

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 362

Approved September 15, 2017

WHEREAS, On November 21st, 1861, General Robert E. Lee presented his army with its newly created battle flag, commonly known today as the Confederate flag; and

WHEREAS, The Confederate flag was used widely throughout the Civil War as a symbol of the Confederate States of America (CSA), the Confederate army, and the Confederate cause; and

WHEREAS, The Confederacy was deeply rooted in white supremacy and its aim was to establish a permanent slave society, as the CSA's first Vice President stated, the Confederacy was founded "upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition."; and

WHEREAS, In South Carolina's official declaration of secession, it explained the decision as being due to the "increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the institution of slavery"; and

WHEREAS, William T. Thompson, one of the designers of the Confederate flag, stated, "As a national emblem, it is significant of our higher cause, the cause of a superior race, and a higher civilization," and, "As a people we are fighting to maintain the Heaven-ordained supremacy of the white man over the inferior or colored race";

WHEREAS, During the CSA's invasion of Pennsylvania, Confederate forces abducted free African-Americans and sent them south to be sold into slavery; and

WHEREAS, In many instances, when Union soldiers surrendered to Confederate forces, white soldiers were kept as prisoners of war while black soldiers were summarily executed, including the Fort Pillow Massacre, which historian Richard Fuchs, described as, "an orgy of death, a mass lynching to satisfy the basest of conduct - intentional murder - for the vilest of reasons - racism and personal enmity";

WHEREAS, The Confederate flag was revived as a political symbol in the 20th century in response to desegregation, anti-lynching legislation, and the civil rights movement; and

WHEREAS, Moreover, monuments and statues honoring the Confederacy were erected at points in the 20th Century to bolster the enacting of discriminatory "Jim Crow" legislation and to respond to the civil rights movement; and

WHEREAS, More than 700 Confederate monuments and statues exist on public property, many honoring and memorializing Confederate leaders, generals, soldiers, and others who fought to preserve and promote the institution of slavery; and

WHEREAS, Some monuments and statues go further to glorify the Confederacy's cause, such as a South Carolina monument erected in 1902 that reads "The world shall yet decide, in truth's clear, far-off light, that the soldiers who wore the gray, and died with Lee, were in the right."; and

WHEREAS, In 1948, South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond ran for President on an explicitly segregationist platform and prominently used the Confederate flag and other Confederate symbols in his campaign; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the 20th century, the Confederate flag was a common sight at Ku Klux Klan rallies and other events held by white supremacist organizations; and

WHEREAS, Despite their long history as a symbol of white supremacy and racism, the Confederate flag and Confederate statues and monuments continue to maintain a presence on public and government property; and

WHEREAS, In the wake of a white nationalist rally that turned violent in Charlottesville, Virginia, many elected officials from around the nation have renewed the call for the removal of the Confederate flag and Confederate monuments from public property in the United States; and

WHEREAS, One such elected official, Mitch Landrieu, the mayor of New Orleans, stressed that the monuments "were erected with the goal of rewriting history to glorify the Confederacy and perpetuate the idea of white supremacy";

WHEREAS, Even General Lee himself was opposed to the construction of monuments to the Confederacy, warning in the years after the Civil War that the construction of such monuments would be counterproductive and would only further divide the nation; and

WHEREAS, On June 22nd, 2015 then-South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley called for the removal of the Confederate flag from the grounds of the South Carolina State House, stating "[B]y removing a symbol that divides us, we can move our state forward in harmony."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence does hereby call for the Battle Flag of the Army of Northern Virginia, commonly known as the Confederate flag, and all Confederate monuments and statues to be removed from all public property in the United States.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That, upon passage, copies of this resolution will be sent to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate, the Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate, and the members of the Rhode Island Congressional delegation.

IN CITY COUNCIL

SEP 07 2017

READ AND PASSED

Sabrina Mats

ACTING PRES.

Lowell

CLERK

I HEREBY APPROVE.

[Signature]

Mayor

Date: 9/15/17