

December 19, 2017

Edward H. Sebesta

Resident

Dear Resident:

This letter is inspired by a campaign of the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS) in 1835 in which they mailed anti-slavery printed materials to leaders in the slave states. It is also inspired to some extent by the very famous Saturday Night Live comedy skit, "Tech Talk," about the iPhone 5 in response to the Mayfair resident complaints about the inconvenience of having Lee Parkway name changed.

I think that there is a failure in Dallas to understand the importance of changing the name of streets named after Confederates since antebellum slavery remains too much an abstraction and not enough a horror that happened to real people. So I enclose a short account by Gerritt Smith, pp. 219, from "American Slavery as It Is," by Theodore Weld. *"... he and his fellow boatmen saw a shockingly cruel punishment inflicted on a couple slaves for the repeated offense of running away. Straw was spread over the whole of their backs, and after being fastened by a band of the same material, was ignited, and left to burn, until entirely consumed. The agonies and screams of the sufferers he can never forget."* This account might be something to consider while you gaze down on the one-third Arlington Hall replica, a monument to Dallas' plantation mentality.

I also enclose a bibliography of books on slavery to provide an opportunity to learn about the history of slavery. My plan is to try to assign a slave story, or an appropriate story from history, to every address on a Confederate named street in Dallas. For Cabell Drive I have gotten a list of the members of the 1st Kansas USCT killed at Poison Springs, for Junius Street a very long list of African Americans murdered in Reconstruction Texas.

However, let's not forget the grievances expressed by the Mayfair Residents Nov. 1, 2017 at city hall. (<http://www.templeofdemocracy.com/mayfair.html>) I have been informed that the City of Dallas will automatically change the address for your water bill. Many bills you get have a box in front in which you can check for address changes which you write on the back. Further the post office will continue to deliver mail using the old address for some time. Hopefully this will provide a relief from any night terrors you might have over the address change.

I think if you take the suffering of millions of slaves seriously, if their lives mattered to you, a street named after a Confederate would be intolerable as would be an obscure Himmler alley even though that alley might get out of the way, short, and not be known to the general public.

There is an opportunity to learn from the South African experience where they have changed over 800 places named after apartheid leaders. A list of links to news articles is at <http://www.templeofdemocracy.com/street-name-changes-in-south-africa.html>. On November 1, 2017 the president of the Mayfair HOA could have stated that the Mayfair residents support this great historic change happening in the former slave states and though it would be a minor inconvenience they would like to see the Lee Parkway name changed.

A person might assume that no one wants to live on a street named after someone who fought to preserve the loathsome institution of slavery. A person might assume that residents on a street named after a person who fought to preserve slavery would be repulsed by the name that and they would want it changed whether anyone else was concerned or not. Evidently the residents aren't that bothered by a street named after Robert E. Lee nor that repulsed. Instead on November 1, 2017 the president of the Mayfair HOA and five others confirmed the worst stereotypes of what the attitudes of affluent white Dallas residents might have.

I think also the November 1, 2017 Mayfair speakers before the Dallas city council have provided a window into the mentality of Dallas elites. We should not be surprised that the racial issues of our city persist generation after generation. If a street name is too much a bother, can it be expected that any challenging effort will be taken to address Dallas' racial issues?

Given the obvious expressed indifference to the moral issues involved in the Lee Parkway name I don't think it is surprising that juries again and again let police officers get away with the murder of African Americans.

However, the future is still to be made. The Mayfair HOA could ask the city to expeditiously change the name of Lee Parkway. They could set an example for the city and indeed the nation.

James Mellon's dedicates his 1988 book, "Bullwhip Days: The Slaves Remember," with the following, "*For All The Slaves, White and Black, Living and Dead, And Especially For Those Whose Suffering Was Never Known Or Has Been Forgotten.*" Perhaps over this holiday season you can reflect on the suffering of the slaves.

Sincerely Yours,

Edward H. Sebesta