

March 17, 2017

Dear Friends,

I write to support your ten-year campaign to remove the statue of Dr. J. Marion Sims from its current location on Fifth Avenue and 103rd Street. This campaign is a powerful testament to the will of the local community to preserve public spaces for recognizing important and uplifting historical figures. Dr. Sims does not fit that bill, especially for the people who live in the area.

As has been pointed out, there is no scarcity of inspiring lives who have contributed to scientific and medical advances and who are products of the legacy communities of East Harlem and the surrounding areas. A more appropriate figure can be selected.

The installation of monuments and statues are a crucial element in the creation of public spaces. The wealthy and elites can use their private fortunes and political connections to occupy such public spaces on behalf of their favored figures and heroes. Poor and middle-income communities, disenfranchised neighborhoods, should be supported to have their stories and history represented in such public spaces.

It is remarkable – and distressing – that after such an extended period of grass roots education, the authorities have been unwilling to have a new designation for the space.

I am hopeful that continued pressure and education will bring about necessary change in the use of this space.

Sincerely,

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