



ALBEMARLE CHARLOTTESVILLE
Historical Society

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STATEMENT ON MONUMENTS AND RACIAL EQUALITY
September 2020

The Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society exists to research, explore, and discuss issues of historical concern and relevance. We believe in the worth and dignity of every human being. We value discovery, integrity, and diversity in the writing and telling of history. We know that our history—local, regional, and national—impacts the present, shaping our institutions and defining who we are as a people. At times, history confronts our ideals and challenges our assumptions about the core values of our nation.

Like many southern communities, we have inherited notorious monuments that glorify the Confederacy and the Lost Cause mythology. Those monuments became the ostensible basis for the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in the summer of 2017. The events of 2017 were a wake-up call for this community and, in many ways, for the nation, revealing the deep polarities that divide us locally and nationally. In 2020, the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Rayshard Brooks, following a pattern of so many others before them, starkly raised fundamental questions about systemic racism that pollutes the social fabric of our nation.

We believe it is important for people to grapple with the history of white supremacy in our country and to understand its implications and the pain caused for our diverse citizenry. We believe it is important to recognize the ways that mischaracterizations of history, as represented through such monuments, continues to divide us. We believe that we must engage in thoughtful discussion and action within our communities to confront the ramifications of slavery and Jim Crow. We believe the systemic racism based on these historical realities leads to the needless deaths and inequities suffered by Black people today. We further believe that white supremacy ideologies must be understood and confronted to move our nation forward toward healing.

Removal of monuments from our public spaces will not change our history. Inequality, injustice, and division remain, and the conversations and conflict over our complex past will continue. The Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society is neither interested in erasing our history nor subtracting from it. Rather, we wish to add to our knowledge and encourage the deep study of our complicated past. We believe that each region of this nation must focus on the ways that past wrongs impact current circumstances. We intend to use our community's history to inform current and future dialogue and to be a part of the process of healing and repair for the citizens of Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville.