



THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
CITY HALL
NEW YORK, NY 10007

MELISSA MARK-VIVERITO
SPEAKER

TELEPHONE
(212) 788-7210

August 17, 2017

Hon. Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

I am writing to formally request that the statue of Dr. J. Marion Sims, which is located outside of Central Park at 103rd Street and Fifth Avenue, be included in the 90-day review that the City is conducting of all symbols of hate on city property following the violent protests in Charlottesville.

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.

None of the enslaved black women on whom he carried out his experiments were provided with anesthesia. And of the three women who are known – Lucy, Anarcha and Betsy – records show that Anarcha underwent 30 of these operations.

As the Council representative for El Barrio/East Harlem, where the statue of Dr. Sims is currently located, I have long been opposed to its presence in our community and wrote directly to the Parks Commissioner in 2011 to begin the process of having it removed (see attached).

Members of the East Harlem/El Barrio community, including Community Board 11, recognize this statue to be an affront to the families who live here and have repeatedly called for its removal as well.

New York City has always been a beacon of hope for New Yorkers and all those in search of a better life. Dr. Sim’s statue is less a celebration of a medical pioneer than it is a constant reminder of the cruelty endured by women of color in our nation’s past. And in light of acts of hatred and bigotry across the nation, it is imperative we send a clear message to New Yorkers that the events in Charlottesville are not reflective of New York City values.

This statue is not indicative of who we are as a city or a nation, and I am confident that the panel that you are putting together as part of this review will agree that it should be removed from our city once and for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Mark-Viverito".

MELISSA MARK-VIVERITO
Speaker