

It's Jefferson's Fault



The [removal of a statue](#) of Thomas Jefferson from New York City Hall on November 22nd raises troubling questions. That the statue had been there unmolested since 1833 reconfirms that ours is a harsh era of savage reassessments without the tempering influence of context. Whose fault is it that Thomas Jefferson's statue is, for many Americans, [no longer acceptable](#) for public display?

Rejection of American heroes of the past is an essential

element of Democrat revolutionary ideology. One can only observe in astonishment as slaveholding Founding Fathers like Jefferson are strongly rejected on “moral grounds” by the very same Democrats who shout their approval of and support for abortion.

Until recent years, a semi-sophisticated acceptance of the contradictions of American history was understood, so that people like Robert E Lee and Thomas Jefferson could be appreciated despite their errors; for their excellence of character in Lee’s case, and for the extraordinary vision of freedom they espoused in Jefferson’s case. There is an implied demand from the political and cultural left that our heroes must be stainless and without flaws. There were, and are, no such people.

The Democrat party was founded by Thomas Jefferson in the late 18th century as the Democratic-Republican party as a foil to the Federalists. Fundamentally, this new party was meant to ensure the rights of the states versus the federal government. Founders like Washington and John Adams were astonished that such an opposition party would arise because they understood, as Jefferson did not, that unity of purpose and a shared vision of the nation as a unified country of formerly independent states was essential to American success. This party would later be called, simply, the Democratic party.

The United States, founded as it was on the concepts of the supremacy of the individual over the government, was a stunningly new concept on this planet. The new American ideas of freedom and the value of the individual were, in many ways, world-changing. The existence of slavery undermined these concepts because it exposed the new country to charges of hypocrisy and racism, charges generally warranted. Over time, these errors were corrected – even requiring a civil war in which almost one million Americans died to finally eradicate the grotesque slavery institution.

Pragmatists like John Adams knew that slavery could not be ended *and* a new country created at the same time. The issue was left for future generations to resolve.

Jefferson was presented with an opportunity by his friend and fellow Virginian, and then secretary to President Madison, Edward Coles, to end slavery. Coles, himself a slaveholder, promised Jefferson that he would free all of his slaves and leave Virginia; he did both. He implored Jefferson in a strong letter, rightly invoking the Declaration of Independence, that ending slavery was Jefferson's duty. [Coles wrote](#) on July 31, 1814, "...it is a duty, as I conceive, that devolves particularly on you, from your known philosophical and enlarged view of subjects..." Replying to Coles in a letter that, to modern eyes, looks pathetic, weak, and shameful in comparison to Coles's, Jefferson discouraged Coles and refused any assistance to him. Jefferson never freed his slaves (with a few notable exceptions). Coles later became the second governor of Illinois.

Jefferson's failure to personally involve himself in the fight to end slavery in any substantive way beyond rhetoric would later have catastrophic consequences for the country that he was instrumental in founding. Had Jefferson joined Coles to fight against slavery, perhaps the Civil War might not have been fought at all. Perhaps by 1861 slavery would already have been dismantled – an ending to a grotesque institution brought about by Jefferson and Coles, themselves participants in it.

✘ The removal of the longstanding Jefferson statue from the City Hall of New York City in recent days, in a decision supported by the Democrat outgoing mayor, his activist wife, as well as the incoming Democrat mayor-elect, signals a ramping up of the pressure on Jefferson and on the principles of individual freedoms that he espoused.

In this era of rigid ideological thinking in certain quarters, general ignorance of history, and a widespread

misunderstanding and rejection of fundamental truths about humanity (that people can both make mistakes *and* be heroes) the principal fact of the contradictions of people and of history are rejected. The foundations of morality and ethics rely on an acceptance of the truth of the contrary nature of the past and of life itself, so that forgiveness and redemption are possible. Such things are now out of favor.

In this not-at-all-brave new era of rejectionism and confused morality in which the murder of children is embraced and encouraged by the very same people who condemn historical slavery and those who supported it, the absolutist leftist view is that America and its founders failed and the country itself corrupt and unworthy.

Whose fault is it that Jefferson's statue was removed and that Jefferson himself is rejected despite his championing American independence at the risk of his life? It is Jefferson's fault.

The extraordinary current situation of the world, combined with the radicalization of the political party that he founded, means that Jefferson can no longer be abided for his elevated rhetoric about freedoms all the while buying, selling, and holding slaves at Monticello.

These concepts of freedom, opportunity, and equality of all under the law are not bankrupt ideas even though Jefferson, one of freedoms greatest champions, would not live according to his own guidelines. Only with a full capacity to understand and accept contradictions such as this one and so many others, can American history and the country itself be understood and appreciated.

That the United States has learned from its historical mistakes and failures is undeniable. It is – despite its contradictory past – the standard-bearer of freedom and, yes, equality. Confirming this are the millions arriving at our southern border, where people risk their lives to illegally

enter and live in the United States.

In a [letter to John Adams](#) of August 1, 1816, Jefferson wrote that “bigotry is the disease of ignorance, of morbid minds; enthusiasm of the free and buoyant. education & free discussion are the antidotes of both. we are destined to be a barrier against the returns of ignorance and barbarism.”

We are moving swiftly toward a future of ignorance and barbarism as ideological rigidity, intolerance of political differences, and deep-seated resentments and hatreds drive our politics. It is an extraordinary moment of global and national crisis.

Lincoln took it upon himself to prove Jefferson wrong, that slavery could be eradicated and the country advance into the future in unity and toleration. It is now upon us to prove Jefferson right – that ours is a country that *is* a barrier against ignorance and barbarism. This is our American national mission and our destiny.

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