

October 1, 2017

Edward H. Sebesta

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Mayor Mike Rawlings
Mayor and City Council City of Dallas
1500 Marilla St.
Dallas, TX 75201

Dear Hon. Rawlings:

The Task Force on Confederate monuments had this resolution regarding Fair Park.

2. Recognizing that Fair Park is a local, state, and national landmark, the Task Force recommends that the historic art and architecture of Fair Park which contains symbols of, or references to, the Confederate States of America or persons associated therewith, remain in place as a piece of the history of Texas as presented at Fair Park. However the Task Force recommends that appropriate signage, markers, digital tour guides, public art, educational programming, and/or exhibitions be added as necessary to provide the full context of the Civil War, Reconstruction, "Lost Cause" mythology, the "Jim Crow" era, and the creation of Fair Park for the 1936 Texas Centennial. Historical context should include reference to the many contributions of Mexicans, Tejanos and indigenous peoples made during the colonization of Texas, the Texas Revolution, and during and after the Mexican War leading to the 20th Century, to also include the participation or exclusion of various communities in those historic events.

First, I would like to point out is that the Cultural Affairs Committee, in their meeting Oct. 12, 2017 were informed of this recommendation, but didn't vote on it. Is the public to assume that this recommendation of the Task Force on Confederate Monuments has been dropped?

I further would like to review this recommendation. I think it misses the point of Fair Park and the Hall of State which is the representation of a triumphal account of Texas history resulting in the white supremacist state of Texas in 1936. Though not fascistic in its art forms, it is veritably a "Triumph of the Texas Will," in the art and architecture. The entire built environment is a message of white supremacy. Leni Riefenstahl would have recognized what Fair Park was about.

The six flags of Texas theme is fundamentally an expression of white supremacy. History in Texas doesn't start until there are white people present.

In reviewing the murals along the Esplanade in the buildings you see white people as masters of science, technology, crafts, trades, and industry. Nowhere are non-white people present. White people do everything under the patronage of white goddesses in front of the buildings. A flyer is enclosed with illustrations of this point.

In the Hall of State white people found and build states and societies, African Americans tote bales of hay. Possibly an African American is shown helping to saw down a tree.

The story of Texas to 1936 is the dispossession of Native Americans of the land, the establishment of a society built by the exploitation of African slaves, the separation from a multi-racial abolitionist Mexico to establish a white supremacist slave Republic with Hispanics and of course slaves making non-white underclasses, then a panicked attempted secession from a United States that was headed towards abolition, then a violent terroristic overthrow of efforts to establish a multi-racial democracy during Reconstruction and then the establishment of a white supremacist Jim Crow Texas.

The omission of Reconstruction from the murals at the Hall of State at Fair Park is the first obvious indicator to look at that these beautiful murals and statues as propaganda and not just pretty things.

The art objects and murals serve to make the, previously mentioned history of Texas, the continuing struggle of a white supremacist society and its triumph in the Jim Crow era in the establishment of a white supremacist state a glorious and beautiful accomplishment of white people. The crushing of non-white humanity is missing. The art defines racial roles in society as given in the opposite page of this flyer.

The literature of the Centennial repeatedly refers to the establishment of an empire, situating the triumph of Texas as the formation of an empire in a world imperial system of white supremacy of European and American empires. The souvenir program for the *Cavalcade of Texas* performed at the Centennial also portrays Texas history as a triumph in establishing what it calls an “empire.”

Cullen F. Thomas, president of the Texas Centennial Commission, the booklet “Commemorating A Hundred Years of Texas History,” makes the racial meaning of “empire” clear when he states about the Centennial, “It will testify that Texans are not unworthy of the incomparable heritage left to them by martyrs and patriots, dying and ready to die, that Texas might become an Anglo-Saxon commonwealth,” establishing that Texas is not just a white triumph, but a triumph of a certain type of white people. The *Dallas Morning News*, “750,000 Expected to Attend Centennial during Week,” June 1, 1936, pages 1,9, reported that D.W. Griffith, director of the pro-Klan movie, “Birth of a Nation,” both reviewed and improved the *Cavalcade* to let the public know that Griffith endorsed it.

The Task Force on Confederate monuments recommendation doesn’t see that the entire built environment of Fair Park is in the service of white supremacy, but instead the Task Force sees a something that just needs some corrections and modifications which will likely be implemented as token gestures. Given the current historical context provided at Fair Park by the Dallas Historical Society I would say they are unqualified to do any contextualization.

I enclose a flyer with some of the Confederate art work to be found at Fair Park. The statue of the Confederacy is particularly insidious because it represents the Confederacy,

an attempt to establish a state to preserve slavery and white supremacy, as a thing of heavenly beauty, a white goddess.

The Texas medallion at the hall of state again has all the stages of Texas represented by white women on clouds even though Texas has been a place of multiple nationalities and races. The Confederacy is represented as beautiful, heavenly and bountiful. The medallion as a whole represents this succession establishing white supremacy as the essential core identity of Texas.

The State Fairs at Fair Park have had a Confederate Day each year from sometime in the 1880's until sometime in the 1990s. On these days neo-Confederate groups have had presentations advancing their ideology.

The fact that Fair Park is given local, state and national landmark status is no excuse to uncritically accept a white supremacist built environment. They might merit these landmark status, but they should merit this as an example of a 1930s white supremacist built environment showing another example in that era of fascism a different way of supporting white supremacy.

The city of Dallas should recognize Fair Park for what it is and act accordingly.

Sincerely Yours,

Edward H. Sebesta

CC:

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