



Are People Who Tear Down Confederate Statues Like ISIS?

Responding to the continued protests over a statue of a Confederate soldier at the University of North Carolina (UNC) in Chapel Hill, Fox News host Laura Ingraham used her Tuesday night broadcast of *The Ingraham Angle* to compare their “destructive mindset” to the Islamic terror group ISIS.



“Think about ISIS,” Ingraham said, “what they did, they pillaged and they wiped away irreplaceable historical and religious monuments. From Palmyra, remember in Syria, simply because they could. It was offensive to them.”

This “mindset” is now prevalent “particularly among the young, to hate the past and eradicate anything they find objectionable or troubling,” Ingraham argued.

The protesters at UNC are targeting a statue that was erected in 1913 by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) in honor of the average Confederate soldier. The statue is known as Silent Sam, and it was pulled down in August by student protesters using a rope (shown).

A 2015 state law prohibits the removal of historic objects of remembrance on state property. Exceptions can be made in cases of preservation or construction, but otherwise UNC is not allowed to simply remove the statue because some students are supposedly offended by it.

As Carol Folt, chancellor at UNC, explained in their decision to relocate — rather than remove — Silent Sam, relocation is the “best legal option,” which will simultaneously preserve the monument “and its history,” while also providing for public safety. The protesters were responding to the decision, announced Monday, that Silent Sam will be included in a new “History and Education Center” that will have many historic artifacts.

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“The Center would be in a new, free-standing building with state-of-the-art security and outstanding programming,” Folt said. “We have a long and important history to tell, and the Center will offer us an excellent opportunity to tell it all. We are the only public university to have experienced our nation’s history from the start — war, slavery, Jim Crow laws, suffrage, civil unrest, as well as hope, freedom, emancipation, civil rights, opportunity, access, learning, and great discoveries fostered here. All of these subjects will be covered in the proposed Center.”

Not surprisingly, UNC’s relocation of Silent Sam, rather than the statue’s destruction, did not satisfy campus radicals who are either ignorant of its history or are simply using it to advance a leftist agenda, or both. As Ingraham noted, “This happened, OK, the confederacy happened. And we owe it to the future to leave history as it existed undisturbed, continue to debate it, have conversations about it.”

Debate is the last thing the Left wants, on any subject. They are not interested in hearing anyone else’s



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viewpoint. Their idea of a “conversation” is to hurl curse words and insults at those who hold a differing opinion. While they have not (yet) brought out the guillotines as their forbears did in the French Revolution to deal with those who have an opposing viewpoint, they remain steadfastly opposed to any point of view that does not advance their radical agenda.

Instead of attempting to understand why the UDC would have erected the statue to Silent Sam, the protesters simply argued that it was a symbol of racism — which the university administration supposedly supports. “They are building a safe space for white supremacy and forcing us to pay for it,” several student groups, including Defend UNC, said in a statement condemning the retention of Silent Sam.

The protest against Silent Sam is based on some false historical premises, such as the idea that he somehow represents slavery. First of all, the statue is in honor of average Confederate soldiers, probably the fathers of many of the women of the UDC who paid for the statue 105 years ago. It was not erected to promote racism.

As only about five percent of Confederate soldiers were slaveowners, the average soldier did not own any slaves. Average soldiers probably had a variety of views about slavery and slaves. But even for those who supported its continuation, it was not the reason they fought in the war.

Neither did the average Union soldier fight to abolish slavery, because the war was not fought to end slavery, but rather to force seceded states back into the Union. The average northern soldier fought to keep the Union together, because they had long been taught that should the nation divide, it would become weaker and an easier prey to foreign powers. They had been taught, for a generation, the words of Senator Daniel Webster — “liberty and union, now and forever, one and inseparable.”

So just why did Silent Sam fight? Most likely because of the invasion of his home state by soldiers from the North. All they desired was for the blue-clad Yankees to go back North.

Slavery was certainly an issue, and an important issue, that caused the secession. Another issue was the tariff — that is why President Lincoln did not want to give up Fort Sumter, as so much of the tariff (the major revenue source for Lincoln’s federal government) was collected at the port of Charleston, South Carolina. Others with a southern slant have cited “states’ rights” as an issue over which the war was fought.

But the reality is that the average southern soldier — as symbolized by Silent Sam — was not fighting over some abstract issue such as states’ rights any more than he was fighting for slavery. He probably disliked the tariff, which was transferring wealth from southern states to the North, but that is not likely the reason he took up arms in 1861.

As said already, almost all Confederate men and boys who wore the gray did so because of the invasion of their homeland. We can certainly debate today whether secession was legal or wise, or what should have been done about slavery or the tariff, or the war’s relationship to states’ rights, but for the average Confederate soldier — Silent Sam — the fight was a defense of their home and families.

For the protesters at UNC and for those protesters at other locations around the country, pulling down statues so as to promote the idea that America was, and still is, a racist country, fits well with their agenda. That agenda is to argue that this country was founded on principles that need to be eradicated. That way, appeals to the Founders, to the Constitution, etc., can be answered with denunciations of racism, sexism, and related charges.



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Make no mistake about it. Today it is Silent Sam, but tomorrow it will be statues of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, and beyond that they will call for scrapping the Constitution itself as a “racist” document, so it can be replaced with a government more like the socialist democracies of Europe — or worse.

Photo: AP Images

Steve Byas teaches history and government at Randall University. His book, History’s Greatest Libels, is a challenge to the efforts to repeat lies about historical figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Joe McCarthy, Christopher Columbus, and Marie Antoinette.



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