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THE ART NEWSPAPER

**San Francisco school board votes to
preserve but conceal a controversial mural**

**Its 4-3 decision reverses an earlier vote to paint over a
1930s work that some parents and board members found
racist and damaging to students**

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14th August 2019 17:43 BST



Visitors viewing a mural at George Washington High School in San Francisco at an open house earlier this month AP Photo/Eric Risberg

In a compromise that reflects a broad divide, the San Francisco Board of Education has narrowly voted to cover a controversial mural at a high school but not destroy it.

The 4-3 vote on Tuesday to conceal the 1930s mural, depicting the life of George Washington, amended a unanimous vote by the board in June to paint over it. The earlier decision had stirred **broad dissent**, with many arguing that the Depression-era work had artistic merit and offered a historic critique of the nation's first president.

Others argued that the mural should be permanently erased on the ground that its depiction of a slain Native American and scenes of slaves at work on Washington's plantation was racist and damaging to students.

The 1,600-sq.-ft mural was painted by a Russian immigrant, Victor Arnautoff, as a commission by the Works Progress Administration. Under the board's 4-3 decision, the school system will cover it with panels, rendering it invisible. But digital images of the work will be available to students, art historians and others.