

August 12, 2020

Dear Governor Abbott,

We urge the removal of Confederate monuments and symbols displayed in buildings and on the grounds of our revered Texas Capitol. Changing its landscape to ensure it is a hallowed place for honoring the contributions of Texans of all races would be a meaningful first step in recognizing that our state's history is replete with discriminatory policies that negatively impact people of color, some of whom serve in the Texas Senate.

As the symbol of democratic government for all Texans, the Texas Capitol should reflect the highest ideals of liberty, fairness and unity. It is no place for statues and paintings that edify injustice and divisiveness. The state should join the numerous cities, universities and states around the country that have removed Confederate statues and other related symbols.

The issue of Confederate symbols in public spaces, including the Texas Capitol, is a long-standing one. Five years ago, after the racially-motivated murders committed at a church in Charleston, S.C., many Senators asked you to form a taskforce to review the Confederate monuments and symbols on the Texas Capitol grounds, in state parks and buildings, and in other public spaces (see enclosure). The sincere objective was to start a serious conversation about how best to honor Texas' heritage and history in a manner that is culturally appropriate and historically accurate. To date, no statewide taskforce has been created.

Those who oppose the removal of Confederate symbols say we must honor the contributions of past Texans and preserve history. However, it is that very history and intent of the Confederacy that is discriminatory and offensive. As stated plainly in "A declaration of the causes which impel the State of Texas to secede from the Federal Union" (February 2, 1861):

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.

Hopefully, these are the sentiments of a bygone era and are not shared by 21st Century Texans.

The murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and Ahmaud Aubery and the fatal shootings of Atatiana Jefferson, Rayshard Brooks and many other African Americans have sparked outrage around the country, leading to protests calling for criminal justice reform and other changes that would help restore faith in our system of government. In this crucial moment, we – legislators of all races and ethnicities – must act in good faith to ensure that the very grounds that enshrine the hopes of democracy, freedom and opportunity for all Texans, do not abet the forces of racial discrimination.

As members of the Texas Senate, we stand in solidarity against racism and all forms of discrimination. Together, we urge the removal of Confederate monuments and symbols from the Texas Capitol.

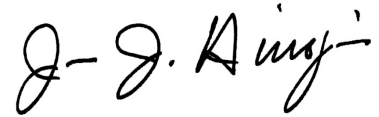
Sincerely,



Carol Alvarado
Senate District 6



Sarah Eckhardt
Senate District 14



Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa
Senate District 20



Nathan Johnson
Senate District 16



Eddie Lucio, Jr.
Senate District 27



José Menéndez
Senate District 26



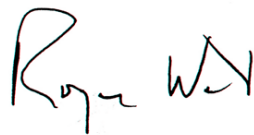
Borris Miles
Senate District 13



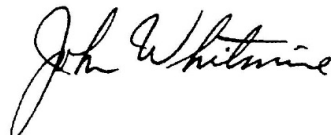
Beverly Powell
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Senate District 23



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Senate District 21

Encl: 7.16.2015 SHC Letter to Gov. Abbott, Lt. Gov. Patrick & Speaker Straus

cc: The Honorable Dan Patrick
Members of the Texas Senate