Coalition to Remove the Dr. Sims Statue
"Reclaiming the Reproductive Rights of Women of Color"
Fact Sheet and Timeline

- The campaign to remove the Sims statue was started in 2010 by East Harlem Preservation in solidarity with earlier efforts by activist Viola Plummer- a member of the December 12 Movement and co-founder of the Harriet Tubman-Fannie Lou Hamer Women's Collective- who had begun calling attention to Sims' cruel experiments soon after the publication of Harriet A. Washington's book "*Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*" in 2006.

- In February 2011, East Harlem Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito wrote a letter asking the Parks Department to remove the statue, which she described as "a constant reminder of the cruelty endured by women of color in our country's history."
  "I am disturbed that a monument honoring an individual who tortured enslaved women and young Irish immigrants for the advancement of medicine is located in a neighborhood where people of color are the majority," Mark-Viverito added. "Because this statue is a constant reminder of the inhumane manner in which his medical practices were perfected, I request that a reevaluation of its current location be conducted. It is my belief that a monument that aligns with the ideals of a community in which the majority is people of color would be more appropriate for our neighborhood."

- The NYC Parks Department refused to honor these requests, claiming that "the city does not remove 'art' for content" - a ridiculous argument given the fact that such a precedent was met when the Sims statue was removed from Bryant Park in 1934 to make way for "thematic changes." Years later, the Park Department offered to install a plaque beneath the Sims statue that would "honor" three of the women who were subjected to his unnecessarily barbaric experiments- Anarcha, Betsy and Lucy.

- In June 2016, Community Board 11 passed resolutions to reject the plaque as presented and called for the removal of the statue.

- In September 2016, artists from the Laundromat Project's Harlem team organized a speak-out in defense of the reproductive rights of women of color in partnership with East Harlem Preservation and El Museo del Barrio. The event was held in front of the

Sims statue, where community residents and local artists honored their ancestors and condemned the continued assault on Black and Latina female bodies.

- In February 2017, a panel discussion on the medical abuses of J. Marion Sims was held with <u>Medical Apartheid</u> author Harriet Washington; Dr. Lynn Roberts, reproductive justice scholar activist and Assistant Professor at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy; and Diane Collier, Chair of East Harlem's Community Board 11. The program was produced by East Harlem Preservation and broadcast over Manhattan Neighborhood Network.

- On August 17, 2017, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito wrote a letter to Mayor de Blasio asking that the statue of Dr. J. Marion Sims be included in the 90-day review that the City is conducting of all symbols of hate on city property. "While Dr. Sims has been heralded as 'the father of modern gynecology,' his contributions to the field of gynecology in no way justify the medical means through which they were achieved."

- On August 19, 2017, Black Youth Project 100 held a protest in front of the monument, which drew dozens of activists- many dressed in blood-soaked hospital gowns. "Memorializing of imperialist slaveholders, murderers and torturers like J. Marion Sims is white supremacy," BYP100 member Rossanna Mercedes said. "We will no longer allow government institutions like the NYC Parks Department to passively allow symbols of oppression."

- Most recently, Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito was joined by other elected officials to reaffirm her call for the removal of the statue. "We must send a definitive message that the actions of J. Marion Sims are repugnant," she urged during her August 21, 2017 press conference.