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AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL WAR MUSEUM

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From: Frank Smith, Founding Director

To: House of Representatives Washington D. C.

Date: July 2020

RE: H. R. 4135 To Direct the Secretary of the Interior to Remove a statue of the memory and honor of Albert Pike

Dear Committee,

My name is Frank Smith and I am Founding Director of the African American Civil War Memorial and museum in Washington D. C.

I rise in support of the Bill as introduced by the Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton to instruct the Secretary of the Interior to remove the Albert Pike Statue. I think monuments that occupy public space should be restricted to monuments to the core values of American Society. Values freedom, justice and Union as expressed by the Founding Fathers. Alternatively, if and when it is discovered that monuments are placed in public space that do not represent the basic values of the vast majority of Americans then I think the public has a moral obligation to see those monuments moved from public space to some more appropriate location.

Albert Pike was an avowed racist. He supported the Confederate Army in its effort to split America into two countries, one slave and one free. Pike was an officer in the Confederate Army that slaughtered thousands of Union soldiers that were left the dead on the battlefields of the Civil War in places such as Gettysburg, Vicksburg and Nashville and Fort Pillow. At wars end Pike opposed the three Civil War Amendments, the 13th 14th and 15th arguing that "The white race and that race alone shall govern this country".

As Confederates defeated on the battlefields of the Civil War Pike would join other rebel officers such as Nathan Bedford Forrest in establishing the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan was a terrorist organization that hanged blacks, burned their schools and churches and destroyed their hard earned wealth in places such as Tulsa, Oklahoma. There are many monuments, markers, public buildings roads and highways named for traitors such as Jefferson Davis, Robert E Lee and Albert Pike but few to no such public monuments to especially blacks and their white officers who remained loyal to the Union Army and helped President maintain his avowed dream of "One Nation".

Blacks found a way to persevere through all the violence and bloodshed and by the time we reached 1890 there were thousands of black churches and schools and more than 100 historically black colleges educating free blacks. The basic groundwork for the establishment of the black middle class that we know today was laid during this period of Reconstruction.

On July 18th, just a few days ago we celebrated the 22nd Anniversary of the establishment of the African American Civil War Memorial and museum in Washington. July 18, 1998 was chosen as the Inauguration Day for the AACWM because it is also the Anniversary of the Battle of Fort Wagner, the battle about which the movie GLORY was made. The AACWM lists the names of 209,145 US Colored Troops and their white officers who joined President Lincoln in the Civil War to fight for Freedom and Union. The monument was built on federal lands with private funds and was authorized by HR a Bill introduced by Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton.

The African American Civil War Museum which is across Vermont Ave from the monument in Washington is expanding into the adjacent Grimke Building where it will triple the size of its exhibit offerings. One new exhibit will feature two USCT soldiers related to First Lady Michelle Obama whose names are listed on the Memorial Wall of Honor. As an added feature, we have commissioned a six foot tall statue to the memory of President Abraham Lincoln which freezes Lincoln in the moment in history when he is signing the Emancipation Proclamation. Paragraph 8 of the Proclamation reads "Persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed services of the of the United States" approximately 150,000 former slaves marched through this paragraph of the Proclamation onto the bat fields of the Civil War to fight for Freedom and Union. I would like to say to the Ranking Member from Utah that the Lincoln Proclamation sculptor is Stanley Watts from Kearns, Utah. We have acquired the Lincoln statue already and have it in storage at the museum awaiting final installation later this year. It is available for private viewing at this time by appointment only.