



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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July 2, 2020

Ms. Julie Langan  
Director and State Historic Preservation Officer  
Department of Historic Resources (DHR)  
2801 Kensington Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23221

Dear Ms. Langan;

On June 4, 2020, the Governor directed the Department of General Services (DGS) to remove the statue of Robert E. Lee as soon as possible and place in storage. DGS has initiated the process and engaged B. R. Howard Conservation to provide services associated with the removal and storage of the statue and pedestal. Additionally DGS has reviewed the monument removal guidance published on the DHR website. As required by the Appropriations Act (2020 session Chapter 1289) Item 4-4.01.q, I am submitting the current plan for removal. We are requesting DHR comments by July 17, 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph F. Damico", with a long, thin, sweeping line extending from the end of the signature.

Joseph F. Damico

/Attachment: Robert E. Lee Removal Process - BRHOWARD



**For Immediate Release:** June 4, 2020

**Contacts:** Office of the Governor: Alena Yarmosky, Alena.Yarmosky@governor.virginia.gov

# Governor Northam to Remove Robert E. Lee Statue in Richmond

**RICHMOND**—Governor Ralph Northam today announced plans to remove the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee located on Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia.

The Governor directed the Department of General Services to safely remove the statue from its pedestal and house it in storage until an appropriate location is determined.

Speakers joining the Governor at today's announcement include City of Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney, Reverend Robert W. Lee IV, Robert Johns, Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax, Attorney General Mark Herring, and Zyahna Bryant.

Governor Northam is acting under his executive authority and Section § 2.2-2402 of the Code of Virginia, which provides the Governor the sole authority to approve the removal of a work of art owned by the Commonwealth upon submission of a plan to do so. The Robert E. Lee monument was erected for and is owned by the Commonwealth of Virginia and is considered a work of art pursuant to Section 2.2-2401 of the Code of Virginia.

The Governor's remarks as prepared for delivery are available below.

## **REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY:**

Good morning, everyone.

I want to thank everyone watching from around Virginia and around the country, and I want to thank the many guests who have joined us as we chart a new course in Virginia's history.

Today, we're here to be honest about our past and talk about our future.

I'm no historian, but I strongly believe that we have to confront where we've been, in order to shape where we're going.

And in Virginia, for more than 400 years, we have set high ideals about freedom and equality, but we have fallen short of them.

Some of America's most hopeful and forward-looking moments happened in this Commonwealth and in this capital city. When Americans first dreamed of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—they dreamed here in the Commonwealth.

Virginia adopted a Declaration of Rights before the United States declared independence. It said that all are “equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights.” It specifically called out freedom of the press and freedom of religion.

And in a church on a hill 15 blocks from here, Virginia's first elected Governor helped launch the American Revolution when he cried, “Give me liberty, or give me death!” That was Patrick Henry, and I now have the job that he once held—72 governors later.

These are our greatest legacies as Americans. But there's a whole lot more to the story, because those inspiring words and high ideals did not apply to everyone, not then and not now.

Because at the bottom of that same hill, one of the country's largest slave-trading markets was coming to life. A place where Virginians would sell men, women, and children for profit. Americans buying and selling other Americans.

This is just as much the American story, and it's one that we are only just now beginning to tell more fully.

Through 400 years of American history, starting with the enslavement of Africans, through the Civil War, through Jim Crow, and Massive Resistance, and mass incarceration, black oppression has always existed in this country, just in different forms.

The legacy of racism continues not just in isolated incidents like we saw in Minneapolis a few days ago—and I want to acknowledge that our country will honor the life of George Floyd in a memorial service in about three hours.

The legacy of racism also continues as part of a system that touches every person and every aspect of our lives, whether we know it or not. But hearts are in different places, and not everyone can see it—or they don't want to see it.

When I used to teach ambitious young doctors, I would tell them, “The eyes can't see what the mind doesn't know.” That's true for all of us.

So, it's time to acknowledge the reality of institutional racism, even if you can't see it. Public policies have kept this reality in place for a long time. That's why we've been working so hard to reform criminal justice laws, expand health care access, make it easier to vote, and so much more.

But symbols matter too, and Virginia has never been willing to deal with symbols. Until now.

Today, Virginia is home to more Confederate commemorations than any other state. That's true because generations ago, Virginia made the decision not to celebrate unity, but to honor the cause of division. You'll see this if you look around Virginia and our capital city.

The statue of Robert E. Lee is the most prominent. Lee himself didn't want a monument, but Virginia built one any way. Lee once said, "I think it is wiser not to keep open the sores of war, but to follow the examples of those nations who endeavored to obliterate the marks of civil strife, to commit to oblivion the feelings engendered." Those are wise words indeed.

So, what happened? Virginia leaders said, we know better.

Instead of choosing to heal the wounds of the American civil war, they chose to keep them on display. They launched a new campaign to undo the results of the Civil War by other means.

They needed a symbol to shore up the cause. And it's quite a symbol. The Lee statue was built in France, and when it arrived by boat on the James River docks, it took 10,000 citizens—and a whole lot of rope to haul three large crates out into the tobacco field where it would be installed. Some business people put it out in the field, so they could eventually build a housing development around it, and make money. It worked.

This happened in May 1890, twenty years after Lee died and a generation after the Civil War ended. 150,000 people came out when the statue was unveiled. But from the beginning, there was no secret about what the statue meant. Almost every one of those 150,000 people waved Confederate flags that day.

John Mitchell was the editor of the Black newspaper, the Richmond Planet, at the time. He wrote, "The emblem of the union had been left behind—a glorification of the lost cause was everywhere." It was a big day, and more big days followed throughout the old south. And as the statues went up, so did lots of new laws. It was all part of the same campaign.

Here's just one example: New laws limited the right to vote. In the years after the Civil War, more than 100,000 African American men were registered to vote in Virginia. But once this campaign took off, that number plummeted by 90 percent, to barely 10,000.

That worked too. Because the people who wrote these laws knew what they were doing. They wrote other new laws to say that once a statue goes up, it can never come down. They wanted the statues to remain forever—they needed the statues to stay forever, because they helped keep the system in place. That also worked. Those laws ruled for more than a century.

But voting matters, and elections matter, and laws can be changed. And this year, we changed them. This year, I proposed legislation to let cities and counties decide what to do with monuments in their communities—take them down, move them somewhere else, or add additional context.

That law takes effect in four weeks, and then local communities will decide. I know Richmond is going to do the right thing.

But the Lee statue is unique. It's different from every other statue in Virginia—both in size and in legal status.

You see, the state owns it, unlike most other statues. That was another part of the plan to keep it up forever. It sits on a 100-foot circle of land, a state-owned island, surrounded by the City of Richmond.

The whole thing is six stories tall. It towers over homes, businesses, and everyone who lives in Richmond—from elegant Monument Avenue to the public housing neighborhood of Gilpin Court. The statue itself weighs 12 tons, and it sits atop a large pedestal. A pedestal is a place of honor. We put things on pedestals when we want people to look up.

Think about the message this sends to people coming from around the world to visit the capital city of one of the largest states in the country. Or to young children. What do you say when a six-year-old African American little girl looks you in the eye, and says: What does this big statue mean? Why is it here?

When a young child looks up and sees something that big and prominent, she knows that it's important. And when it's the biggest thing around, it sends a clear message: This is what we value the most. But that's just not true anymore.

In Virginia, we no longer preach a false version of history. One that pretends the Civil War was about “state rights” and not the evils of slavery. No one believes that any longer.

And in 2020, we can no longer honor a system that was based on the buying and selling of enslaved people. In 2020!

I want us all to tell the little girl the truth. Yes, that statue has been there for a long time. But it was wrong then, and it is wrong now.

So, we're taking it down.

Now, I know some will protest. Some will say, Lee was an honorable man. I know many people will be angry.

But my friends, I believe in a Virginia that studies its past in an honest way. I believe that when we learn more, we can do more. And I believe that when we learn more—when we take that honest look at our past—we must do more than just talk about the future.

We must take action. So, I am directing the Department of General Services to remove the statue of Robert E. Lee as soon as possible. It will go into storage, and we will work with the community to determine its future.

Before we turn to the next speakers, I want to acknowledge all the elected officials, scholars, members of our advisory boards, and other guests who are here.

In particular, I want to acknowledge members of the family of Barbara Johns: Mr. Robert Johns and his grandson Mr. Tyrone Mayer, Jr. You all know their family's story.

In 1951, a 16-year-old girl, Barbara Johns, stood up and led a protest—a student strike against substandard conditions at Robert Russa Moton High School in Prince Edward County. She pushed and pushed, and two great American attorneys took up her cause. Oliver Hill and Spottswood Robinson filed suit, next door, in the federal courthouse at the bottom of the hill. That case became *Brown v. Board of Education*, and it eventually threw out segregated schools in the United States of America.

That is how you make change—you push on the outside, and you push on the inside too.

We'll hear in just a moment from a few of the people who are making change happen.

My friends, I believe in a Virginia that studies its past in an honest way. I believe in a Virginia that learns lessons from the past. And we all know our country needs that example right now.

America is once again looking to Virginia to lead. But make no mistake—removing a symbol is important, but it's only a step.

It doesn't mean problems are solved. We still need change in this country. We need healing most of all. But symbols do matter.

My friends, we all know it's time. And history will prove that.

Now, I would like to introduce the Reverend Robert W. Lee IV. We've been talking about his great-great-grandfather.

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## ROBERT E. LEE MONUMENT

### **Phase I: Procedures recommended to safely remove the bronze equestrian sculpture from Monument Avenue in Richmond, VA**

Photo document the sculpture using both still and drone images and videos. This has been completed as of Friday, June 5, 2020.

Based upon on-site inspection of the bronze sculpture and granite monument base (employing a rental manlift on Monday, June 8, 2020), it is believed that the sculpture can be lifted from the granite base as a single unit without any partial disassembly of the bronze prior to rigging and lifting to the ground. It had been reported that the sculpture weights 13 tons (26,000 lbs.) *Missionary Weekly, May 8, 1890*.

It appears that the monument is secured to the top of the base with 16 bronze pins, which are driven into the integrally cast bronze base. The 16 bronze anchors are “leaded” into holes that had been drilled into the stone base.

The 16 bronze anchors need to be detached from the sculpture by the conservator in a manlift, prior to the test lift and final lift of the sculpture to the ground.

No other method or methods of securing the sculpture to the base were observed upon review of the drone images or the initial on-site observations.

Additional preparation will be needed, by removing the “harness and Reins” which are attached using mechanical fasteners (bronze screws) or brazed joints. Removal of these elements, by the conservators, will allow installation of lifting straps without causing damage to the sculpture, during the lift and removal.

All lifting straps will be of an appropriate material and weight rating, determined by the rigger and crane operator. All straps will be padded to ensure the bronze is not abraded during removal of the sculpture.

During the initial phase of lifting, great care should be taken to ensure that no other point or methods of attachment were used to secure the bronze sculpture to the granite pedestal. Test lifting should verify if the sculpture is free and ready to complete the lift.

The sculpture will be removed from the base and lowered to the ground onto dunnage in preparation for its' removal to an undisclosed storage area, located outside of the city limits of Richmond, VA.

Transport under highway overpasses will require that the sculpture be partially disassembled to meet the highway height restrictions which are believed to be somewhere between 13'6" and 14'; therefore, the sculpture must be carefully and sensitively disassembled. A small hole will need to be drill for an inspection using a borescope to determine if and where internal armature is positioned. This will be needed to determine where cutting of the bronze sections will be executed.

The process of disassembling the sculpture into components that are sized to meet highway height restrictions will require cutting of the bronze, when possible, along original casting joints or along edges of cast elements or sculpted folds. Areas to be cut will be selected with the intent to cause minimal damage to the bronze casting and visual disruption in the event it is reassembled and restored at a future date. All sections will be wrapped and padded using nonabrasive packing materials and placed on dunnage.

It is believed, based upon recent on-site observation of the monument and the review of written accounts which describe the assembly of the sculpture in 1890, that the bronze sculpture will be separated into three sections, cast base and legs of the horse, the body and head of the horse, and the figure, from the waist up.

The two bronze tablets will be removed from the east and west facades of the monument, first removing the decorative five-pointed star escutcheons which cover the mounting fasteners. The tablets will be protected from abrasion and lowered using a crane and or telehandler to be packed for transport.

A screened or barriered partition should be erected before the process of disassembly begins. These procedures need to be conducted away from the view of the public for their safety and protection of the crew. Rigging will be required during disassembly of the sculpture in order to provide adequate support of the sculpture components and crew safety.

The disassembled components should remain within the enclosure or barrier until they are properly loaded, packed, and secured into open top containers for transport. The containers, when possible, should be covered with tarps for transport and possible long-term storage.

The containers will then be loaded onto vehicles to be transported to a, currently undisclosed, storage location and removed from the transport vehicles.

Safety to personnel is paramount, followed by great care to protect remove the historic bronze sculpture.

Removal and disassembly of the bronze sculpture, if performed as outlined will allow for proper reassembly, in the future. The process will cause minimal permanent damage to the bronze and leave little evidence of cutting and reassembly, once completed.

**Phase 2: Procedures recommended to safely remove the granite base from Monument Avenue in Richmond, VA.**

Photographically document the granite pedestal; optionally, create a 3-D scan of the base prior to scaffolding the structure.

Detailed CAD drawings or a 3d photogrammetry model should be created for all facades of the monument.

Establish an inventory system and method to identify and locate each granite block and carved decorative elements. An RFID or tagging system for original position locating and inventory is suggested.

Scaffold the monument pedestal and begin careful disassembly by separating and cutting mortar joints to separate stone blocks and decorative elements.

All disassembled granite blocks will be placed on pallets, separating each block and layer with protective padding such as  $\frac{1}{4}$ " ethafoam; where possible all finished or face blocks will be protected from damage during transport and storage.

All carved and decorative elements should be placed in custom designed crates and protected with inert padding such as ethafoam. All crates should be identified and labeled with the selected inventory system.

All palletized and crated stone blocks and decorative elements should be loaded for transport to a, yet to be determined, storage location outside of Richmond, VA city limits.