

Lawrence Lukshar
Rules 5/3/22

RE: Opposition to 2022-0265 calling for a Public Referendum on Historical Monuments

Re. the Referendum language:

It's extremely vague. The language makes no mention of the specific monument(s) in question. If read literally, one would assume the referendum aims to remove all historical monuments and markers from city-owned land. The language can easily be misunderstood by the average voter.

Two stark downsides to the referendum:

1. Referendums engage the general population to produce a decision on a topic in which they typically have relatively low information on. This makes them especially vulnerable to producing decisions based on false information and/or unrealistic beliefs about what alternatives are possible - often stoked by opportunistic actors within the political system.
2. Referendum campaigns themselves can be savagely divisive, especially when the prospect of a narrow victory tempts campaigners to use every argument at their disposal. Look no further than the referendum campaigns in the UK, Colombia and Australia recently.

Putting this issue to a referendum would not be healthy for Jacksonville:

In the words of the late, great, Tommy Hazouri, "[Re. the HRO Referendum] ... It's not very healthy for the city. A referendum will further divide discrimination in Jacksonville. I have always maintained if you want to have a referendum, you do it on the big ticket items. You do it on sales tax, not on human rights."

City Council should lead on this issue:

Putting this issue up to a referendum is a clear abdication of responsibility by pushing off tough decisions to the voters. We shouldn't do this each time the minority of constituents make a great amount of noise calling for inappropriate action. Good leaders will take this issue without fear and address it with grace - this is the burden of leadership within a republic.

RE. Support for 2022-0232 Resolution to Remove Monuments Glorifying the Confederacy

Myth: Removing Confederate monuments is erasing history.

Truth: I am not advocating the removal of the history of the Civil War, the history of the Confederacy, or the history of slavery. History is taught in classrooms and museums through speeches, diaries, letters, interviews, oral histories, photographs, newspaper articles, government documents, poems, novels, plays, and music. Statues, by contrast, are erected to glorify their subjects, rarely do they teach history, and in this specific instance, the individual(s) portrayed in the “Women of the Southland” statue glorify its subjects for their fight for the continuance of slavery and therefore should not be kept in a place of public reverence.

Myth: Monuments teach history, therefore we should keep them up.

Truth: While some monuments educate, the “Women of the Southland” monument does not. Instead, this monument is about values – this monument reveres. Objectively speaking, we don’t learn history from this monument, but we see a public display of the myth of the Lost Cause, which claims the cause of the Confederate States during the American Civil War was just, heroic, and not centered on slavery.

Myth: The cause of the Confederate States during the American Civil War was just, heroic, and not centered on slavery.

Truth: In its simplest terms, the war came about because the southern states seceded. The southern states seceded to protect and defend the institution of slavery.

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How do we know? They openly said so at the time of secession. Proudly. Openly. Repeatedly:

Mississippi - “Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery – the greatest material interest in the world”:

Mississippi

A Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of the State of Mississippi from the Federal Union.

In the momentous step which our State has taken of dissolving its connection with the government of which we so long formed a part, it is but just that we should declare the prominent reasons which have induced our course.

Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery-- the greatest material interest of the world. Its labor supplies the product which constitutes by far the largest and most important portions of commerce of the earth. These products are peculiar to the climate verging on the tropical regions, and by an imperious law of nature, none but the black race can bear exposure to the tropical sun. These products have become necessities of the world, and a blow at slavery is a blow at commerce and civilization. That blow has been long aimed at the institution, and was at the point of reaching its consummation. There was no choice left us but submission to the mandates of abolition, or a dissolution of the Union, whose principles had been subverted to work out our ruin. That we do not overstate the dangers to our institution, a reference to a few facts will sufficiently prove.

Source: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/declaration-causes-seceding-states>

South Carolina – left the Union because of “an increasing hostility from non-slaveholding States to the institution of slavery”:

The same article of the Constitution stipulates also for rendition by the several States of fugitives from justice from the other States.

The General Government, as the common agent, passed laws to carry into effect these stipulations of the States. For many years these laws were executed. **But an increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the institution of slavery, has led to a disregard of their obligations, and the laws of the General Government have ceased to effect the objects of the Constitution.** The States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa, have enacted laws which either nullify the Acts of Congress or render useless any attempt to execute them. In many of these States the fugitive is discharged from service or labor claimed, and in none of them has the State Government complied with the stipulation made in the Constitution. The State of New Jersey, at an early day, passed a law in conformity with her constitutional obligation; but the current of anti-slavery feeling has led her more recently to enact laws which render inoperative the remedies provided by her own law and by the laws of Congress. In the State of New York even the right of transit for a slave has been denied by her tribunals; and the States of Ohio and Iowa have refused to surrender to justice fugitives charged with murder, and with inciting servile insurrection in the State of Virginia. Thus the constituted compact has been deliberately broken and disregarded by the non-slaveholding States, and the consequence follows that South Carolina is released from her obligation.

Source: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/declaration-causes-seceding-states>

Texas – citing “an unnatural feeling of hostility to these Southern States and their beneficent and patriarchal system of African slavery”:

In all the non-slave-holding States, in violation of that good faith and comity which should exist between entirely distinct nations, the people have formed themselves into a great sectional party, now strong enough in numbers to control the affairs of each of those States, based upon **an unnatural feeling of hostility to these Southern States and their beneficent and patriarchal system of African slavery**, proclaiming the debasing doctrine of equality of all men, irrespective of race or color-- a doctrine at war with nature, in opposition to the experience of mankind, and in violation of the plainest revelations of Divine Law. They demand the abolition of negro slavery throughout the confederacy, the recognition of political equality between the white and negro races, and avow their determination to press on their crusade against us, so long as a negro slave remains in these States.

Source: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/declaration-causes-seceding-states>

Virginia – Robert E. Lee’s home state making clear that their cause was in line with the other “Slaveholding Southern States” in wanting to defend that institution at all costs:

Virginia

THE SECESSION ORDINANCE.
AN ORDINANCE TO REPEAL THE RATIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BY THE STATE OF VIRGINIA, AND TO RESUME ALL THE RIGHTS AND POWERS GRANTED UNDER SAID CONSTITUTION.

The people of Virginia, in their ratification of the Constitution of the United States of America, adopted by them in Convention on the twenty-fifth day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-eight, having declared that the powers granted under the said Constitution were derived from the people of the United States, and might be resumed whensoever the same should be perverted to their injury and oppression; and the Federal Government, having perverted said powers, *not only to the injury of the people of Virginia, but to the oppression of the Southern Slaveholding States.*

Source: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/declaration-causes-seceding-states>

Look beyond these declarations to comments from leaders of the Confederacy, and listen to what issues they say their cause and their new country, the Confederate States of America, were dedicated.

Here's the "Cornerstone Speech" by Vice President of the Confederacy, Stephan Alexander: *"Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery – subordination to the superior race – is his natural and normal condition."*

Cornerstone Speech

Savannah; Georgia, March 21, 1861

But not to be tedious in enumerating the numerous changes for the better, allow me to allude to one other -- though last, not least. The new constitution has put at rest, forever, all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institution -- African slavery as it exists amongst us -- the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution. Jefferson in his forecast, had anticipated this, as the "rock upon which the old Union would split." He was right. What was conjecture with him, is now a realized fact. But whether he fully comprehended the great truth upon which that rock stood and stands, may be doubted. The prevailing ideas entertained by him and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old constitution, were that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally, and politically. It was an evil they knew not well how to deal with, but the general opinion of the men of that day was that, somehow or other in the order of Providence, the institution would be evanescent and pass away. This idea, though not incorporated in the constitution, was the prevailing idea at that time. The constitution, it is true, secured every essential guarantee to the institution while it should last, and hence no argument can be justly urged against the constitutional guarantees thus secured, because of the common sentiment of the day. Those ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error. It was a sandy foundation, and the government built upon it fell when the "storm came and the wind blew."

Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery -- subordination to the superior race -- is his natural and normal condition. [Applause.] This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth. This truth has been slow in the process of its development, like all other truths in the various departments of science. It has been so even amongst us. Many who hear me, perhaps, can recollect well, that this truth was not

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If nothing else, take it from Robert E. Lee when he summed up his feelings when asked to attend a meeting commemorating Civil War monuments: *"I think it wiser not to keep open the sores of war, but to follow the example of those nations who endeavor to obliterate the marks of civil strife and to commit to oblivion the feelings it engendered."*

The widely heralded meeting of the officers, (U.S and Confederate,) who took part in the battle of Gettysburg, to mark the operations of both armies on the field, by enduring memorials of granite, has proven, as many expected a great farce. But few of the prominent Northern officers were present and only two Confederate officers of minor grades. The Hotel man did not make as much as he expected, when he got up the idea.

Gen. Lee was invited and forwarded the following reply:

Lexington, VA., August 5, 1869.

Dear Sir--Absence from Lexington has prevented my receiving until to-day your letter of the 26th ult., inclosing an invitation from the Gettysburg Battle-field Memorial Association, to attend a meeting of the officers engaged in that battle at Gettysburg, for the purpose of marking upon the ground by enduring memorials of granite the positions and movements of the armies on the field. My engagements will not permit me to be present. I believe if there, I could not add anything material to the information existing on the subject. I think it wiser, moreover, not to keep open the sores of war but to follow the examples of those nations who endeavored to obliterate the marks of civil strife, to commit to oblivion the feelings engendered. Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,
R. E. Lee.

The New York *Herald* and other Northern papers were down on perpetuating the memory of Gettysburg. The Democratic Watchman, (Pa.) expresses their sentiments in short, which for its succinctness and pith, we copy below:

Source: Virginia Center for Digital History (VCDH) (University of Virginia)

Thank you for reading.