

For Immediate Release:

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"The Coalition to Remove the Dr. Sims Statue: Reclaiming Reproductive Rights of Women of Color" to Hold Press Conference this Thursday

Mayoral Commission must put Dr. Sims' Central Park statue at top of list of monuments it will review

NEW YORK -- A coalition of community leaders and elected officials demanding the immediate removal of the Central Park monument to Dr. J. Marion Sims will hold a press conference and rally in front of the statue on Thursday, October 19th at 4pm.

The Coalition is calling on the newly formed *Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers* to place the Sims' statue at the top of its list for consideration for removal. The Commission has begun a citywide review for the next 90 days.

October 19th is an especially appropriate day to highlight the repugnance of the Sims statue as it is also National Domestic Violence Awareness Day.

While Dr. Sims has been heralded as "the father of modern gynecology" because of his development of surgical techniques to treat vesicovaginal fistulas in the 19th century, the means through which these breakthroughs were achieved have not been properly acknowledged. The enslaved African American women on whom Sims experimented should be the focus of any historical monument.

None of these enslaved women were provided with anesthesia. And of the three women who are known – Lucy, Anarcha and Betsy – records show that Anarcha underwent 30 separate surgeries.

Dr. Sims' 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 our nation, it is imperative we send a strong message that New Yorkers are clear-eyed about the ongoing legacy of slavery and racial injustice.

The Coalition will be paying close attention to the Commission's review process, and will continue to call attention to and demand timely action on this issue.

Who: "The Coalition to Remove the Dr. Sims Statue: Reclaiming Reproductive Rights of Women of Color"

Members:

Public Advocate Letitia James

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer

City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito

NYC Council Member Inez Barron

NYC Council Member Laurie Cumbo, Co-Chair, Women's Caucus

NYC Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Co-Chair, Women's Caucus

NYC Council Member Mark Levine, Chair, Committee on Parks and Recreation

Viola Plummer, Office of State Assembly Member Charles Barron

Diane Collier, Chair, Community Board 11

Marina Ortiz, East Harlem Preservation

Esperanza Martell, Professor, Hunter College School of Social Work

Ann-Gel Palermo, Director, Harlem Community and Action Partnership

Harriet Washington, Author, *"Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present"*

Dr. Lynn Roberts, Asst Prof, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy

(List in formation)

What: Call for Mayoral Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers to remove the Central Park statue honoring Dr. J. Marion Sims

When: Thursday, October 19th at 4:00pm

Where: East 103rd Street and 5th Avenue