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Should Confederate Monuments be Removed?

by Nick Leader

BEFORE I delve into this controversial topic, I would like to state two important parts of my background in regards to it. First, I was born in the North, Chicago to be specific; however, I grew up and have spent most of my life in the South. To my knowledge, I have no ancestors that fought for either side during the Civil War. Second, I am a military man. I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps at eighteen and left a week after graduating high school. With this noted, I full-heartedly believe that the Confederate monuments should remain standing to preserve the heritage of the South and as a national reminder of our history.

As a Northerner, it is hard to understand why so many southern people have such a strong opinion on a war that they lost; there still seems to be a disconnect between regions. For those who do not study history, it is easy to fall into the general opinion that the war was over the establishment of slavery. Slavery played a large part, and hopefully nobody is rejecting the fact that it was a horrid institution; however, the Civil War had so many more causes and factors. The biggest of which was the infringement of State's rights. If one reads the Declaration of Causes issued by Texas, Mississippi, Georgia and South Carolina, they would see that the issue of State's rights is discussed significantly more than slavery. Slavery was the spark to the fire of the Civil War, but the issue of State's rights was the firewood that allowed it to burn for so long. All this being said, Confederate monuments stand as a reminder that our federal government is formed by the people, for the people and we, as Americans, have the right and ability to fight for our beliefs. Although Southerners chose to fight to shackle men of other races, now their cause stands to remind us that we cannot, and should not, be shackled by our own government.

On a more personal standpoint, in regards to military service, Confederate monuments remind future generations of the valor and bravery that was displayed by men and women on both sides of the war. In every war there are good men who lay down their life for a cause they deem bigger than themselves; even if they do not fully understand the big picture, they have a sense of pride that drives them through. To take down the monuments is a degrading act that shames and infuriates proud, long-standing southern families. Furthering this, removal of such monuments portrays all of those who fought for the South as evil men who only fought to preserve slavery; however, this is not the case, a large majority of those who fought for the South had little or nothing to do with slavery. That is the problem our nation faces, as this generation has fallen low due to a lack of knowledge about its past adversities. These monuments should be preserved, not only for the families and heritage, but also for the memory of each individual man that fought for what he thought was right.

A large majority of history is written and preserved by the victorious side; little is ever recorded by the defeated and their memory and causes are often misplaced. This is not the case for the American Civil War; we have a vast amount of primary and secondary sources regarding battles, acts of government, personal lives and family hardships. To topple monuments that have stood for so long is to take history into our own hands and rewrite it in a skewed

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viewpoint. Just because the Civil War is seen as a blemish on American history, that does not mean we should attempt to cover it up. In life it is the small blemishes, scars and oddities that make us our own individual person that we can be proud of when we present ourselves to society. America is not perfect, it has never been and never will be, but by covering up our past how can we honestly present ourselves to other nations?

