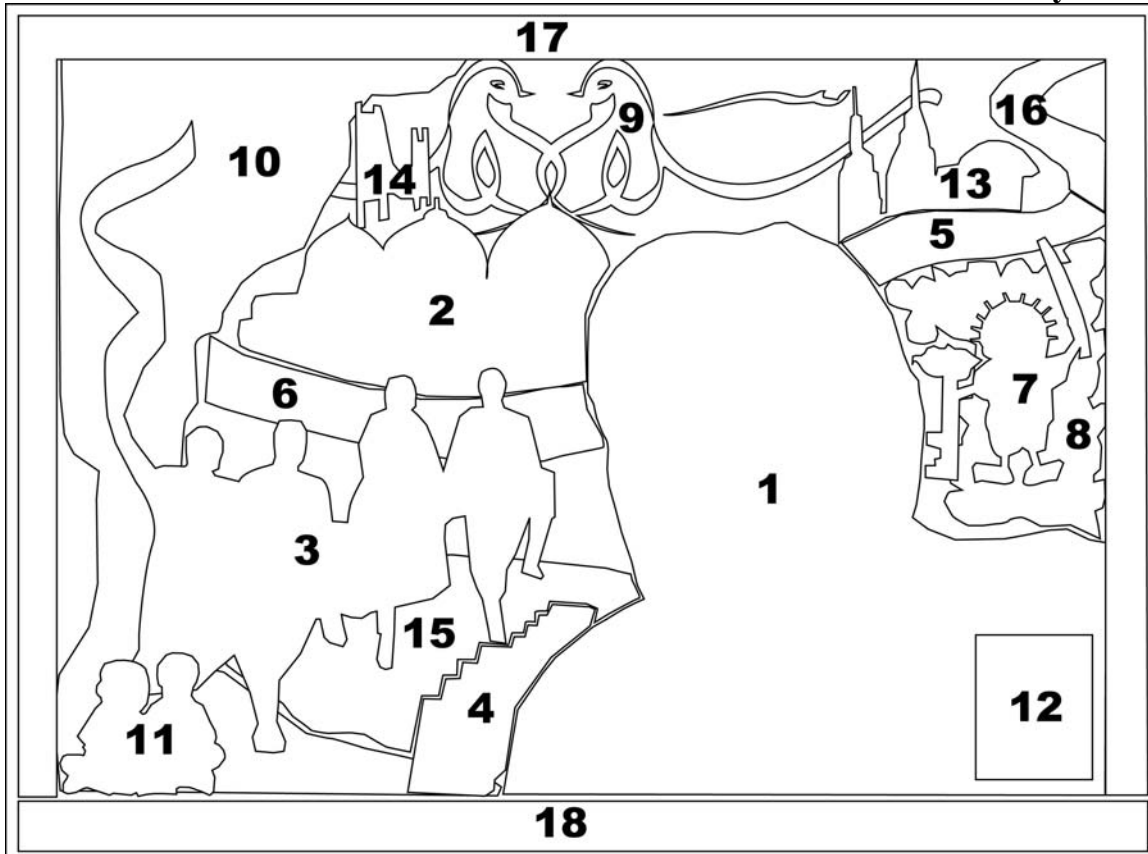


**Palestinian Cultural Mural**  
**Honoring Edward Said: Outline and Element Descriptions**  
**Cesar Chavez Student Union - San Francisco State University**



*Artists: Fayeq Oweis & Susan Greene*

**1) Professor Edward Said (1935-2003)**

Edward Said was a Palestinian Arab-American academic, educator, writer, philosopher, thinker, scholar, civil and human rights activist. His writing is an inspiration for Arab Americans. His activism for human rights, justice, and a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is also an inspiration to millions of people around the world. He was one of the greatest thinkers and scholars of America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because he broke down the stereotypes of “Orientals” that have been perpetuated for hundreds of years. Said is wearing a Palestinian headdress or scarf (Kuffiyya, or Hatta), which is a cultural garment that has come to symbolize the struggle in maintaining and preserving Palestinian identity.

**2) The city of Jerusalem**

Jerusalem is the birthplace of Edward Said, and its representation on the mural through its landscape and monuments complements **the poem in 5 & 6** (“I am from there...”). Jerusalem represents the genesis of Said’s thought. Since Said was born and lived in Jerusalem, his earliest experiences and hence his thought process were influenced by Jerusalem.

### **3) The Palestinian Folkloric Dance and Students Activism**

Debka is a traditional, folkloric Arab dance. Palestinian Debka is a non-violent form of resistance and preservation of Palestinian culture and heritage. It is presented on the mural to bring attention to the rich culture of the Palestinian people, and performed by students at San Francisco State University in the Malcolm X Plaza (no. 15) wearing traditional Palestinian clothing. One of the women dancers is holding a Palestinian flag. The presence of Palestinian women pays homage to the matriarch responsible for maintaining and preserving Palestinian life and culture. Palestinian women play an integral part in Palestinian life, society, resistance to occupation, and in the struggle for human rights through mobilization and education.

### **4) Edward Said's Books**

Edward Said's scholarly work and his contributions to academia are imperative to and have influenced such fields as literary studies, comparative literature, area studies (specifically the Middle East/ the Arab world/ Islamic world), anthropology, political science, comparative religion, and music. Books represented include: *The Question of Palestine, Orientalism, and Covering Islam.*

### **5) Poem honoring Edward Said – in traditional Arabic Calligraphy**

Mahmoud Darwish is a well known Palestinian poet and a personal friend of Edward Said. He wrote a farewell poem in Arabic dedicated to Said in 2003. For the mural, we are selecting a verse of the poem that reads: *ana min hunaak, ana min huna*, which translates to: I am from there, I am from here. The selection of this poem serves many purposes: it recognizes Said's identity as an Arab-American and reflects the identities of others in the diaspora. Arabic calligraphy, with many styles, is an art that has been used to decorate architectural monuments, manuscripts, and objects of daily life for over 1,400 years. The Arabic poem noted above will be rendered in an artistic form to enhance the Arab and Eastern influence of the mural.

### **6) Poem honoring Edward Said – English Translation**

The same verse noted above in (no. 5) is rendered in English on the Wall of Jerusalem.

### **7) Handala**

Handala is a cartoon character and a Palestinian cultural icon that reminds the world of the unresolved Palestinian refugee problem. Handala is holding a pen symbolizing that the pen is mightier than the sword. Like Naji al-Ali, the author of the Handala cartoon, Edward Said used his pen to struggle for peace and justice. In the other hand Handala holds a key, artistically rendered as Al-Awda [Return] in Arabic Calligraphy. The key is physical evidence and a reminder of origins that Palestinians collectively long for. As Professor Edward Said (2003) states the key is kept in Palestinian households "to preserve the memory of a period when our existence was relatively whole. Memory is a powerful collective instrument for preserving identity." Professor Said fought for the recognition of refugees' right of return to their origins.

David Barsamian, Edward Said, *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward Said*, 2003.

#### **8) Cactus Trees**

Cactus trees (Sabr in Arabic) which has a double meaning, of cactus pears and patience. They represent Palestinian people's desire for peace and patience waiting for it. It is a resilient plant and part of the landscape of Palestine.

#### **9) Dove**

The dove is the universal symbol of peace and represents the Palestinian desire for a peace for all people. Two doves are rendered in Arabic calligraphy using the word "Salam" which is Peace in Arabic.

#### **10) Olive Tree**

Olive trees are indigenous to the land of Palestine. Palestinians have a deep cultural connection to the olive tree because it represents their subsistence, their deep history and their profound connection to the land that gives them life. Furthermore, the olive branch is a universal symbol for peace which is consistent with the most important theme of Palestinians' desire for peace.

#### **11) Children Reading**

Children are the bearers of the future who will carry on the deep cultural traditions of the Palestinians. Their presence on the mural represents the recognition of Palestinian children's right to freedom, life, and education. The children reading a book complements the murals overall theme and its dedication to a great writer.

#### **12) Postage Stamp**

With the intention that one day Said will be recognized on a U.S. postage stamp as one of the greatest thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, The postage stamp includes the name of Edward Said in both Arabic and English.

#### **13) New York Landscapes**

The landscape of New York, where Said spent most of his life in exile, is represented by a building at Columbia University, where he taught, and New York City monuments including the Chrysler and Empire State Buildings.

#### **14) Golden Gate Bridge**

In addition, the Golden Gate Bridge, in conjunction with images of the New York City landscape illustrates the vast geographical scope and reach of Palestinian diaspora in the United States.

#### **15) Malcolm X Plaza**

Cesar Chavez Students Center's Malcolm X Plaza is included in recognition of Student activism at San Francisco State University, as well as to pay homage to the connection between the Palestinian-American and other Civil and Human Rights struggles.

#### **16) Piano Keys**

The piano keys honor Edward Said's artistic talent. They also honor his efforts in using music to bridge the Palestinian-Israeli divide (Riding 2006). Together with conductor Daniel Barenboim, he created the East-West Diwan Orchestra in 1999, featuring young Israeli and Palestinian musicians.

Alan Riding, *Music: Harmony Across A Divide*, New York Times, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006

#### **17) A quotation by Edward Said**

The following quotation by Edward Said is taken from his most influential book *Orientalism*: "Humanism is the only, and I would go so far as saying, the final resistance we have against inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history."

#### **18) Traditional Arabic Calligraphy**

Each quotation in the mural is translated into Arabic and rendered in a traditional Arabic calligraphy style, recognizing the Arabness of Palestinian culture and demonstrating the importance of art, language, and culture to Arabs.