

“CONFEDERATE HOLIDAY FUELS OPPRESSION”

It's past time for Texas to do away with Confederate Heroes Day. What are we celebrating?

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Imagine this:

Child: “Why do we have a holiday for Confederate Heroes Day?”

Grownup: “It honors the Civil War leaders who fought to keep Black people slaves.”

Huh? How does that sound to a Black child? What message does it send to a white child?

Continuing to celebrate this holiday perpetuates the culture of oppression of fellow Texans. This issue is before the Texas legislature NOW.

Honoring the Confederacy is an ongoing outrage to fellow Texans and an incitement to violence, from small insults to deadly force. Representative Jarvis Johnson from Houston, who authored the 2019 bill to remove this holiday, said, “These images and words [honoring the Confederacy] give some people the courage and even the audacity to do what they do to people of color, because it emboldens them” (Emily McCullar, “Why Texas Still Celebrates Confederate Heroes Day,” [Texas Monthly](#), July 3, 2020).

Research bears this out. Evidence presented at the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education trial in 1954 included the results of the famous “doll test.” In the 1940s, Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark, a husband-and-wife team of psychologists, studied the mental and emotional effects of segregation on African-American children ages three to seven. They showed the children dolls, identical except for color, to test children’s perceptions of race. According to [NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund](#), “A majority of the children preferred the white doll and assigned positive characteristics to it. The Clarks concluded that ‘prejudice, discrimination, and segregation’ created a feeling of inferiority among African-American children and damaged their self-esteem.”

That study was 80 years ago. Have we learned nothing? Are we still stuck in the 1940’s?
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In the words of Amanda Gorman, America’s first Youth Poet Laureate, on January 20, 2021:

The loss we carry,
a sea we must wade
We’ve braved the belly of the beast
We’ve learned that quiet isn’t always peace
The norms and notions of what just is
Isn’t always just-ice

Yes, this 47-year-old Texas state holiday “just is.” But no way it is “just-ice.” Continuing Ms. Gorman’s sea metaphor, this time in the words of the Bible, this Texas state holiday is “raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame” (Jude 1:13).

As former director of campus programs at the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life at Brandeis University, I feel that continuing to observe this holiday damages all Texans – Black, white, and every shade in between – and adds to national perceptions of Texas as oppressive and backwards. This is not the Texas I know and love. It’s time to abolish this shameful holiday. It’s way past time.

The issue of Confederate Heroes holiday is in front of the Texas legislature in this very session, right now. SOUND OFF!! Write your legislators. Find them at house.texas.gov/members/find-your-representative/