

UT Removes Confederate Statue From Campus

The University of Texas said on Thursday it would move a statue of Confederate president Jefferson Davis from the campus to an educational exhibit in response to protests over the public display of symbols of the Confederacy.

The university said it would not remove statues of other figures of the Confederacy but said it was considering adding plaques explaining their significance in respect to the U.S. Civil War and the state of Texas.

A wave of opposition to the display of Confederate symbols in public places swept the United States after nine black people were murdered in a South Carolina church on June 17 by a white man who was pictured on social media with the Confederate battle flag.

"As a public university, it is vital that we preserve and understand our history and help our students and the public learn from it in meaningful ways," University of Texas President Gregory Fenves said.

The campus has several monuments to the Confederacy and its leaders due in large part to a wealthy benefactor named George Washington Littlefield, who fought in the Civil War with "Terry's Texas Rangers." Littlefield donated money to the university on the stipulation that the Southern heritage of Texas be preserved.

The statues that will stay on campus include those of Confederate Generals Robert E. Lee, who led the Confederate army, and Albert Sidney Johnston, who was born in Kentucky but commanded a Texas Division in the Civil War until his death in the Battle of Shiloh.

The university said those figures had stronger connections with Texas than Davis, whose statue will be placed in a center for American history. The statues have been on the campus for decades. The University of Texas at Austin opened in 1883.

In the midst of opposition to Confederate symbols, seen by many people as representing racism and slavery, “Black Lives Matter” was painted on the bases of some of the statues and “Dump the Chumps” was painted on the base of the Davis statue.

The University of Texas student government launched an online petition to get the statue of Davis removed from the campus.

“Given Jefferson Davis’ vehement support for the institution of slavery and white supremacy, we believe this statue is not in line with the university’s core values,” the petition said.

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