

A monumental teachable moment [Editorial]



The monument sits outside the Howard County Circuit Court building, and bears the names of 92 Confederate soldiers from Howard County. (Courtesy photo)

By **Editorial by the Howard County Times**

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To Howard County's credit, there has been no rush to summarily remove a marker listing the names of Confederate soldiers from the courthouse grounds in Ellicott City.

Instead, county leaders are calling for a broader conversation and asking questions about appropriate options for a monument that was installed nearly seven decades ago and provides one reminder of the Civil War and Maryland's place as the "Free State," where slavery was abolished in 1864.

With the rage over last weekend's deadly encounter between protesters in Charlottesville, Va., still raw, a hasty decision to destroy or mothball local monuments, statues and markers is a disservice to history and doesn't advance deeper efforts in a diverse society to find common ground in denouncing racism and bigotry.

The Ellicott City marker stands as a monument to those who fought for their beliefs in a vastly different era, and with the passage of time, were shown to be on the wrong side of history by allowing and condoning slavery.

The nation's past has many ugly moments. Rewriting history to pander to political correctness serves little good and erases the ability of future generations to learn from mistakes. As one caller to a Baltimore radio talk-show asked earlier this week, "What's next? Removing books about the Civil War from our library shelves?"

Two reasonable options need to be on the table as Howard County studies its next move.

One involves keeping the marker in its place and adding a second plaque that provides the context of the Civil War, reconstruction, emancipation and the later civil rights movement. Another would put the monument on display in the nearby Howard County Historical Society Museum, supplementing other relics of the county's past, and providing an exhibit that celebrates, not denigrates, the community's diversity and place in history.

Howard's modulated response is welcomed.

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