

The Whole Truth Needs To Be Told About this Monument

We believe this Confederate monument, which was placed here on the Courthouse grounds in 1916, reflects the racist views of the Jim Crow era when African Americans were subjected to pronounced racial discrimination, segregation, and racial injustices. An honest reading of history reveals that there was a movement in South during the first two decades of the 20th century to purchase and place Confederate monuments in prominent public places to not only to honor those who fought for the Confederacy but to also reinforce the Lost Cause narrative about the Civil War that included beliefs about white supremacy (see *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* by David Blight, Harvard Press).

We concur with the perspective of the Southern Poverty Law Center regarding the symbols of the Confederacy that can be found all over the South. This anti-racism center says “the argument that the Confederate flag and other displays represent “heritage, not hate” ignores the near-universal heritage of African Americans whose ancestors were enslaved by the millions in the South. It trivializes their pain, their history and their concerns about racism — whether it’s the racism of the past or that of today. And it conceals the true history of the Confederate States of America and the seven decades of Jim Crow segregation and oppression that followed the Reconstruction era.”

We have discovered too that “there is no doubt among reputable historians that the Confederacy was established upon the premise of white supremacy and that the South fought the Civil War to preserve its slave labor. The 1861 Texas Ordinance of Secession provided the justification for joining the Confederacy. It stated: *“We hold as undeniable truths that the governments of the various States, and of the confederacy itself, were established exclusively by the white race, for themselves and their posterity; that the African race had no agency in their establishment; that they were rightfully held and regarded as an inferior and dependent race, and in that condition only could their existence in this country be rendered beneficial or tolerable.”*

Despite the desire of some to romanticize the history of the Confederacy, we maintain that the truth about this Jim Crow era edifice needs to be told for the sake of racial reconciliation today. This monument reflected the period (1915) when D.W. Griffith and Thomas Dixon produced the motion picture- *The Clansman*- a racist epic film about the victimized South and the heroism of the Ku Klux Klan, that later gained national success in the retitled movie- *Birth of a Nation*.

Rather than destroy these Confederate monuments, we concur with the perspective of the Atlanta History Center about adding historical interpretative plaques that note “Our understanding of history changes over time. Civil War monuments remain important reminders of how history can be influenced by false ideas and misconceptions. This monument was created to recognize the dedication and sacrifice of Americans who fought to establish the Confederate slave-holding republic. Yet, this monument must now remind us that their loss actually meant liberty, justice, and freedom for millions of people- a legacy that continues for all of us today.”

Consequently, we have been asking the Williamson County Commissioners Court to allow the Texas Historical Commission to place an interpretive historical marker next to this Confederate monument to correct the racial blindness that perpetuates a false belief about the purpose of this Jim Crow era symbol of white supremacy and to affirm that we no longer embrace these views. We believe a more truthful history of this monument and its symbolism would contain the points listed on the back of this flyer.

(This information was prepared for distribution by the Cultural and Historical Advocacy Team of Courageous Conversations on Race in Georgetown, www.CourageousConvoGTX.com)

To provide an honest summary of the historical background and interpretation regarding the erection of this Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Georgetown in 1916, ***we suggest the following outline of historical facts for such a subject marker to be placed next to this Confederate monument:***

1. Although one of two delegates from Williamson County voted against secession from the Union on February 2nd, 1861, Texas joined the Confederate States of America on March 11, 1861.
2. The Texas Ordinance of Secession stated that the purpose of that action was to maintain slavery in this state, claiming “as undeniable truths that ...the African race... were rightfully held and regarded as an inferior and dependent race, and in that condition only could their existence in this country be rendered beneficial or tolerable.”
3. After the Civil War, the United States Constitution was amended in the late 1860s to grant freedom, bestow citizenship, and guarantee the right to vote to the former male slaves.
4. This Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Monument was erected in 1916 to honor the military service of citizens of Williamson County who fought for the Confederacy. Along with others like it erected in this same time period throughout the South, this monument reflected the Jim Crow era of our history when African Americans were subjected to racial discrimination, segregation, and injustices, inscribed by law.
5. This plaque is installed in this year-*(date to be added at time of installation)* -to deepen the understanding of our racial history and to move forward to bring dignity and harmony to all members of our diverse community.