

To Whom It May Concern:

As both a resident of Harlem and a citizen of the world, I find it tremendously offensive and equally disturbing that the NYC Parks Department has not yet seen fit to comply with the numerous requests, both formal and informal, to permanently remove the J. Marion Sims statue from its current location at E. 103rd St. and Fifth Avenue and ensure that such a monument never is permitted to be publicly displayed again.

Sims' 19th Century work in gynecology, while admittedly both pioneering and innovative in treating vaginal fistulas and newborn tetanus, was done at the expense of a population of enslaved African women and children who, as per the warped social mores of the time, had absolutely no say or agency in their unwilling involvement in Sims' work – and at an excruciatingly painful cost in every way imaginable. This statue honors an individual who offered up a segment of the American population as fodder for experimentation because he could get away with doing so – he is said to have performed his experiments without the use of anesthesia or painkillers accepted at the time because of his belief in the inherent inferiority of people of African descent, and reportedly also kept the corpses of the deceased infants he experimented on for later study – and was handsomely rewarded with both fame and fortune as a result of his work.

Simply put, the Sims statue disrespects those victims of his wanton medical practices (if one can even call his actions “medical”), their descendants, and the proper, ethical practice of Gynecology in general, and it also disrespects those residents of Harlem of African descent (including the Latino and other members of the African diaspora) that make up a significant percentage of the neighborhood's population and who are subjected daily to the insult of this memorialized lionization of a wayward, anti-African physician, just by its mere presence in the neighborhood.

The Parks Department should be ashamed of its inaction to date, and should remove the Sims statue posthaste. It is a veritable eyesore to anyone who knows the circumstances behind much of Sims' gynecological success, not to mention literally in blocking the lovely view of Central Park and its pastoral tableau for area passerby.

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