

From: PDR Land Use Admin
Sent: Thursday, June 17, 2021 4:38 PM
To: Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR
Subject: FW: The Monument at Libby Hill

From: Mary Lorino [<mailto:mary@lochdesign.com>]
Sent: Thursday, June 17, 2021 2:29 PM
To: PDR Land Use Admin <PDRLandUseAdmin@richmondgov.com>
Cc: Newbille, Cynthia I. - City Council <Cynthia.Newbille@Richmondgov.com>
Subject: The Monument at Libby Hill

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June 17, 2021

Dear Planning Commission Members,

I'm writing to object to, or at least slow down the process of removing the remaining Corinthian column and granite steps at Libby Hill Park. This icon has special meaning to me and many in the community.

The community has been left out of the conversation regarding the remains of the monument. Few, if any, in the community knew what was in the Ordinance. The decision to remove in full, was made during a pandemic. The people impacted have had little, if any, ability to interface with those making the decisions. Additionally, a number of people have no awareness of the decisions made and most likely will be very upset when they wake one morning and find the most prominent architectural feature of their neighborhood being carted away. I understand the complexity and difficulty of these decisions, however I believe it is a mistake to remove it and feel compelled to speak out.

The remaining pedestal at Libby Hill Park is an extremely valuable asset – the scale, the siting, the richness of the material and craftsmanship will not be replaced in our lifetime. It strikes me as a sad commentary that as a people we don't believe that we have the power and vision to reimagine the column – to claim it as our own. Across time, for economic reasons, as well as an awareness of natural resource value, monuments and their associated parts have been reused for purposes different from their intent. The Romans, in particular, repurposed the grand obelisks of others – they knew a thing of value when they saw it! Even societies that have been victimized have created purpose and meaning on the remaining pedestals once dedicated to statues of the despots that ruled them -- see the reused

plinths in Prague and Budapest that were once monuments to Stalin. I realize that this is not an exact comparison, but these reinterpretations do show the resiliency and spirit of people which can serve as a source of strength to future generations as well as present a warning of tragic human failings. I view the removal as a capitulation to the past rather than attempt to triumph over it. For me, it is a waste.

I was married 20' from its base, as a small child my adult daughter fell down its steps which caused a permanent dimple, and for 25 years it has oriented me in the world. When I've been away and I see it in the distance, I know I'm home. I realize this sounds self-absorbed, but people can form an attachment to an object, which has nothing to do with its original intent. An object can serve as a witness to one's life – this is true for vast numbers of people, those in the past, present and future - not just me.

Last summer, I tried to get a handle on my own feelings– I was truly conflicted and really wanted to understand whether something that meant so much to me could be causing pain to others. This was after George Floyd's murder, but before the statue had been removed. In a mask and in the summer heat, I interviewed about 20 people in the park – not enough to mean anything, but still it was enlightening. The truth is not one of them knew what the monument was memorializing – not one. After informing them that it is a Confederate monument dedicated to Soldiers and Sailors, the majority either wanted it removed because they found it oppressive or they relayed a sympathy that others might find it hurtful and thus it should be removed. There were only 3 people who thought it should remain exactly as is. What if when they asked me its meaning, I could have answered them differently? I believe we can change its meaning – I believe we already have. I think this feeling is shared – the spray painting and protest of it stopped as soon as the statue was removed. This is telling us something!!!

I realize others feel differently, but I would like to opportunity to hear from them – to hear heart felt reasons for why it can't be repurposed. Perhaps for others who feel like me, it would help lessen the loss.

Mary Lorino
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