



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on August 17, 2017

Interior Secretary and Nat'l. Park Service Defend Historic Value of Confederate Memorials

Spokesmen for the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior (the NPS's parent agency) have both defended Confederate statues, monuments, and flags as important educational tools that help educate park visitors about the Civil War.

"Don't rewrite history," Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said during a visit to Antietam National Battlefield in western Maryland last month. "Understand it for what it is and teach our kids the importance of looking at our magnificent history as a country and why we are what we are."



The Battle of Antietam was the bloodiest single-day battle in American history, with combined casualties on both sides numbering 22,717 dead, wounded, or missing.

In a statement to E&E News on August 16, Jeremy Barnum, public affairs specialist at the National Park Service, said that monuments, markers, and plaques that commemorate those who fought and died in the Civil War are "an important part of our country's history."

"The National Park Service is committed to safeguarding these memorials while simultaneously educating visitors holistically and objectively about the actions, motivations and causes of the soldiers and states they commemorate," said Barnum.

The discussion about whether our national parks should continue to display Confederate historic items along with those representing the Union side in the Civil war has gained relevance in light of recent campaigns to remove statues of Confederate military figures and other memorials in American cities.

As any diligent student of history realizes, the Civil War (also called The War Between the States by some) was fought over multiple issues, including states sovereignty and whether the Southern states should be forced to operate under a system of federal tariffs that favored Northern manufacturers at the expense of the agricultural South. While the institution of slavery was certainly a factor, it was by no means the only factor. Those who maintain that anyone or anything associated with the Confederacy represents a defense of slavery or racism misinterprets history — whether inadvertently or deliberately.

Unfortunately, extremists on both sides of the issue — a small number of racist agitators who have exploited Confederate symbols to further their unsavory goals, and a larger number of leftist (including Marxist) agitators who have fomented violence and destruction in several cities, including Charlottesville, Virginia, and Durham, North Carolina, have squared off against each other and spoiled the peaceful existence that has existed since most Americans on both sides of the conflict heeded Abraham Lincoln's words in 1865: "With Malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds."



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Those wounds were largely bound up more than a century ago, and stayed healed until the agitators opened them up again.

The Daily Caller reported on August 15 that during a press conference that day, President Trump sparred with reporters over the issue of removing Confederate statues and the violent confrontation that erupted in Charlottesville, Virginia, between the opposing sides.

"You had people in that group that were there to protest the taking down ... to them, a very, very important statue and the renaming of a park from Robert E. Lee to another name," Trump said during one spat with a reporter.

"George Washington as a slave owner," he continued. "So will George Washington now lose his status? Are we going to take down statues to George Washington? How about Thomas Jefferson?"

"Are we going to take down his statue because he was a major slave owner. Are we going to take down his statue?"

The Daily Caller noted that Trump's critics accused him of comparing neo-Nazi and white supremacists to so-called "anti-fascist" counter-protesters.

The comparison is a valid one, however. As was noted in an [article posted by The New American](#) about the violent hard-left "Antifa" movement:

On June 12, 2017, the New Jersey Department of Homeland Security and Preparedness officially declared Antifa to be a terrorist group, explaining the following: "Anti-fascist groups, or 'Antifa,' are a subset of the anarchist movement and focus on issues involving racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism, as well as other perceived injustices." The New Jersey DHS stressed that the Antifa movement is opposed to "fascism, racism, and law enforcement," while targeting in particular far-right extremists, including perceived white supremacists.

The writer of that article, Jerome Corsi, noted:

The violent, confrontational nature of Antifa anarchists presents a challenge to U.S. law enforcement that is unprecedented; they reject the free speech principles upon which civil discourse depends, while seeking to achieve the demise of the U.S. Constitution, as it holds as illegitimate any compromise with their communist worldview.

Trump issued a statement condemning the relatively small number of neo-Nazis and white supremacists who attended the Charlottesville "Unite the Right" rally. But he also said that he believed that some of the people who showed up for the protest were "fine people."

"You also had some very fine people, on both sides," he said.

However, the radical Left has attacked Trump for acknowledging that there are fine people who want to preserve historic Confederate monuments.

Interior Secretary Zinke said he supports Trump "in uniting our communities and prosecuting the criminals to the fullest extent of the law."

Katie Lawhon, a Gettysburg National Military Park spokeswoman told the Hanover, Pennsylvania, *Evening Sun* on August 16 that they were not removing Confederate monuments to those who fought at the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. "These memorials, erected predominantly in the early and mid-20th century, are an important part of the cultural landscape," she said.



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"This week, it's Robert E. Lee," Trump said about the statue removal during an August 15 press conference. "I noticed that Stonewall Jackson is coming down. I wonder, is it George Washington next week, and is it Thomas Jefferson the week after? You know, you really do have to ask yourself, where does it stop?"

At least for now, this insanity stops at the boundaries of our national parks.

Photo of Stone Mountain Confederate memorial: [Wikipedia](#)

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