



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on August 24, 2020

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Tearing Down Statues of Real Heroes

When Black Lives Matter and other Marxists began toppling public monuments, they first targeted Confederates and other “racists” to cover the destruction with the patina of “anti-racist” action. Not surprisingly, they expanded their list of long-dead enemies to include Christopher Columbus, whom the Left began attacking years ago, and now they include Jesus Christ and his Blessed Mother. “Anti-racists” have beheaded or defaced statues of both. Thus did the Left reveal the ultimate target of its arson, looting, and vandalism: Western civilization and the Christian faith in general, and the Catholic Church in particular.



Yet with regard to the United States, the widespread destruction and dishonest revision of history means we may no longer speak with pride of the heroic oceanic exploration and settlement of the New World, or the creation of a unique civilization of nonpareil prosperity that, 66 years after the Wright brothers flew at Kitty Hawk, put a man on the Moon. Rather, we must confess to genocide, slavery, and, of course, the wreckage of a peaceful continent where tawny natives lived in peace, communed with their feathered friends in the sky and brother beasts in the woods, and warbled love calls across sparkling streams under the eye of the night.

Though no historic eminence is safe from BLM’s wrath — the terrorists have even attacked statues of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass — five men are particularly loathsome in BLM’s book: Christopher Columbus, Father Junipero Serra, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Robert E. Lee.

They were genocidal “racists,” we are told, who murdered and exploited the so-called natives (Columbus and Serra), organized a society built on slavery that has absolutely no redeeming value (Washington and Jefferson), and fought to keep blacks enslaved (Lee).

BLM’s goal is that of all revolutionaries: demoralize the historic majority by demonizing its heroes and ancestors, and its history, symbols, monuments, and even flag, so the majority believes its social order is unjust and permits its destruction.

A corrective is in order. Though these men were flawed as we all are, BLM lies in claiming that they were unworthy of admiration. On balance, the history shows they were not just good, but great men, flaws notwithstanding, and it is that for which we honor them.

Christopher Columbus: Admiral of the Ocean Sea

The war against Christopher Columbus began three decades ago in communist history professor Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States*, which falsely claimed that Columbus’ arrival at San Salvador was a dreadful genocidal cataclysm. Such was the smear’s potency that an episode of *The*



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Sopranos detailed the effort of Tony Soprano's mob family to stop "Native Americans" from desecrating the 15th-century Italian explorer's memory.

Now, apparently, Zinn's mendacious account is settled history. And so the statues must come down.

To cite one example of Zinn's heavy-handed distortions, the late professor dishonestly edited Columbus' account of his encounter with the Tainos and other tribes. "They would make fine servants," Zinn quoted Columbus as writing in his diary. "With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want."

But those words aren't what they seem. Zinn deviously edited the diary, as Mary Grabar wrote in 2019 for *The College Fix*, and made "Columbus say something quite different from what he actually said." In suggesting they would be "fine servants," Columbus did not mean they should be subjugated or enslaved, but instead tried to explain why another mainland tribe landed on their island to capture them.

As well, Zinn convinced a significant number of Americans to believe that Columbus showed up in the New World in a "frenzy for money," as Grabar quotes him, and that the arrival of the Spaniards destroyed forever the just, peaceful idyll of the innocently nude natives.

That, too, is false.

A Franciscan tertiary, Columbus' main concern, the Reverend John Hardon wrote, was bringing the people of the New World to Christ, and Columbus assembled a *Book of Prophecies* from Scripture that related to himself and his discovery of the New World:

Commercial interests were certainly prominent in the minds of others. But Columbus had deeper spiritual interests at heart. It was surely part of God's mysterious design that Columbus should have planted the true faith in the New World at the same time that Islam was overrunning Africa, the Near East, and was being driven out of Southern Europe.

As one reads the Book of Prophecies, the spirit of the Crusades stands out. For centuries the Crusaders, under Papal inspiration, sought to liberate the Holy City of Jerusalem from Moslem domination. This is the underlying theme of the Book of Prophecies, but with one remarkable difference. Columbus sought not so much the physical deliverance of the Holy Land. His aim was to extend the faith which makes the Holy Land holy....

As early as 1493, Columbus wrote a letter to the Royal Treasurer of Spain.... He wrote: "Since our Redeemer gave this victory to our most illustrious King and Queen and to their famous realms, in so great a manner, it is fitting for all Christendom to rejoice and to make celebrations and give solemn thanks to the Holy Trinity with many solemn prayers for the great exultation which it will have and the turning of so many peoples to our holy Faith."

In other words, charity inspired Columbus' voyage, not the search for gold or desire to perpetrate rape, slavery, or mass murder.

Nor did Columbus and his successors destroy a native paradise. As Samuel Eliot Morison reported in *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, Columbus and his men encountered cannibals who preyed upon the Tainos:

In the huts deserted by the warriors, who ungallantly fled, they found large cuts and joints of human flesh, shin bones set aside to make arrows of, caponized Arawak boy captives who were being fattened



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for the griddle, and girl captives who were mainly used to produce babies, which the Caribs regarded as a particularly toothsome morsel.

The Aztecs had a similar taste for human flesh. Spain's exploratory project in Latin America terminated a "civilization" that organized orgies of mass human sacrifice. "The victims of these sacrifices were most frequently slaves or prisoners of war," Hardon wrote. "Tearing out the hearts of living victims ... was a relatively merciful death compared to being scourged or eaten alive." Such was the Aztec thirst for blood, by their own account they slaughtered 84,000 people in four days when they dedicated the temple at Tenochtitlan to the sun god Huitzilopochtli.

Thanks to Columbus and his successor conquistadors, the demons of mass murder were exorcised from Latin America, and "millions embraced the religion of Jesus Christ before the end of the 16th century and became, like the converted Aztec Juan Diego, models of humility and charity."

Apropos of the truth about the natives, Columbus did not introduce slavery to the Americas or traffic in Africans. The Caribs and other Indians practiced slavery long before Columbus set sail on his 61-day journey from Palos de la Frontera, Spain.

And if Columbus did seek riches, the history shows, he did so in the hope they would pay to raise an army to liberate the Holy Land from its Muslim conquerors.

Thus is he called the Last Crusader.

St. Junipero Serra: Apostle to the Indians

Another villain, we are to believe, is St. Junipero Serra, known as the Father of California for founding nine of the many Catholic missions that grew into major cities such as San Diego, San Gabriel, San Francisco, and San Luis Obispo.

Like Columbus, Serra's object was bringing the natives to Christ and establishing the Catholic faith in new territory. And like Columbus, Serra's heroic efforts are now the object of contempt and criticism, his statues targets for destruction. The radicals have vandalized, desecrated, or destroyed Serra monuments up and down the state.

Yet he was not, as we are told, a brutal colonizer.

"Serra showed himself to be a defender of the Indians' human rights in 1773, when he journeyed from California to Mexico City to personally present to the viceroy a *Representación*," wrote Monsignor Francis J. Weber, the author of books on the saint and the archivist emeritus of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Spanish authorities accepted that "Bill of Rights" for the Indians, and two years later, when 20 Indians received a death sentence after a deadly attack on Mission San Diego, the viceroy acceded to Serra's request to pardon them. "Serra poured out the better part of his life on behalf of Native Americans having baptized over 5,000 and confirmed 6,000 more," Weber wrote. As well, he accomplished his feats with a chronically infected leg and, in the end, tuberculosis.

Contrary to what the revolutionaries want us to believe, Serra's efforts were not always consonant with those of Spain's royal authorities. "Regarding 'cultural genocide,'" Weber wrote, "such a charge irresponsibly conflates Serra's missionary work with the misdeeds of Spanish colonialism."



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Serra and his priests knew life would change for the Indians, and so therefore joined the effort to colonize California “to Christianize and to cushion what they knew would be a major cultural shock.” They tried to keep the military away from the Indians, whom Serra taught to farm and build. Life was better for the Indians at the missions:

It is sometimes assumed that the Indians in California had been living in some sort of idyllic lifestyle, akin to that of Eden. Contrary to this and related myths, the Indians were attracted to the food and quality of life that the missions provided, when compared to their original state.

Nor in claiming that Indians were forced to convert and kept captive do Serra’s detractors fully understand — or want to understand — how his missions operated. Indian catechumens lived at Serra’s missions, where priests not only taught the faith but also fed and clothed them. Serra and his priests did not force them to accept baptism or the Catholic faith, Weber explained:

Freedom, as all catechisms and manuals of Christian doctrine teach, is a precondition of baptism. In addition, the missionary handbook *Itinerario para Párrocos de Indios*, which occupied a place second only to the Bible for the friars, stated that “enforced baptisms shall be considered null and void.”

As well, a “baptized Indian freely agreed to live permanently on the mission,” and “monthly visits to relatives outside the missions were allowed. On the relatively few occasions when an Indian ran away or failed to return after his monthly excursion, other Christian neophytes were sent after him with a warning that chastisement would follow if the offense was repeated.”

Without ignoring that neither Serra nor Columbus nor the Spanish royal authorities were perfect, serious observers would conclude that the Indians were better off becoming and living as 18th-century Christians than living as near Stone Age primitives in a primitive land — if not for a better diet, then for the salvation of their eternal souls.

“The real ground for animosity against Columbus is the fact that he brought the Catholic faith to the New World,” Hardon wrote, and one may safely conclude that the same is true for St. Junipero.

George Washington: First in the Hearts of His Countrymen

The anti-American radicals have not yet besieged the Washington Monument or the first president’s visage on Mount Rushmore, but give them time. A radical law professor at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, wants to not only drop Robert E. Lee’s name from the name of the university because Lee owned slaves and fought for the Confederacy, but also George Washington’s because he too owned slaves. Seventy-three percent of Democratic college students polled by *The College Fix* would tear down the statues of slave-owning Founding Fathers.

Whatever the failings of the man who could not tell a lie — he believed indolent or recalcitrant slaves must be punished, and he sold those who repeatedly tried to flee Mount Vernon, his home on the Potomac River below Alexandria, Virginia — he made provision in his will to free his 123 slaves upon his wife’s, Martha’s, death, as the Mount Vernon website observes:

George Washington stipulated in his will that elderly slaves or those who were too sick to work were to be supported throughout their lives by his estate. Children without parents, or those whose families were unable to see to their education were to be bound out to masters and mistresses who would teach them reading, writing, and a useful trade, until they were ultimately freed at the age of twenty-five.



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Washington's will stated that he took these charges to his executors very seriously: "And I do moreover most pointedly, and most solemnly enjoin it upon my Executors ... to see that this clause respecting Slaves, and every part thereof be religiously fulfilled at the Epoch at which it is directed to take place; without evasion, neglect or delay, after the Crops which may then be on the ground are harvested, particularly as it respects the aged and infirm."

Martha Washington freed those slaves on January 1, 1801, more than a year before she died in May 1802.

Moreover, Washington's stature among his troops at the end of the Revolutionary War — to which he devoted seven of his prime years as commander of American forces — was so great that a large part of his officer corps wanted to make him America's first king. He refused, and instead returned home after he resigned his army commission. He was unanimously elected president twice, only to leave office voluntarily and again return to Mount Vernon. Every one of his successors honored that two-term precedent without a law forcing them to do so until Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was first elected president in 1932.

The significance of Washington's resigning as commander of the American military, then leaving the presidency after two terms, wasn't lost upon his British cousins.

"George Washington's conduct is beyond all praise," said William Petty, first Marquess of Lansdowne, on receiving the portrait of Washington he commissioned from the fabled portraitist Gilbert Stuart. "He has left a noble example to sovereigns and Nations, present and to come."

The American ambassador to Britain, Rufus King, reported what King George III told American painter Benjamin West. If Washington did indeed step down, "[It would] place him in a light the most distinguished of any man living," West told King of George III's opinion. "He thought him the greatest character of the age."

Washington lived by a strict personal code, his *Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior*, adapted from the French Jesuits. When the first president died in 1799, Lighthorse Harry Lee famously penned a paean to his old commander. "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen,"

Washington's faithful cavalry commander wrote. "He was second to none in the humble and endearing scenes of private life; pious, just, humane, temperate and sincere; uniform, dignified and commanding, his example was as edifying to all around him."

But perhaps more telling is the opinion of the Reverend Richard Allen, a former slave. "Our father and friend is taken from us," Allen wrote 15 days after Washington died.

To us he has been the sympathising friend and tender father. He has watched over us, and viewed our degraded and afflicted state with compassion and pity — his heart was not insensible to our sufferings.... He dared to do his duty, and wipe off the only stain with which man could ever reproach him....

If he who broke the yoke of British burdens "from off the neck of the people" of this land, and was hailed his country's deliverer, by what name shall we call him who secretly and almost unknown emancipated his "bondmen and bondwomen" — became to them a father, and gave them an inheritance!

But none of that matters to the Left.



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Thomas Jefferson: “We Hold These Truths”

As with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson stands condemned because he owned slaves, although the anti-Jefferson radicals believe they have an even larger-caliber bullet to fatally wound him: At 45 years old when he was U.S. minister to France, they argue, he carried on an affair with 16-year-old slave Sally Hemings, and went on to father six of her children. So Jefferson was not only a “racist,” Jefferson haters allege, but also a “rapist,” and a child rapist at that.

The Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society published *The Jefferson-Hemings Controversy: Report of the Scholars Commission*, which showed the Jefferson-Hemings tale to be false. DNA tests *did not*, as widely believed, connect Jefferson to Hemings, and other historical research showed the claims of so-called offspring and descendants of the two were also untrue. So the story remains what it was: a scurrilous lie and blackmail attempt conceived by Jefferson’s enemy, James Callender, in 1801.

That didn’t stop the people who run Monticello or one of Jefferson’s real descendents, Lucian Truscott IV, from conceding the lie. Grandson of a renowned World War II general, Truscott sallied forth for BLM in the *New York Times* to explain the memorial “is a shrine to a man who famously wrote that ‘all men are created equal’ ... and yet never did much to make those words come true. Upon his death, he did not free the people he enslaved, other than those in the Hemings family, some of whom were his own children. He sold everyone else to pay off his debts.”

Such is Truscott’s anti-Jefferson zeal that he would not only raze the monument but also replace it with one honoring Harriet Tubman, the escaped slave who ran the Underground Railroad.

Yet, as with Washington, the single-minded obsession with Jefferson’s ownership of slaves, which few Americans, black or white, worried about until BLM told them to, threatens to obscure his singular accomplishments as a Promethean American and surpassing figure of the late 18th and early 19th centuries who truly changed the world.

Jefferson listed what he thought were his three most significant accomplishments on the obelisk over his grave at Monticello: He wrote the Declaration of Independence, which justified secession from Great Britain and explicitly stated that God, not the state, endows us with immutable rights neither state nor government can abridge or take away. He also wrote the Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom, which Virginia’s General Assembly adopted in 1786 and which anticipated the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. “No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever,” it says, “nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief.”

Jefferson thought his third great deed was founding the University of Virginia.

Yet Jefferson did not have listed two of his most significant feats outside those political and intellectual achievements.

With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, he doubled the size of the United States by acquiring 827,000 square miles of territory from Napoleon for the meager sum of \$15 million. The transaction included all of Iowa, Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, almost all of the Dakotas, Minnesota west of the Mississippi River, parts of Texas and New Mexico, and Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado east of the Rocky Mountains. Even adjusted for inflation — \$342.2 million — Jefferson’s remarkable real estate acquisition from Napoleon was less a purchase and more a steal. He also sent the U.S. Navy and



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Marines to defeat the Barbary pirate states. When the Marines captured Derna in Tripoli in 1805, the American flag flew over conquered territory for the first time.

Yet because he was a man of his time and one aspect of his life does not meet 21st-century sensibilities, the stunning memorial on the Tidal Basin must be demolished.

Robert E. Lee: “The MOST Perfect Man”

The campaign against Robert E. Lee, the Confederate commander and one of the two or three finest Americans ever born, began long ago. A Boy Scout troop in Richmond stripped Lee’s name from its uniforms, title, and logo in 2003. And now, hard-left Virginia Governor Ralph Northam desires to tear down the priceless and shockingly vandalized Lee Monument in Richmond.

Lee owned slaves, say the angry critics, and did not free the slaves he inherited from George Washington Parke Custis quickly enough. Even worse, he fought to perpetuate slavery. And so Lee is a “racist traitor.” But the facts of the matter stand in stark contrast to the leftist fable: In actuality Lee inherited slaves, and he not only needed to pay off debts to make releasing them feasible, but he was forbidden by Virginia law from freeing them.

Custis, who died in 1857, set aside the sale of multiple estates, as well as the work on others, to pay legacies to Lee’s daughters:

And upon the legacies to my four granddaughters being paid, and my estates that are required to pay the said legacies being clear of debt, then I give freedom to my slaves, the said slaves to be emancipated by my executors in such manner as to my executors may seem most expedient and proper, the said emancipation to be accomplished in not exceeding five years from the time of my decease.

The National Park Service interprets the will to mean the slaves were to be freed “if the estate was found to be in good financial standing or within five years otherwise.” Lee’s critics complain that he sought a court’s permission to keep the slaves longer than his father-in-law wished.

Fact is, as historian Brion McClanahan wrote, Lee could not have freed the slaves before 1862 because doing so would break the law. Manumission was illegal in Virginia. As well, Lee “managed the Arlington estate in an attempt to make the property solvent in order to save it for his wife and family after years of mismanagement.” McClanahan wrote:

To keep Arlington and not sell it off, he had to get out of debt.... To get out of debt, he had to make the estate profitable and doing so required that the Custis slaves be forced to work, either at Arlington or on neighboring plantations, something they did not want to do and openly resisted....

A Virginia court finally forced Lee to sell off portions of Arlington in 1862 in order to meet the final requirements of the Custis estate and to free the slaves.

Lee thought slavery a “moral and political evil,” McClanahan observed, although he held the same views on race as almost everyone of his time.

Lee’s detractors also claim he either ordered his slaves brutally whipped at Arlington, a charge, as McClanahan observed, that “is at minimum debatable and probably a lie.” A historian who leveled the charge admits the whipping itself cannot be validated, and one of the slaves who claimed to have been a victim “carried no scars from such a violent event.”



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Wrote McClanahan, "Lee publicly refused to answer the charge against him and did not directly comment on it privately, telling his son that the whole business 'has left me an unpleasant legacy.' If Lee was so vindictive, why would it be 'an unpleasant legacy?'" As well, "Lee twice denied it happened later in life. Whom are we to believe? Why would Lee lie in a private letter to his son in 1859 when he had nothing to lose?"

Still, nothing else in Lee's life matters. History must be rewritten, his courageous service during the Mexican War, for instance, must be ignored.

During the Battle of Contreras outside Mexico City, Lee thrice crossed the Pedregal, a lava field thought to be impassable, at night. General Winfield Scott called it the "greatest feat of physical and moral courage, performed by any individual" during the campaign. Lee, he wrote, was "the best soldier that I ever saw in the field."

I tell you that if I were on my death bed tomorrow, and the president of the United States would tell me that a great battle was to be fought for liberty or slavery of the country, and asked my judgment as to the ability of a commander, I would say with my dying breath, let it be Robert E. Lee.

Despite that heroism, Lee's anguished resignation from the Army to fight for Virginia, after declining the offer to command the Union Army, made him a "traitor." He was not a secessionist, but as he wrote to his sister, he would not make war upon his home state and people: "Save in defence of my native state with the sincere hope that my poor services may never be needed, I hope I may never be called upon to draw my sword."

Even after Lee's defeat in April 1865, the opinion of his contemporaries, including his Yankee foes, did not change. "It is easy to see why Lee has become the embodiment of ... the soldier, the Christian and the gentleman," a Union general wrote on seeing Lee at the Confederate surrender at Appomattox.

Lee reproached those who wished to pick scabs on the wounds of the war, and when a penniless Union veteran showed up at Lee's front gate, the man remembered, Lee "not only had a kind word for an old soldier who had fought against him, but he gave me some money to help me on my way."

Lee turned down lucrative offers to exploit his name, and at a Sunday service after the war, was the first congregant to kneel by a black man who had stepped forward to receive communion.

British Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley called Lee "the most perfect man I ever met," and the day after he died, the *New York Herald* offered this evaluation of Lee:

Here in the North ... we have long since ceased to look upon him as the Confederate leader, but have claimed him as one of ourselves; have cherished and felt proud of his military genius; have recounted and recorded his triumphs as our own; have extolled his virtue as reflecting upon us — for Robert Edward Lee was an American....

Never had mother a nobler son.... He united all those charms of manners which made him the idol of his friends and of his soldiers and won for him the respect and admiration of the world.

But the mountain of evidence in Lee's favor must be ignored, so we're told.

The revolutionary destruction of traditional American heroes and symbols in which we justly take pride is not an end in itself. It is the means to an end: the imposition of a new narrative that justifies an



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unthinkable totalitarian regime that will enforce its dogmas with a reign of terror. The first step, though, is erasing our past and our deservedly treasured historical memory.

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