

THE COFFEE GROUP



A Public Policy Analysis Group

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October 30, 2017

Dear City of Atlanta Council Members and City of Atlanta Confederate Monument Committee;

Please read attached position paper.

Aaron Turpeau
Convener

**SUMMARY POSITION PAPER ON
"CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS ADVISORY
by The Coffee Group**

Final EX
15 copies
Take to Mtg. 10/11
Need cover sheet

On October 13, 2017 CBS reported in an article entitled *Monuments Advisory Committee Revealed*¹ that the City of Atlanta has formed an advisory committee to

...evaluate each street name and marker and provide recommendations on how the community can be more involved in the process of determining how to deal with each landmark moving forward...

That article states that Mayor Reed got the idea to have such a committee from the Charlottesville, Virginia conflict:

The tragic events in Charlottesville, Virginia brought renewed attention to Confederate markers and street names around the country, with many elected officials, clergy and members of the public calling for their removal. To ensure that we approach this in a thoughtful manner, and that we include community input in the process, my Administration and the Atlanta City Council worked to assemble a group of advisors to consider each marker.

This summary position paper has been prepared because, as the descendants of those who were victims of this country's chained and Jim Crow enslavement²,

¹(<http://atlanta.cbslocal.com/2017/10/13/members-of-the-confederate-monuments-advisory-committee-revealed/>).

² Indeed, many of the writers and endorsers of this position paper were born in Jim Crow slavery. See *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. Interestingly, the author Douglas A. Blackmon is a member of the committee. To understand the issues at stake and as Carter G. Woodson sought to teach in *The Mis-Education of*

we cannot and will not keep silent when this City has commissioned a group of people to determine **WHETHER** the monuments will be removed.

The only moral and legitimate purpose of any government or committee with regard to monuments honoring those who advocated for our enslavement is to determine how they will be removed as soon as possible.

In addition to assigning to this committee the inappropriate and immoral purpose of determining whether the monuments would be removed, the constitution of the membership of the committee is alarming.

Even if the committee had the proper purpose, it is unacceptable to have only 4 Blacks (i.e., descendants of those who were enslaved) on the 11 member committee.

We now take our stand and state clearly and without equivocation, Confederate memorials and street signs serve the sole purpose of celebrating and honoring those who enslaved our parents, their parents and their parents' parents.

Whether the celebration and honoring will continue of those who enslaved our parents, their parents and their parents' parents is not a question for debate. Anyone who thinks it is, be they Black or White, lack fundamental judgment and moral decency to serve in positions of governmental trust or to advise those who

the Negro, the following New York Times statement is very instructive:

In "Slavery by Another Name" Douglas A. Blackmon eviscerates one of our schoolchildren's most basic assumptions: that slavery in America ended with the Civil War. Mr. Blackmon unearths shocking evidence that the practice persisted well into the 20th century. And he is not simply referring to the virtual bondage of black sharecroppers unable to extricate themselves economically from farming.

He describes free men and women forced into industrial servitude, bound by chains, faced with subhuman living conditions and subject to physical torture. That plight was horrific. But until 1951, it was not outside the law.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/10/books/10masl.html>

are in positions of governmental trust.

If the committee is continued, we demand

- 1) The membership of the committee be reconstituted such that a minimum of 54% are Blacks; and
- 2) It's purpose be explicitly limited to determining how and when the slavery celebratory monuments and street names will be removed as soon as humanly possible.

Otherwise, our position is that the Black community and all fair minded people reject the committee as another attempt to continue this country's long history of justifying slavery and pacifying Blacks into allowing and/or supporting the celebration of their own enslavement.

We close by urging that no one attempt to utilize this paper to promote or advocate violence. To honor those who have brought us thus far we are bound to maintain the dignity in words and deeds which exemplified the conduct of those who displayed such regal comportment even while being physically and otherwise brutalized.