

August 24, 2020

Dear City Council and Mayor Tergin:

The Human Relations Commission was formed for the purpose of encouraging community involvement and the empowerment of all voices in our community through engagement and education.

This summer, our commission took testimony regarding a rock installation donated to the city in 1933 by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). The installation bears a short inscription, "Deciding against attack the Confederate Army under Gen. Sterling Price turned from Jefferson City, October 7, 1864. This marker dedicated April 6, 1933 by the Winnie Davis Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy." Although initially placed elsewhere, it is currently placed at a city-owned island in the middle of the intersection between Moreau Drive and Fairmount Boulevard.

Serious concern about both the history of the UDC and the accuracy of the marker were brought to the Commission's attention. In particular, the UDC was formed for the purpose of creating a nationwide historical narrative in support of the "Lost Cause" theory of the Civil War and the organization had a history of celebrating the Ku Klux Klan. In addition, the marker does not tell the real story of "The Battle That Never Was." Gen. Price did not "spare" our fair city out of benevolence or honor. Instead, his Confederate forces decided against attack because Jefferson City was well-fortified due to the efforts of Union troops and the people of our city.

The Commission recognizes that the continued presence of this marker in our community is met with mixed reactions. Many members of our community are not comfortable with the marker's continued presence. As one example, Commissioner Patsy Johnson told the Committee that she remembered walking by the marker on her way to school as a child – and that she saw it as a symbol of control – a marker not just of times when Black Americans were enslaved and men from the Confederacy were willing to fight and die to keep it that way, but also a reminder of white control and power over Blacks.

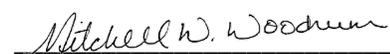
Our Commission recognizes the need to preserve history and our city has a remarkable story to tell about the Civil War and the Battle That Never Was. Our city has a deep and complicated history. It includes the efforts of Jefferson City area Black people, German Catholic immigrants, and Union soldiers who fought against slavery and, on the other side, Confederate forces in state government and Confederate sympathizers in our community who made life dangerous for Union soldiers stationed here. On the whole, however, Jefferson City was a Union town throughout the war.

The marker fails to accurately convey our city's history. Worse, it's continued existence without removal is a symbolic artifact of a revisionist history organization that no longer even has a presence here. Considering the real facts of our city's history and the organization that placed the marker, the Human Relations Commission firmly believes that it is necessary and appropriate for the city to remove the existing marker and replace it with a marker or monument that is accurate to our City's history.

Despite some press reports, it has never been the Commission's view that the marker should be removed without a replacement. To the contrary, we think that would be a mistake. The Commission respects and wants the City to celebrate its history. We simply believe it should be an accurate history that does not include any property donated by organizations that celebrated the KKK.

The Commission urges the elected members of the City Council and Mayor Tergin to seriously consider this recommendation and take action. We understand that many have a knee-jerk reaction to oppose such proposals. We simply ask that the City make a good faith effort to investigate the history of the UDC and the "Battle That Never Was" before making a final decision. This would include considering the views of organizations such as the Jefferson City NAACP and consulting with historians about these issues.

On Behalf of the Jefferson City Human Relations Commission:



Mitchell W. Woodrum, JC-HRC Chairperson