

NYC MONUMENTS STAY, SAVE ONE

Bill Donohue

The New York City commission empowered to assess the propriety of having controversial monuments, statues, and markers on public lands has issued its report: all of the tributes, save one, will remain where they are. The lone exception is a Central Park statue of Dr. J. Marion Sims, a nineteenth century gynecologist who experimented on slave women; his statue will be moved to the Brooklyn cemetery where he is buried.

After I testified before the panel on November 27, I told my colleagues at the Catholic League that my guess is that the statue of Columbus in Columbus Circle—the most high profile and contentious of all monuments, statues, and markers—will remain, as will most of the others. If there is an exception, I said, it would be to remove the statue of Dr. Sims.

I would have preferred not to empanel a commission at all—it was pure political grandstanding—but given the hostile climate created by left-wing extremists, the report's final recommendations are quite acceptable.

The statue of Columbus will remain because of the efforts of the Italian-American community (Gov. Andrew Cuomo deserves credit here) and Catholic activists: they stood fast against the cultural cleansers. I was happy to lend the support of the Catholic League to the pro-Columbus side.

The most ideological of the speakers were young radicals associated with Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter; they were joined by some aging professors still living in the 1960s. Their hatred for America was palpable, as was their contempt for the democratic process. Indeed, the first speakers at the Manhattan hearing (where I spoke) pledged to take down the Columbus statue by force if the panel didn't

elect to move it.

How ironic it is to note that the most vocal critics of Columbus—those who accused him of gross injustice—turned out to be modern-day totalitarians. These zealots made the 15th-century Italian explorer look positively angelic by comparison.

One final thought. The most notable member of the commission was Harry Belafonte. He was also the laziest—he did practically nothing. For that we can count our blessings: he is not a patriot.

It's time Harry fully retired and moved to some place where he belongs. Maybe he can bring his calypso to North Korea and dance with Kim.