

To: Virginia's US Capitol Statue Commission

From: Susan Rohrbach, Crozet Virginia

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In response to your request for proposals, my idea for the second of Virginia's statues in the US Capitol, to replace the Robert E. Lee statue that is slated for removal, is a **Statue of Abraham Lincoln**, with both arms raised holding a scrolled document in each arm, one labeled "Created" and the other labeled "Equal"

This honoring of Lincoln represents the indebtedness Virginia, and the country, owes to Lincoln for properly justifying and interpreting the immortal words written by Virginia's Jefferson, who himself may not be honored so much as he did own slaves, but whose **words** never the less stand true for all time. The four score and seven years running from the Declaration to Gettysburg saw many leaders failing to interpret "created equal" correctly, most notably the Constitution in its slave clauses (which is why Madison must be passed over), and the Confederacy's Jefferson Davis and Vice President Alexander Stephens (see documentation below). But with grit Lincoln fought a war that made manifest the true sense of "created equal", and won its incorporation into the Constitution, with a straight line to the abolition of slavery and protection of the inalienable rights of persons in the thirteenth and fourteenth amendments.

While there are many images of Lincoln in the US Capitol, **there is not one representation in Statuary Hall** (see this [list](#), which *does* include Davis and Stephens), where the 50 states are allowed two images each. Given Lincoln's service to unknitting the understanding of "Created Equal", it is fitting that Virginia acknowledge his exceptional role.

It is common that the difficulty in redesignating a statue lies in choosing a new name that will stand the test of time. As we know, Lincoln's character has been thoroughly vetted, with the additional testimony of the sacrifice of his own life. The designation of a Lincoln statue would be an appropriate way to bring focus to the true claim to greatness of Virginia ("created equal"), an ideal too scarcely recognized amongst the many Confederate statues and battlefields. .

Here is an [image](#) of a statue in Philadelphia named "The Signer", and here is an [image](#) of the Statue of Liberty with both arms raised. Our statue of Lincoln could have each arm lifted up holding a scroll, one labeled "Created" the other labeled "Equal", representing on the one hand the Declaration of Independence, and the other either the Emancipation Proclamation, the

Gettysburg Address, or the 13th Amendment, with Lincoln being the bridge between the two documents. (I apologize that my artistic skills cannot render this image well!)

It is fitting that the Civil War veterans who gave up their lives, and their families their fathers, in pursuit of the abolition of what was Virginia's "peculiar institution" (see the Virginia slave code of 1662), but also in the defense of Virginia's exceptional statement of inalienable right, are represented by an image of their bold commander-in-chief. The words he validated, "created equal", embodied by his humble but triumphal visit to Richmond in April 1865, have inspired the Tiananmen protestors, consoled the slaves of the gulags, and brought hope to so many more oppressed ever since. May "Created Equal" remain the standard for truth and excellence, and may it provide the occasion to "bind up the wounds" of our dear country!

A poem written by Robert Frost alludes to Lincoln's perennialization of "Created Equal" in speaking through the eyes of a Civil War widow...

"...She had her own idea of things, the old lady.
And she liked talk. She had seen Garrison
And Whittier, and had her story of them.
One wasn't long in learning that she thought
Whatever else the Civil War was for
It wasn't just to keep the States together,
Nor just to free the slaves, though it did both.
She wouldn't have believed those ends enough
To have given outright for them all she gave.
Her giving somehow touched the principle
That all men are created free and equal.
And to hear her quaint phrases-so removed
From the world's view to-day of all those things.
That's a hard mystery of Jefferson's.
What did he mean? Of course the easy way
Is to decide it simply isn't true.
It may not be. I heard a fellow say so.
But never mind, the Welshman got it planted
Where it will trouble us a thousand years.
Each age will have to reconsider it..."

From "The Black Cottage", Robert Frost

Selected sources on Confederate leaders regarding slavery

(rebutting the “Lost Cause” myth and proving the intention to be a permanent slave regime)

Virginia very clearly identified with the "Southern slaveholding states" in its declaration of secession. ([link](#))

South Carolina was first to secede and anxious to declare her reason to be the protection of slavery, which she averred to have been backed up by the Constitution:

" The Constitution of the United States, in its fourth Article, provides as follows: "No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up, on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

This stipulation was so material to the compact, that without it that compact would not have been made."

South Carolina further stipulated that the very mentions of slavery in the Constitution meant approval for this peculiar institution .

"The ends for which the Constitution was framed are declared by itself to be "to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

These ends it endeavored to accomplish by a Federal Government, in which each State was recognized as an equal, and had separate control over its own institutions. The right of property in slaves was recognized by giving to free persons distinct political rights, by giving them the right to represent, and burthening them with direct taxes for three-fifths of their slaves; by authorizing the importation of slaves for twenty years; and by stipulating for the rendition of fugitives from labor."

South Carolina maintains that she would never have become part of the US if she thought slavery would eventually be abolished.

https://www.civilwar.org/learn/primary-sources/declaration-causes-seceding-states#South_Carolina

Texas' secessionist declaration includes the following outrage (underline inserted):

"We hold as undeniable truths that the governments of the various States, and of the confederacy itself, were established exclusively by the white race, for themselves and their posterity; that the African race had no agency in their establishment; that they were rightfully held and regarded as an inferior and dependent race, and in that condition only could their existence in this country be rendered beneficial or tolerable.

That in this free government *all white men are and of right ought to be entitled to equal civil and political rights* [emphasis in the original]; that the servitude of the African race, as existing in these States, is mutually beneficial to both bond and free, and is abundantly authorized and justified by the experience of mankind, and the revealed will of the Almighty Creator, as recognized by all Christian nations; while the destruction of the existing relations between the two races, as advocated by our sectional enemies, would bring inevitable calamities upon both and desolation upon the fifteen slave-holding states." ([link](#))

Most other states' secession statements similarly identify slavery as a cause.

Confederate President **Jefferson Davis** claimed that the clauses on slavery in the Constitution helped PROVE that the Declaration of Independence did not cover blacks as "created equal".

"...for there [in the Constitution] we find provision made for that very class of persons as property; they were not put upon the footing of equality with white men--not even upon that of paupers and convicts; but, so far as representation was concerned, were discriminated against as a lower caste, only to be represented in the numerical proportion of three fifths. " [link](#)

And finally, Confederate Vice President **Alexander Stephens**, his vice president, concluded Thomas Jefferson had *erred*, while the Confederate slaveholders triumphed, in their *interpretation* of equality.

"But not to be tedious in enumerating the numerous changes for the better, allow me to allude to one other though last, not least. The new constitution has put at rest, forever, all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institution African slavery as it exists amongst us the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution. Jefferson in his forecast, had anticipated this, as the "rock upon which the old Union would split." He was right. What was conjecture with him, is now a realized fact. But whether he fully comprehended the great truth upon which that rock stood and stands, may be doubted. The prevailing ideas entertained by him and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old constitution, were that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally, and politically. It was an evil they knew not well how to deal with, but the general opinion of the men of that day was that, somehow or other in the order of Providence, the institution would be evanescent and pass away. This idea, though not incorporated in the constitution, was the prevailing idea at that time. The constitution, it is true, secured every essential guarantee to the institution while it should last, and hence no argument can be justly urged against the constitutional guarantees thus secured, because of the common sentiment of the day. Those ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error. It was a sandy foundation, and the government built upon it fell when the "storm came and the wind blew."

Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition...[Those of the North] were attempting to make things equal which the Creator had made unequal." ("[Cornerstone Speech](#)")

The above should make clear the qualitative difference between Confederate leaders and the founders of our country. To mitigate any ongoing public doubts as to a major cause of the Civil War (and the propriety of replacing the Lee statue, especially as compared to others like Washington who had a legitimate basis for fame other than defending slavery, and a hope that "created equal" would eventually rectify slavery), these declarations of secession and Confederate leader's statements, should be required reading in public schools. This is particularly important as the same group that placed so many of the Confederate statues in town squares also censored the school textbooks for decades, to leave students ignorant of these statements and the real harms of the Confederacy. It is hardly fair to blame the students (or their parents!) for racism when their government hands them a Lost Cause textbook and their town square passively indoctrinates a Confederate statue. May "Created Equal" remain the standard for truth and excellence!

Commission for Historical Statues - Statue Prerequisites

The Commission for Historical Statues in the United States Capitol is holding this public hearing in order to hear suggestions for a historical person to represent Virginia in a new statue to replace the Robert E. Lee statue in National Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol. Suggestions for a historical figure to represent Virginia in the U.S. Capitol must conform to the following criteria established by the Office of the Architect of the U.S. Capitol. The person must be:

- Deceased,
- Illustrious for historic renown or for distinguished civic or military service,
- Representative of only one individual, and
- A U.S. citizen, to include an indigenous person who resided in the present-day U.S.

The Commission has also added the following additional criteria. The person should be:

- Associated with significant events that changed the course of history or with significant ideals, writing, or concepts,
- Renowned for exemplary valor, patriotism, and bravery,
- One whose primary historical significance ties her or him directly to Virginia, or is a person who has spent the majority of her or his life residing in the Commonwealth, and
- Representative of current prevailing values.

<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/uscapitolcommission/>