

1 June 2020

FROM: Sherman Neal II



TO: Mayor Bob Rogers

RE: Robert E. Lee Confederate Memorial

CC: Murray Chamber of Commerce  
Congressman James Comer (KY District - 1)  
Representative Larry Elkins (KY District - 5)  
Murray City Council

Mayor Rogers,

I am a resident of Murray, Kentucky. I am a black male. I am no longer willing to accept state sponsored symbols of institutional racism in my community. The erection and maintenance of the Robert E. Lee confederate memorial statue located on the courthouse square is an affront to all residents who support notions of equality and value the American justice system. The "friendliest small town in America" must remove this symbol of oppression if the purported friendliness extends to its black residents.

The construction and dedication of the statue in 1917 coincided with the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the Purchase area, adoption of the neo-confederate sponsored "lost cause" myth, lynchings, and concerted state efforts to curtail civil rights for black citizens. Robert E. Lee, the commander of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, does not have significant historical ties to the city or Murray civil war veterans serving in the confederacy.

Do we as a city want to maintain the visual of an oppressor guarding the gates of justice as representative of our collective values? Can we condemn current day racist persons or groups while we simultaneously praise a racist suppressive regime? No. Symbols of hate intended to intimidate have no place in this community in 2020.

When my 3 year old son, and 2 year old daughter, ask "who's that man and why is he up there?" I will inform them that the city worked in conjunction with the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Ku Klux Klan by proxy, to place him up there with the intent to keep black people quiet and subservient. I will then tell him that we will not be intimidated by any symbol and will never be subservient to any man. We will tear down this and other actual/symbolic barriers to justice - eventually.

I hope you will take swift action based on precedent set by other progressive cities to remove symbols of hatred that perpetuate injustice against minorities. I am willing to volunteer my assistance in this endeavor.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sherman Neal II".

Sherman Neal II

