

February 9, 2017

[Address removed.]

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President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

Since the administration of Woodrow Wilson, presidents annually have sent a wreath to the Confederate Monument at Arlington National Cemetery. Prior to the administration of George H. W. Bush, this was done on or near the birthday of Jefferson Davis. Starting with George H.W. Bush, it has been done on Memorial Day.

I ask you to not send a wreath or any other commemorative token to the Arlington Confederate Monument during your administration.

There are several reasons as to why this monument, a product of what historians call the “nadir in American race relations,” should not be honored.

The Arlington Confederate Monument is a monument to traitors who through violent insurrection attempted to secede from the United States of America. It is a monument that monumentally endorses secession and treason.

In the United States of America today there are multiple secessionist movements. These movements might seem marginal, but there are reasons to take them seriously.

The long historical view of secession movements has shown that often they start with very little public support, but over time they can suddenly be a real threat to the integrity of the nation. They are like seemingly unimportant hairline cracks that when an object is put under stress suddenly open up. The Quebec and Scottish movements both started out with very little support. The Scottish movement for decades was viewed as insignificant. Yet in a recent 2014 Scottish referendum on independence, the vote to remain a part of the United Kingdom was only 55.3%. Now there is talk of another referendum because of the British vote for Brexit. A nation whose integrity is open to question on the occasion of one major political event or issue or another will not long endure.

Though many might think that the secession of an American state from the United States of America is farfetched, recent actions by the Texas State Republican Party in 2015 and 2016 show that it is not very farfetched at all.

The Texas Nationalist Movement in 2015 and 2016 lobbied for a measure to place the question of Texas secession on the state ballot in the 2016 Republican primary. What is disturbing is that they very nearly succeeded and what is even more disturbing is the lack of patriotism of the Texas State Republican Party in opposing this movement.

At the December 2015 meeting of the sixty-member State Republican Executive Committee (SREC) the secession measure was actually voted out of the resolution committee for a vote by the full SREC, and then voted down by a margin to 2 to 1 by the SREC. What is disturbing is that the SREC refused to have a roll call vote on it, had a voice vote, and then upon complaint of the secessionists, had a stand up vote on it, done so fast that it was hard to see how individuals voted. It is astounding that it got out of the resolution committee, it is astounding that it got any votes at all in the vote by the SREC, and it is astounding that all sixty members of the SREC wouldn't want to go on record that they are proud to be American citizens and wish to continue to be so.

Even worse at the May 2016 Texas State Republican Party convention the Platform Committee only voted down the secession ballot measure 16 to 14 with one member abstaining. You would think the vote would easily be 31 to 0 by a party which represents themselves as mainstream. How patriotic is the Texas State Republican Party when a secession measure is narrowly defeated? I hope that your administration doesn't appoint anyone to office that supported secession in Texas or anyone that wasn't willing to clearly stand up against secession.

Numerous opinion polls have shown that a surprisingly large percentages, (in the double digits, often in the twenties), support state secession. An appalling development as I write this letter is that the support for secession in California as reported in a Reuters/Ipsos poll on 1/23/2017 reached 32%. One Minnesota Republican Congressional District Conventions in 2010 passed resolutions supporting a state's right to secede. Another Minnesota Congressional District in the same year came within 2 votes of passing a resolution supporting a state's right to secede. I hope that your administration doesn't appoint anyone who supported secession in Minnesota, and for that matter I hope you don't appoint anyone who supported secession anywhere in the United States.

Secession movements are even more dangerous to the integrity of a nation when they have the support of a large hostile foreign power. Though the involvement of Russia in American affairs has been a point of partisan contention in the past few months, I can assure you that Russian support for secession movements is very real. The head of one California secession movement lives in Russia. The Texas Nationalist Movement has had leaders go to meetings in Russia. Russian groups have even had the pro-secession League of the South speak at events. Having a large powerful nation supporting a small secessionist group certainly gives a secessionist group moral support, and a feeling that what they are doing is recognized as significant and important. As far as I can ascertain

there has been no material support of these groups, but I ask that your administration be vigilant in making sure that doesn't happen.

Secession is a threat to the integrity of the United States of America. Unfortunately across the nation and at the Arlington National Cemetery, one of the most sacred sites of our nation, we have monuments to honor secessionists who through violent insurrection sought to tear America apart. We normalize secession everyday with these monuments. It should not be surprising that secession is chosen by various groups as an option when they have some gripe when we portray violent secessionists as heroes.

If the Confederates had gotten their way, there would be no America to make great again. Tearing America into different nations doesn't make America great, it terminates America.

Not sending a wreath to the Arlington Confederate Monument would be an important message: that secession is not acceptable.

The Arlington Confederate Monument insults and denounces Abraham Lincoln, the first elected Republican president. Inscribed on the monument are the words "*Victrix causea Diis placuit, sed victa Catoni.*" This is a line from a poem "Pharasalia" by the Roman poet Lucan. It is used to smear Lincoln as a tyrant and the United States of America as being tyrannical. A speech by Fr. Alister C. Anderson, as Chaplain-in-Chief of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), at the 85th anniversary of the dedication of the Arlington Confederate Monument in 1999, published in the *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 4 2000, explains the meaning of this inscription as follows:

Victix causa, "the winning cause (or side)", referring to Julius Caesar's inordinate ambition and his lust for total power and control, is compared with President Lincoln and the Federal Government's desire and power to crush and destroy the South. Next we read diis placuit which translates "pleased the gods." In this context, gods are with a small "g" and refer to the gods of mythology; the gods of money, power, war and domination, greed, hate, lust and ambition. Next we come to the noble climax of this quotation, sed victa cantoni which translates "but the losing side (or cause) pleased Cato". Here Lucan, the poet, refers to Pompey's fight to retain the old conservative, traditional republican government of Rome. Even though Pompey was defeated by Caesar's greater military power, his defeat, nevertheless, please the noble Cato. And here, of course, Cato represents the noble aims of the Southern Confederacy. The South fought politically to maintain the Constitution which had guided her safely for eighty-seven years. She merely wanted to be left alone and governed by it. The aggression-minded totalitarian Northern government would not permit that and so she pleased the gods of abolitionism, transcendentalism, utopianism, state centralism, universalism, rationalism and a host of other "isms." [No italics in the original.]

Sending a wreath to the Arlington Confederate Monument endorses the monument and legitimizes this defamation of Abraham Lincoln. I ask you to consider these lines from a poem, "O Captain! My Captain!" by Walt Whitman:

O Captain! My Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring:

But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,

Where on the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

The fact that any wreath by any official has ever been sent to this monument with its smug, snarky slander of Lincoln is a disgrace.

I applaud your choice of a Lincoln Bible for your inaugural oath. This is a great repudiation of the neo-Confederate denunciations of Lincoln. However to send a wreath to the Arlington Confederate Monument with its inscription, "*Victrix causea Diis placuit, sed victa Catoni,*" is a mockery of your choice of the Lincoln Bible and renders it meaningless.

The monument isn't just a memorial to the dead. It is intended to glorify the Confederacy, a secession attempt to preserve slavery and white supremacy. It is also a monument to the defeat of Reconstruction and the triumph of white supremacy in America. This is clear in the speeches made at its dedication.

The monument was given to the Federal Government by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) which raised the funds to erect it. The UDC's reasons for the monument are instructive. In the address of Mrs. Daisy McLaurin Stevens, President General of the United Daughters of the Confederacy at the unveiling of the Arlington Confederate monument in 1914, makes it clear that the monument is to glorify the ideas of the Confederacy. At the unveiling, Stevens said:

The ideas our heroes cherished were and are beneficial as they are everlasting. These were living then; they are living to-day and shall live to-morrow and work the betterment of mankind. Thus our heroes are of those who, though dead, still toil for man through the arms and brains of those their examples have inspired and quickened to nobler things.

The need for the monument then is further explained by Stevens as follows:

From the dawn of time until the present men and women have built memorials to those they esteemed great, to those whose memories they hoped to perpetuate.

Stevens contrasts monuments to those were merely great in deeds but not in morality with the Confederate soldier who she feels were great in both deed and moral worth.

Such monuments mock and sadden each thoughtful heart. They hold aloft ideals of force and fraud. They show how in a pitiless, mistaken past success could gild a crime. They teach that great talent even selfishly used could evoke men's applause and shut the "gates of mercy on mankind." But not all monuments are like these. Some are like the monument the Daughters of the Confederacy dedicate to-day. They show the future how noble the past has been and place it under bond to prove of equal worth.

Thus this monument is intended memorialize the soldiers because the ideals for which the soldiers fought which were the ideals of the Confederacy, white supremacy and slavery.

Since the United Daughters of the Confederacy has upheld in multiple publications in the early 20th Century that the Ku Klux Klan was the heroic effort of the Confederate soldier, we have an idea what Stevens thought as to what the "noble past" and "ideas our heroes cherished" were. Again, one of these "ideas" was secession to preserve the enslavement of Africans.

Stevens herself, as President of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, promoted the idea that the Ku Klux Klan and other violent white supremacist groups in Reconstruction were heroes. The Alexander H. Stephens UDC Chapter in Ohio published, "Secret Political Societies in the South during the Period of Reconstruction," a publication which defended the Ku Klux Klan, to raise money. In a published notice to the UDC membership in the *Confederate Veteran* in 1914, she announced the booklet's publication and states, "This object has your President General's hearty endorsement, and she hopes it will receive your hearty cooperation." The UDC later printed the address in their publication, *Southern Magazine*, July 1936.

Likewise General Bennett H. Young, Commander-in-Chief of the United Confederate Veterans, who spoke at the 1914 unveiling, also defends the cause of the Confederate soldier, the neo-Confederate cause of their descendants, and defends secession in his speech at the dedication as follows:

At this hour I represent the survivors of the Southern army. Though this Confederate monument is erected on Federal ground, which makes it unusual

and remarkable, yet the men from whom I hold commission would only have me come without apologies or regrets from the past. Those for whom I speak gave the best they had to their land and country. They spared no sacrifice and no privation to win for the Southland national independence.

I am sure I shall not offend the proprieties of either the hour or the occasion when I say that we still glory in the records of our beloved and immortal dead. The dead for whom this monument stands sponsor died for what they believed to be right. Their surviving comrades and their children still believe that for which they suffered and laid down their lives was just; that their premises in the Civil War were according to our Constitution....

The sword said the South was wrong, but the sword is not necessarily guided by conscience or reason. The power of numbers and the longest guns cannot destroy principle nor obliterate truth. Right lives forever, it survives battles, failures, conflicts, and death. There is no human power, however mighty, that can in the end annihilate truth.

Young's speech is obscure as to what the Confederate soldiers, "believed to be right," or what "their premises in the Civil War" regarding "our Constitution," were. However, secession conventions proclaimed what the purpose of secession was: white supremacy, and the preservation of slavery. These causes were also endorsed in the speeches of secession commissioners sent by one slave state to another to encourage further secession.

General Bennett H. Young was a supporter of Mr. S.E.F. Rose's pro-KKK book, "History of the Ku-Klux Klan," (1915) arguing that, "all the children and all the descendants of the men of the South" should read this book of the defeat of "carpet-bagger and negro rule."

Another indication of what the ideals of these Confederate soldiers were is revealed in a speech about the Ku Klux Klan given by Thomas Upton Sission to the 19th Annual Convention of the United Confederate Veterans, Wednesday, June 9, 1909. In the speech Sission at length explains that the Ku Klux Klan was the heroic effort of the Confederate soldier during Reconstruction. The minutes of the Reunion, inform the reader that Sission's address was "accorded the most enthusiastic attention."

As for Young's statement of "No Apologies. No Regrets," this is said despite the historical record of Confederate soldiers having committed racial atrocities, war crimes of massacring surrendered African American soldiers on at least eight occasions. To send a wreath to the Arlington Confederate Monument is a desecration of the sacrifice of these massacred soldiers. The ultimate sacrifices of these massacred soldiers obviously didn't matter when the Arlington Confederate Monument was dedicated, but let their sacrifices matter now.

Young's speech conflates the "South" with the "Confederacy," thus imprisoning the South inside a metaphysical Confederacy. Not sending a wreath will assist the South in escaping this metaphysical Confederacy.

In rebuttal to one of Young's claims, it was more than force of arms which found that the Confederacy was wrong, it was an America marching forward in history, freeing the slaves, and freeing America itself from the practice and ideology of slavery. It was this America that found the Confederacy wrong.

Another speaker was President Woodrow Wilson whose presidential administration segregated the federal government and drove many African Americans federal employees out of their jobs. While president, he helped launch D.W. Griffith's notorious pro-Klan movie *Birth of a Nation* by having it shown in the White House. It is not surprising that he would show such a movie. In Wilson's deplorable racist work, "History of the American People," in Vol. 5, he sees giving African Americans the right vote as an oppression and justifies violent terror writing:

There reconstruction, whose object had been, not the political rehabilitation of the southern governments, but the political enfranchisement of the negroes, had wrought a work of bitterness incomparably deeper, incomparably more difficult to undo, than the mere effects of war and a virtual conquest of arms. They had made the ascendancy of the part of the Union seem to the men of the South nothing less than the corruption and destruction of their society, a reign of ignorance, a regime of power basely used; and this revolt, these secret orders with their ugly work of violence and terror, these infinite, desperate shifts to be rid of the burden and nightmare of what had been put upon them, were the consequence. [Lack of capitalization of "negroes" in the original.]

Hilary A. Herbert, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Arlington Confederate Monument Association, makes it clear that the monument stands for the legitimacy of secession, stands in opposition to Reconstruction, and stands for white supremacy. In his "History of The Arlington Confederate Monument at Arlington, Virginia," he writes:

In 1867 the seceding States were subjected to the horrors of Congressional Reconstruction, but in a few years American manhood had triumphed; Anglo-Saxon civilization had been saved; local self-government under the Constitution had been restored; ex-Confederates were serving the National Government, and true patriots, North and South, were addressing themselves to the noble task of restoring fraternal feeling between the sections.

Within a generation after Congressional Reconstruction, American historians condemned it as “a crime against civilization,” and public opinion seems to have approved the verdict.

Herbert goes on to refer to the Confederate soldiers who joined the Ku Klux Klan and Red Shirts as being heroes for restoring white supremacy and overthrowing Reconstruction, referring to “the soldiers who fought the battles of the Confederacy and ... by their courage and devotion during the two decades after the war, were saviors of Anglo-Saxon civilization in their section.”

Herbert was an active white supremacist, a revolting racist, working for the denigration and subjugation of African Americans. In his address, “The Race Problem at the South: Introductory Remarks,” Herbert argues that African Americans weren’t fit to be given the right to vote stating, “...in my opinion the granting of universal suffrage to the Negro was the mistake of the nineteenth century.” Herbert contributed to and edited the book, “The Solid South.” It is a book that aims to historically prove that African Americans in the South should not be given the vote. In the concluding chapter of the book, “Sunrise,” Herbert argues against Congress giving African Americans the franchise with a threat of race war if Congress attempts to do so. Herbert also wrote the, “The Abolitionist Crusade and its Consequences,” not to just attack the anti-slavery movement, but American efforts to give African Americans civil rights in America. He argued that African Americans are incapable of civilization by themselves and insisted that it was necessary to disenfranchise them. A typical comment of this rancid racist text is, “Taken in the aggregate, the shortcomings of the negro are numerous and regrettable, but not greater than was to be expected. The general advance of an inferior race will never equal that of one which is superior by nature and already centuries ahead.” [Page 236, lack of capitalization in the original.]

These are the types of people who worked to have the Arlington Confederate Monument constructed and dedicated and the types of people who accepted it. The monument crowned the establishment of white supremacy in the South and it is a monument to the triumph of white supremacy in America. Sending a wreath to the monument endorses this triumph.

Sending a wreath to the Arlington Confederate Monument also enhances its prestige and the prestige of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and of the neo-Confederate groups which assemble there each year.

The United Daughters of the Confederacy has a long history of supporting discrimination and racism. They praised the Ku Klux Klan in the early part of the 20th century, they published numerous articles against the Supreme Court decision of *Brown vs. Board of Topeka* and in support of segregation during the Civil Rights Era in the 1960s. Even in the 21st century they praise the white terrorist Red Shirts of Reconstruction and maintain a museum to honor them calling it the “Only Shrine of its

kind,” in an article in the June/July 2001 *UDC Magazine*. They promoted and praised the extremist pro-Klan book, “Southern by the Grace of God,” by Michael Andrew Grissom from the 1980s and into the 21st century. More recently, Retta D. Tindal, UDC Historian General 2010-2012, wrote in a Dec. 2012 article in *UDC Magazine* that “Newly liberated Negroes were not prepared for their freedom.” The article also asserts that that infamous Black Codes were fair and appropriate, and denounces the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, the amendment which gave African Americans citizenship under the Constitution.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans also has a history of supporting racism and extremism. To detail it all would require a lengthy article so just some examples will be given here.

On pages 70-71 in the Jan./Feb. 2017 *Confederate Veteran* in their two-page ad for “Confederate Gifts from GHQ,” is the anti-Semitic book “The South Under Siege 1830-2000,” which argues that the Civil Rights movement is a Jewish conspiracy to undermine Christian society. In the book Conner asks, “First, why would the Jewish-controlled U.S. news media be so willing to distort the truth about racial violence so greatly, in order to obtain hate-crimes legislation?” and as a possible answer Conner poses another question, “... are they the acts of a dangerously-paranoid people?”

The book, quoting the notorious anti-Semite Kevin MacDonald, claims that the idea of racial equality in intelligence, was a Jewish conspiracy stating:

Until after the turn of the 20th century, anthropologists had routinely recorded genetic as well as cultural differences between races and ethnic groups – that being the whole point of anthropology. The highlighted differences among the races had included those of intelligence. But as Kevin MacDonald points out in *The Culture of Critique*, a German-Jewish-immigrant named Franz Boas changed all that. At Columbia, Boas arbitrarily claimed that biological differences between races were miniscule – that environment alone shaped the behavior of the different races and ethnic groups (a la Rousseau). A number of other Jewish anthropologists swiftly adopted Boas’ position; and soon the Jews dominated the field of cultural anthropology. As MacDonald points out, by 1915 the Jews had gained control of the American Anthropological Association; and by 1926 they were chairing the anthropology departments at all of the major universities.

The ad recommends the book to the SCV members as, “An excellent defense against the ‘official’ history currently taught in the government schools.” The book is also sold in the 2016-2017 *SCV Merchandise Catalog* with the same recommendation. A 2003 book review in the *Southern Mercury*, published by the SCV Educational PAC, praises the book stating that it is a “masterful volume.”

The SCV sells and has sold for years *The Birth of a Nation*, recommending it as “silent film masterpiece” with the statement that the movie is “so politically incorrect that it hasn’t been shown publicly in years!” implying that it is a valid film but suppressed.

At the 2015 SCV national convention in Richmond, Virginia the “heritage luncheon” speakers were James Ronald Kennedy and Walter Donald Kennedy. Walter Donald Kennedy is the author of “Rekilling Lincoln” which seeks to “rekill” the slain president by destroying his reputation. Walter Kennedy wrote the cover article for the Nov./Dec. 2012 *Confederate Veteran* titled “Lincoln’s Band of Tyrants,” in which Lincoln is grouped with Karl Marx and Adolph Hitler and concludes with the sentence, “Lincoln, Marx, Engels and Hitler are indeed a strange but deadly ‘Band of Brothers.’”

In summary, sending a wreath to the Arlington Confederate Monument is wrong for these reasons: it legitimizes treason, it legitimizes secession; it is a monument for white supremacy; it slanders Abraham Lincoln; and it enables neo-Confederate organizations with their racist agendas.

In your inaugural speech you said, “When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice.” Your speech talks about unity, stating, “We share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny.” White supremacy is of course unpatriotic. It is the idea that we are divided into different classes of Americans based on race, which is deadly to the American idea. You also stated that “The oath of office I take today is an oath of allegiance to all Americans.” Sending wreaths to monuments honoring the Confederacy undermines this idea. I earnestly hope that you will embrace the sense of common national identity you proclaimed in your inaugural speech. Do not pursue business as usual and please give this letter due consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Edward H. Sebesta