symbol of hate and racism. The statue's presence, and the administration's ongoing refusal to remove it, creates an unsafe and unhealthy climate on the UNC campus.

In an act of civil disobedience on April 30, 2018, graduate student worker and UE Local 150 member Maya Little poured her blood and red ink on Silent Sam. This action and artistic statement insists that the statue cannot be seen without the context of the system that it was erected to commemorate and defend.

Ms. Little has not been the first student to paint UNC's Confederate statue. It was graffitied to protest the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968 and the murder of Sandra Bland in 2015. NC State fans have painted it red; UNC fans have painted it powder blue. UNC officials, to our knowledge, have disciplined no students or workers for these acts. Ms. Little's action reflects a popular frustration with UNC's refusal to substantively address white supremacy in its own institution. In the last academic year, dozens of academic departments issued statements calling for Silent Sam's removal. Attorney Hampton Dellinger sent a letter informing the university that the presence of the statue violates the Civil Rights Act by creating a racially hostile environment for students and workers. Since Ms. Little's act of civil disobedience, UNC students and community members have removed Silent Sam from its pedestal.

Disciplining Maya Little for defacing a symbol of white supremacy and racism while not disciplining others for the same offense of defacing the statue would be a grave injustice. It is hard not to conclude that Ms. Little is being disciplined, not for her actions, but for what her actions represent. We therefore call on the UNC Honor Court and any other UNC administrators or disciplinary bodies not to discipline Maya Little and to drop all Honor Court charges against her.

Our union, UE, unites all workers regardless of craft, age, sex, nationality, race, creed, or political beliefs. The presence of the statue on the UNC Chapel Hill campus is an affront to UNC students, workers, administrators, and the broader community, and its removal is a step towards justice. We stand behind Maya Little and request that all charges be dismissed, as well as supporting UNC students, workers, and community allies who are calling for the permanent removal of Silent Sam from your campus.

Very Truly Yours,

Peter Knowlton  
/s/  
General President

Andrew Dinkelaker  
/s/  
General Secretary-Treasurer

Gene Elk  
/s/  
Director of Organization

cc:

Governor Roy Cooper;  
UNC Board of Governors;  
Margaret Spellings, President of the University of North Carolina;  
UNC Board of Trustees;  
Chancellor Carol Folt;