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Newspaper: The Times, Gainesville

Address: 345 Green St. NW

City: Gainesville

State: GA

ZIP: 30503

Phone: 770-532-1234

Fax: 770-532-0457

E-Mail:
kalbertson@gainesvilletimes.
com

Submitted by: Keith Albertson

Title of Person Submitting: Editor

Phone Number: 770-718-3400

E-mail Address: kalbertson@gainesvilletimes.com

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Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)

The Times attempted to find context and local angles relevant to the nation's debate on racism and Confederate symbols following the Charlottesville, Va., incidents. A march in our town was followed by a gathering and discussion at the Confederate monument in town and its role in perpetuating the symbolism of the Civil War, pro and con. In our editorials, we attempted to make a clear distinction between the right and wrong sides of the racial debate while attempting to acknowledge and address those who defend the memorials as Southern heritage. Our goal, as always, is to persuade and enlighten without adding fire to an already-emotional topic. Yet we sought to be clear that accepting our differences in a constructive way is the only reasonable option for a civilized society.

4A OPINION

Keith Albertson
Editor
770-718-3400
editor@gainesvilletimes.com

The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The Times
gainesvilletimes.com

Thursday, August 17, 2017

Racism isn't left-right; it's right-wrong

EDITORIAL

As conflicts escalate nationwide over racial issues, local residents gathered in a peaceful march Tuesday in Gainesville. They chanted "love not hate will make America great." We applaud and agree with that sentiment, and we're proud to see our community stand against white supremacy.

Yet we know the unity portrayed in that march is not true of our community at large; a quick scan of comments on a live video published by The Times on Facebook reveals some who are skeptics at best and haters at worst.

One commenter suggested people "should mind their own business." Another wrote "shut up and go back to work." Despite the marchers' declarations that their gathering wasn't political, others could not separate what they saw from a liberal agenda they oppose.

That's unfortunate. The spectrum is wide between Unite the Right and Antifa, two groups involved in the violent protests in Charlottesville, Va., but those issues aren't necessarily political in nature.

We can disagree about what should be done with confederate statues and monuments. We can disagree about how racism manifests itself in our society.

But we cannot disagree or entertain debate about whether one race is superior to another. That's an illegitimate premise that has nothing to do with liberal or conservative, but simply right and wrong.

This is not a right and left argument, which is in essence about the size and scope of government's role in our lives. Those who want to characterize legitimate ideological positions based on race are likely to paint everyone who holds conservative views into a corner with neo-Nazis and skinheads. That plays into the argument of those who claim all disagreements with Barack Obama's policies were based on his race, and that all conservative leaders are to blame for the rise of Donald Trump. All the gray area has been erased from the picture by extremists on both sides because they want to have this fight.

Everyone of all political views should unite against white supremacy. In fact, we have to. Marchers shouldn't sit down simply because their message makes others a bit uncomfortable. Racism sometimes exists openly and



SCOTT ROGERS | The Times

Participants take part in Tuesday's anti-racism march in Gainesville.

sometimes is more subtle — in the employer who doesn't look as seriously at the application because of an ethnic-sounding name, or the parents who prefer their daughter not go to the prom with someone of a different background.

Rather than face these issues, too many prefer to repress them. It is the dark family secret no one wants to talk about at the holiday dinner table. Many refuse to face it and divert the conversation to other matters.

For some, it's simply because

they don't care about the struggles people of color have endured throughout history. For most, it's likely the desire to forget a past that conflicts with the image of our country as we wish it to be. That's because we know down deep that the execution of what America is and should be hasn't always lived up to the ideal.

The Founding Fathers got an awful lot right in drawing up blueprints for a new kind of nation, one where class and nobility didn't guarantee a seat at the governing table, where freedom to follow one's fate wasn't determined by an accident of birth. But they built one huge, inherent flaw into the foundation: This great ideal didn't treat all people equally, allowing some to be treated as livestock and less than human.

Yet America's original sin plagued the nation throughout the 19th century, leading to a civil war that took more than 600,000 lives. It took another century of segregation before the end of government-supported apartheid got us closer to being a whole nation.

But there remain serious systematic problems in many aspects of society that need to be addressed and repaired to bring us closer to becoming a

truly free nation. We can't fix a problem, though, until we acknowledge it exists.

This denial by otherwise good people delays that effort. Those who claim "racism is dead, slavery is dead, get over it" can't see things from the other perspective. It took the country some 200 years to work on tearing down slavery, segregation and discrimination, yet many seem to think African-Americans should "move past it" in a fraction of that time.

Those who still face racial bigotry know it's still there. We owe it to our fellow Americans not to turn away when the subject comes up.

Tuesday's marchers spoke against hatred, a message that should never be silenced. We hope those of color in our community see that most of us support their dreams and stand against any effort to take away their rights and freedoms or diminish their role in American society.

Perhaps instead of belittling peaceful marchers, our commenters should close that Facebook page and go back to work themselves. Better yet, they should try listening to varying viewpoints before jumping into the fray — preferably in person.



In a PERFECT WORLD...

LISA BENSON | Washington Post Writers Group

LETTERS

Prayer, peace will lead us past evil that spurs injustice

Author Charles Dickens once wrote that we are living in the best of times and the worst of times, the age of wisdom, the age of foolishness.

Today, we are living in the age of foolishness in which a segment of society is acting foolishly without regard for human or animal life. The value of human life is priceless. I'm of the notion that evil is associated with foolishness. It is foolish to think one can cause trouble (evil) to fall upon another without realizing evil must first be let in by the enemy of good.

Life is so valuable that it will continue to give life unto itself. To ensure evil doesn't destroy His people, God put in place an indestructible tool, that mankind cannot destroy, but it will destroy the evil of humanity. The world as we know it was found upon prayer and the United States was established in prayer. Prayer is the secure stabilizer of all humanity in any community and every generation, whether spoken audibly or uttered in silence.

The uniqueness of prayer given to those who know God as saving grace for all humanity and are called by his name. Evil builds walls but prayer demolish all kinds of evil walls. Prayer is key to effective leadership and follow-up if it is to be successful.

No matter how rich, educated or the circle of friends one is associate, the key ingredient in both leader and follower is prayer. The prayers of the righteous keeps one focus with check and balances, and gives hope in despair, strength in weakness as well as emotional stability.

Thusly, prayer is neither Republican, Democratic or independent, nor is it just mainstream religious body or nondenomination, gender-specific, educated or uneducated, color or culture. It is the effective tool available to whosoever will use it and knows the value and power embodied within its words of its Creator. In the one with the ability to hear what is said and understand what is not spoken.

In March 1955, Claudette Colvin, a 15-year-old African-American girl, was infused with justice in an unjust society and was arrested for the refusal give up her seat on a bus to a white man. Nine months later, Rosa Parks gave birth to justice in an unjust society, through the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Today in an unjust and evil land, Heather Heyer lost her life in the Charlottesville, Va., peaceful protest. For me, this is the seat of injustice with a price too high for anyone to pay, in an attempt to destroy God's potential living witnesses in the land of the living. Prayer is the destroyer of evil to keep good alive.

the Rev. Evelyn Johnson
Gainesville

ONLINE

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Trump's right; bigotry wrong 'on many sides'

British writer and theologian G.K. Chesterton observed, "It is hatred that unites people — while love is always individual."

The use of hatred to mobilize has a long and bloody history. We should understand why it works so well. It taps into human weakness. It exploits the unwillingness of individuals to take responsibility for their own lives, to courageously confront life's ambiguities and inconsistencies, and still move forward constructively. It's so much easier to blame someone else.

This is what racism is about. Speaking to the horrible incident in Charlottesville, President Donald Trump condemned the "egregious display of bigotry and violence" on "many sides" that's "been going on for a long time in our country." The president appealed for the "hate and violence" to stop and that we "come together as Americans."

For these remarks the president is being attacked.

Immediately, former Vice President Joe Biden tweeted out "only one side." Congressional Black Caucus member Rep. Maxine Waters followed suit with the same.

But President Trump is right. The use of hate to blame others, the refusal to take personal responsibility for one's life, is going on and has been going on in our nation "for a long time" on "many sides."



STAR PARKER
www.urbanrenewal.org

Being honest about this does not justify the vile white supremacist violence and murder in Charlottesville. But to claim that these distorted individuals are the exclusive locus of bigotry in America does not help our cause.

The Black Lives Movement, for example, has been going on for a number of years, with rallies laced with threats, blame and violent language.

Eight police officers were murdered by young black men in Dallas and Baton Rouge last year. According to then-Dallas police chief David Brown, during the standoff in Dallas, the young black assailant "said he was upset at white people. The suspect said he wanted to kill white people, especially white officers."

We can't solve our problems if we refuse to be honest about them and if, in trying to solve them, we demonstrate the same behavior that caused them — suppression of the truth, blame, absence of personal responsibility.

I am astounded when those on the black left speak out self-righteously about white bigotry.

If not bigotry of the black left, how do we explain the absence of any mention of Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas in the new National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.?

Or the absence of any mention of America's first black secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, who grew up in Bir-

mingham, Ala., from the Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham?

As the black left moves to whitewash all evidence of the Confederacy and the Civil War from our history, it also wants to whitewash the present and pretend the only blacks in America are liberals. And while they do it, they claim a monopoly on tolerance.

The Charlottesville incident began with a movement from the left to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

In an interview several months ago, Rice was asked about removing statues of individuals who represent history that repels us. She said, "When you start wiping out your history, sanitizing your history to make you feel better, it's a bad thing."

Reality is what it is. Not what those with a political agenda choose it to be. And in this sense, Trump told the truth. Bigotry and violence is coming from "many sides" and it has been for a "long time."

How do we ultimately solve the problem? Here are the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from a speech he gave when he was 14 years old:

"We cannot have an enlightened democracy with one great group living in ignorance. ... We cannot be truly Christian people so long as we flout the central teachings of Jesus: brotherly love and the Golden Rule."

Star Parker is an author and president of the Center for Urban Renewal and Education and a columnist for Creators.

2D OPINION

Keith Albertson
Editor
770-718-3400
editor@gainesvilletimes.com

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The Times
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Sunday, August 20, 2017



"Your suit is ready for the town hall meeting, Congressman."

JIM POWELL | For The Times

EDITORIAL

Conflict set in stone

Gainesville's 'Old Joe' caught up in fight over statues, but can be used as a lesson

On any given Saturday, thousands of people pass by "Old Joe" and never give him a second thought. But Gainesville's monument to the Confederacy was the center of attention this weekend, the focal point of a demonstration, thankfully peaceful, geared toward having it join the rub-bish pile of history.

In light of the tragedy of Charlottesville, Va., similar demonstrations are taking place across the South, where Confederate memorials can be found in both big cities and small towns, and throughout a nation still working to heal wounds from a war that ended 150 years ago.

Long ignored as symbols of a largely forgotten past, such monuments have come to be associated with the scourge of white supremacy that was responsible for one death and many injuries in Virginia.

Previous efforts to remove such memorials lacked the momentum to move to fruition. This time may be different; some are being removed by official acts, others vandalized or destroyed, all the subject of intense debate and fresh scrutiny.

For some, statues of Confederate icons are seen as monuments to racists' ideals steeped in support for slavery, and should come down. To others, they are tributes to a war fought on Southern soil, memorials of ancestors who died in battle and the men who led them.

But it's past time to quit romanticizing the Civil War, and present it instead in proper context. It was no political upheaval over states' rights; it was a rebellion that led to more than 600,000 deaths, fought over whether slavery should be abolished, and the South was on the wrong side. That's the story that should be told by memorials scattered across the landscape.

It's important to acknowledge and remember history, warts and all, to learn from it and avoid repeating it, yet not by honoring the dishonored. The balance to strike is to reconcile these ideas into historic memorials that illuminate without offending.

Take the dispute at Stone Mountain and its carving depicting Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis, and where much of the park's land once was owned by a former Ku Klux Klan leader as site of regular cross burnings. State Rep. Stacey Abrams, a Democratic candidate for governor, wants to remove that image from the big granite rock.

Civil rights icon and former Atlanta Mayor Andy Young opposes



NICK BOWMAN | The Times

Gainesville's Confederate monument in the square, known as "Old Joe."

that effort, saying, "I think it's too costly to refight the Civil War. We have paid too great a price in trying to bring people together."

He's right. Such action would bring an enormous cost, money that could be used more productively than destroying a mere symbol. And when that image is gone, Georgians will still be as divided as they are now. Removing it would solve nothing.

Instead, use it and other Confederate memorials to explain why the war was fought. A prominent plaque in front of the mountain could read: "Lee, Jackson and Davis were key figures in the Confederacy's rebellion against efforts to rid the nation of the inhumane practice of slavery. The Confederacy lost the war, and the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves and started the nation toward a goal of racial equality."

Any statue or monument to Confederate valor should include such context. Rather than claiming its dedication to "Southern convictions" and extolling the patriotism of Confederate soldiers, Gainesville's Old Joe could serve as a reminder of the bloodshed in North Georgia over slavery, with the hope such deaths will never again be necessary to defend the sanctity of any race.

For every statue of a Southern icon like Lee, many others are dedicated

to the war's nameless foot soldiers. Old Joe is such a monument, on land owned by Hall County and leased to the Daughters of the Confederacy, who maintain it.

It's fair to distinguish between the men who instigated the Civil War and those who fought it. Confederate soldiers were seldom slave owners; most merely felt they were defending their homeland from invaders. Historian Shelby Foote told of one Rebel soldier, when asked by Yankees surrounding him why he was fighting, replied, "because you're down here."

Most of these statues have been in place for decades. They denote sentiments of a time long past, many erected while survivors of the Civil War still lived in the communities where they stand. They were meant to be memorials to sacrifice, not monuments to white supremacy.

Yet if any are to remain on public ground, they should be accompanied by educational materials that put the conflict into realistic perspective.

If not, they should be removed to private property, cemeteries, history centers or museums, such as Gainesville's Piedmont Hotel once owned by Confederate Gen. James Longstreet.

Destruction should be a last resort; they are still a part of our nation's history and can help tell the story of a time that should never be repeated.

In a similar vein, there is no place for the Confederate battle flag on public property. It has long been usurped by those who wield it as a weapon in a war of racial hatred, and seen now as a symbol of "white power." Those who feel it represents "Southern heritage" should find a better emblem, preferably from a more honorable period of history than that four-year stretch of madness and shame.

The South fought a war for the worst of causes, and lost it for the best of reasons. Continuing to relive it with discredited symbols glorifies that ugly period of history and brands their defenders either as the voices or the enablers of intolerance.

We can't undo history but we can use it as a learning tool to remember why the war was fought and its after-effects by turning every Confederate statue and symbol into historic lessons rather than icons to white supremacy.

Only then can we hope to move on and address more substantive issues resulting from the nation's painful history of discrimination.

Being less worse than Nazis is no badge of honor

Fighting Nazis is a good thing, but fighting Nazis doesn't necessarily make you or your cause good. By my lights this is simply an obvious fact.

The greatest Nazi-killer of the 20th century was Josef Stalin. He also killed millions of his own people and terrorized, oppressed, enslaved or brutalized tens of millions more. The fact that he killed Nazis during World War II (out of self-preservation, not principle) doesn't dilute his evil one bit.



JONAH GOLDBERG
goldbergcolumn@gmail.com

This should settle the issue as far as I'm concerned. Nazism was evil. Soviet communism was evil. It's fine to believe that Nazism was more evil than communism. That doesn't make communism good.

Alas, it doesn't settle the issue. Confusion on this point poisoned politics in America and abroad for generations.

Part of the problem is psychological. There's a natural tendency to think that when people or movements hate each other, it must be because they're opposites. This assumption overlooks the fact that many — indeed, most — of the great conflicts and hatreds in human history are derived from what Sigmund Freud called the "narcissism of minor differences."

Most tribal hatreds are between very similar groups. The European wars of religion were between peoples who often shared the same language and culture but differed on the correct way to practice the Christian faith. The Sunni-Shia split in the Muslim world is the source of great animosity between very similar peoples.

The young communists and fascists fighting for power in the streets of 1920s Germany had far more in common with each other than they had with decent liberals or conservatives, as we understand those terms today. That's always true of violent radicals and would-be totalitarians.

The second part of the problem wasn't innocent confusion, but sinister propaganda. As Hitler solidified power and effectively outlawed the Communist Party of Germany, the Communist International (Comintern) abandoned its position that socialist and progressive groups that were disloyal to Moscow were "fascist" and instead encouraged communists everywhere to build "popular fronts" against the common enemy of Nazism.

These alliances of convenience with social democrats and other progressives were a great propaganda victory for communists around the world because they bolstered the myth that communists were just members of the left coalition in the fight against Hitler, bigotry, fascism, etc.

This obscured the fact that whenever the communists had a chance to seize power, they did so. And often, the first people they killed, jailed or exiled were their former allies. That's what happened in Eastern Europe, Cuba and other places where communists succeeded in taking over the government.

If you haven't figured it out yet, this seemingly ancient history is relevant today because of the depressingly idiotic argument about whether it's OK to equate "antifa" — anti-fascist left-wing radicals — with the neo-Nazi and white supremacist rabble that recently descended on Charlottesville, Va. The president wants to claim that there were "very fine people" on both sides of the protest and that the anti-fascist radicals are equally blameworthy. He borrowed from Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity the bogus term "alt-left" to describe the antifa radicals.

The term is bogus for the simple reason that, unlike the alt-right, nobody calls themselves "the alt-left." And that's too bad. One of the only nice things about the alt-right is that its leaders are honest about the fact that they want nothing to do with traditional American conservatism. Like the original Nazis, they seek to replace the traditional right with their racial hogwash.

The antifa crowd has a very similar agenda with regard to traditional American liberalism. These goons and thugs oppose free speech, celebrate violence, despise dissent and have little use for anything else in the American political tradition. But many liberals, particularly in the media, are victims of the same kind of confusion that vexed so much of American liberalism in the 20th century. Because antifa suddenly has the (alt-)right enemies, they must be the good guys. They're not.

And that's why this debate is so toxically stupid. Fine, antifa isn't as bad as the KKK. Who cares? Since when is being less bad than the Klan a major moral accomplishment?

In these tribal times, the impulse to support anyone who shares your enemies is powerful. But it is a morally stunted reflex. This is America. You're free to denounce totalitarians wherever you find them — even if they might hate the right people.

Jonah Goldberg is an editor-at-large of National Review Online and a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Charles Krauthammer's column will return soon.

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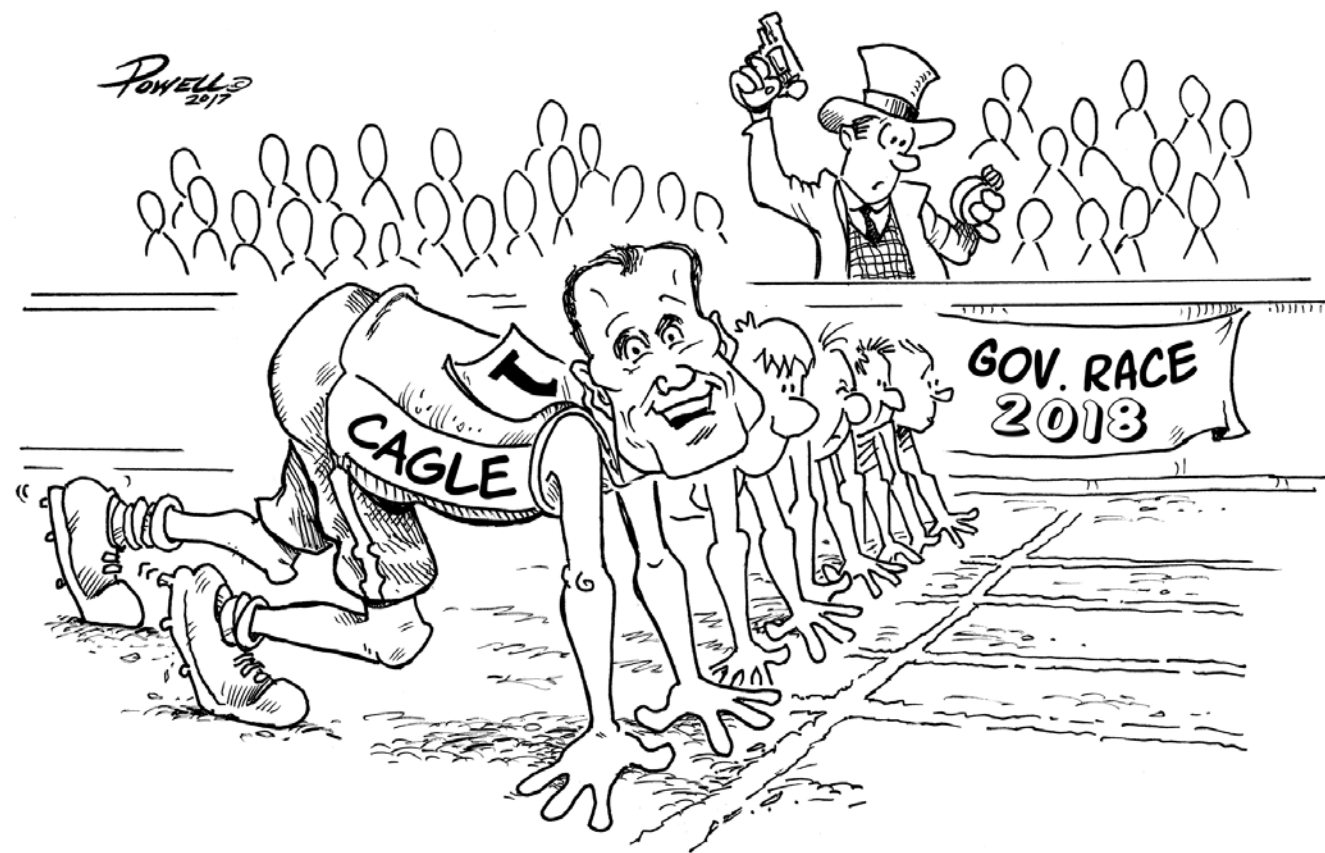
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Keith Albertson Editor | 770-718-3400 | editor@gainesvilletimes.com
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"Hey, they're already chasing me!"

JIM POWELL | For The Times

EDITORIAL

A right healing touch

Americans' divisions over race, monuments can be fixed if leaders take measured steps

As any owner of a home or vehicle knows, when something is broken, the longer you wait to get it fixed, the worse it becomes. That's true if it's a leaky roof, broken window, mysterious ping under the hood, or a split in a community.

The nation, state and region are at such a crossroads now with a divide that seems to be wider than ever, even if it often seems amplified by broadcast and social media to be worse than it is. Still, it's time to get out the toolbox and go to work on it.

This chasm has been jarred open by several seismic jolts: The protests and aftermath of the Charlottesville violence, the ensuing debate over Confederate memorials and a growing sense that a nation that used to unite under one set of symbols and ideals is pulling farther apart.

Whether it's the dispute over historic symbols or football players kneeling for the national anthem, Americans are cleaving into two distinct camps.

This has been exacerbated by a president who teeters between scripted and reasoned speeches, off-the-cuff rally remarks and overnight tweets, sending mixed messages that leave many not knowing where he stands.

That leaves it to other leaders, and to the rest of us, to take deep breaths and a measured approach, listen to all sides carefully and respectfully, then decide how best to bring us together again.

This is the next step in deciding the fate of Confederate memorials around the U.S. Some have already come down as many decry what they call an attempt to erase history. Before they all are toppled like those of Lenin or Saddam Hussein, community leaders should sit quietly and listen to all sides before deciding their fate.

Last Sunday, we made the case that while the memorials invoke painful memories of slavery and segregation for many, they still can be used to teach us about that period in history with the appropriate context. Since then, many have weighed in with letters and comments offering

their views. This is healthy; even when we disagree, we should try to see things from others' perspective. We should concede it's a complex issue that invokes strong emotions from a past that often provides equal parts pride and shame.

This doesn't need to be a one-size-fits-all approach. For some, removal may be best, particularly on college campuses worried about the messages sent. For others, relocation to a historic site or museum may be best. For the rest, adding some context by including a full description of the war's causes and effects would use them to teach current and future generations about the American holocaust that claimed more lives than all of the nation's wars combined, and the decade of institutional segregation that followed.

Whatever other factors may have been involved in the Civil War and its aftermath, there is no denying the influence of racial bigotry in the nation's history and its wounds that have yet to heal.

U.S. Sen. David Perdue, during a stop in Gainesville last week, agrees many monuments could remain in place but include the whole story of the Civil War, a compromise toward a truthful historic context. Yet he said in meeting people around the state, he found more reasoned reactions than what usually is seen on Facebook or cable TV.

"Most people might disagree on social issues, politics, but they agree they love their country," Perdue said. "The extremes, the fringe elements, are dominating the dialogue. They create an uproar that distracts from solutions."

It is easy to assume the loudest, shrillest voices on both extremes reflect the views of the vast majority, when the opposite is really true. We saw this last weekend during a protest at the Old Joe memorial in Gainesville, when opposing sides came together. Though the arguments were loud at times, they were mostly respectful and peaceful, and reflect the true nature of who we are.

In Georgia, these memorials are

protected by law that can only be changed by the legislature. Lawmakers should begin that discussion next year and listen to and respect all sides.

Now Gov. Nathan Deal has an opportunity as well. His first step was appointing DeKalb County CEO Michael Thurmond to the Stone Mountain board of directors, giving that body its first African-American voice as it decides the fate of its Confederate memorials.

Monday, the governor will help dedicate a sculpture of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Capitol grounds. It is perfect timing that amid the debate over a divisive period in history, the state is recognizing an Atlantan whose life's work was aimed at righting a historic wrong.

Georgia and its capital city have a paradoxical history of race relations that reflect the nation's struggle. Atlanta is home to both King and Lester Maddox; of a key battle that turned the Civil War and a birthplace of civil rights; where segregationists held sway in the Capitol for decades while, down the street, Ralph McGill supported tolerance and integration; and where generations of elected leaders fanned flames of hatred later brought under control by the likes of Carl Sanders, Ivan Allen and Andrew Young.

Deal has a chance to join their company and begin reuniting our state. He has made strides in his two terms, forging a strong alliance with Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed that shows both men as pragmatic leaders more concerned with serving constituents than stirring up political dust storms.

We need leaders like Deal, Reed, Perdue and others close to home to set an example for how best to reconcile the intersection of prejudice and heritage that stand erect in town squares and government buildings. It doesn't have to happen overnight, but if the right tone can be set, we can begin to bridge a gap that may grow wider down the road.

Monument removal is a symptom of cultural denial

The virus seems to be approaching its breakout phase. We could be looking at a full-scale epidemic here.

Zika? Ebola? Flu? Nope. We don't have a great word for this sickness yet. "Iconoclasm" — i.e., the destruction of images and monuments that offend this mob or that — comes close, but the toppling of statues is just one acute symptom of the fever.

Indeed, the fight over Confederate statues is just a discrete and more understandable eruption of the larger trend. This stuff has been happening for decades.

One of the first outbreaks involved the word "crusader." The term hurt the feelings of people who didn't know what they didn't know. Left-wing historians (and the Islamists who love them) convinced themselves that the Crusades were a trial run of Western imperialism and colonialism. They were, in fact, largely defensive wars intended to beat back the aggression of Muslim colonizers. Even the organization Campus Crusade for Christ changed its name to "Cru" lest people get the wrong impression.

Sports teams — most famously the Washington, D.C., NFL Franchise That Dare Not Speak Its Name — have been under increasing pressure to drop any association with Native Americans. Columbus Day is outré. And statues of Christopher Columbus may be heading to the pyre, if recent developments in New York City are any indication.

My National Review colleague Kyle Smith reports that Mayor Bill de Blasio has ordered a 90-day review of "all statues and monuments that in any way may suggest hate or division or racism, anti-Semitism — any kind of message that is against the values of New York City."

Translation: de Blasio wants a carefully composed list of stuff to tear down. Orderliness is the one concession de Blasio's brand of progressivism demands of the mob.

But fear not, de Blasio has made it clear that the iconic statue of Columbus in New York's Columbus Circle is "obviously ... one of the ones that will get very immediate attention because of the tremendous concerns about it." What's next, Smith wonders — Columbia University? The District of Columbia?

In New York, the drive to purge Columbus from the historical memory (save as a pioneer of imperialism, racism and genocide) is gaining newfound momentum.

"There obviously has been ongoing dialogue and debate in the Caribbean — particularly in Puerto Rico, where I'm from — about this same conversation that there should be no monument or statue of Christopher Columbus based on what he signifies to the native population ... (the) oppression and everything that he brought with him," Melissa Mark-Viverito, the speaker of the New York City Council, said this week.

I wonder what Colombians think about all this.

What fascinates me about this civilizational auto-immune disorder is how superficial it is. Mark-Viverito is from Puerto Rico. More than 95 percent of the people there speak Spanish. The dominant religion of Puerto Rico is Catholicism (85 percent). As far as I can tell, Mark-Viverito, who is of mixed European ancestry (her mother, Elizabeth Viverito, was of Italian descent and a prominent Puerto Rican feminist; her father, Anthony Mark, was a prominent doctor), does not speak Taino, the native language of the Arawak tribes who inhabited Puerto Rico when Columbus arrived. Rather, she speaks the languages of her alleged oppressors — Spanish and, of course, English. She even attended Columbia University. I could find no mention on the Internet that she has burned her diploma in protest.

My point is not that the world ushered in by Columbus has been very good to Mark-Viverito, though it obviously has. It is that toppling some statues or even incanting some nonsense about "cultural appropriation" cannot separate the iconoclasts from the culture they live in.

The mobs of students — and their enabling professors and administrators — renaming buildings and bowdlerizing the language are still products of Western civilization. Even the poseurs who think Googling a few phrases from Karl Marx and wearing a Che Guevara T-shirt make them anti-colonialists are disciples of Western thinkers. Where does Mark-Viverito think her mother's feminism came from? The Arawaks?

For centuries, to the extent that educated Muslims talked about the Crusades at all, it was to boast about how they emerged victorious from them. But Osama bin Laden and his ilk read too much Noam Chomsky and caught the Western disease of victimization and resentment.

That is the plague sweeping the land now. And tearing down some statues and renaming some streets isn't a cure, it's a symptom.

Jonah Goldberg is an editor-at-large of National Review Online and a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Charles Krauthammer's column will return in September.



JONAH GOLDBERG
goldbergcolumn@gmail.com

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