



July 22, 2020

**To: Members of the League of Women Voters of the Tennessee Valley**

**Subject: Statement Regarding the Confederate Monument in Madison County**

On July 22, 2020, the President of the LWVTNV made the following statement to the Madison County Commission:

Good Morning, I am Kathleen Leonard the President of the Tennessee Valley League of Women Voters. The League was founded in 1920 to encourage citizen engagement with the electoral and political processes. When a government acts to forcefully suppress and intimidate citizens who are seeking accountability and equal justice, we have a duty to speak out and demand that government officials honor their sacred trust to respect, protect, and listen to citizens. That is why I am here today to speak in favor of moving the Confederate Monument.

The League of Women Voters was born of the Women's Suffrage Movement. A local suffragist, who was also a Daughter of the Confederacy, was instrumental in emplacing the confederate monument on our courthouse square in 1905. The unveiling ceremony happened barely a year after the lynching of Horace Maples by a mob of over 2000 people on this very same courthouse square.

I was born in Huntsville Hospital and graduated from Huntsville High. I know those of us of a certain age grew up learning Civil War history that pretended the war was not about slavery. That is just not true. This monument is NOT history. It is a monument to the "Lost Cause" mythology that the Southern insurrection was a struggle for "state's rights." We are here today to say "No! The Lost Cause is a lie!"

Monuments like this one were constructed during the Jim Crow and Lost Cause periods that ushered in a reign of racial terror during which African-Americans were stripped of their basic rights and murdered in public for reasons such as competing with whites in business, seeking the vote or even failing to give way on the sidewalk. That is what these monuments stand for whether you recognize it or not.

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Where it stands today, the monument serves no purpose but as a symbol of racism and a constant reminder of the pain and suffering of untold numbers of people of color. And to our brothers and sisters of color, I regret that we did not always stand with you when we should have. But today, we stand together to REMEMBER HORACE MAPLES AND DEMAND THAT YOU TAKE DOWN THIS MONUMENT.

Respectfully,



Kathleen Leonard

President, League of Women Voters of the Tennessee Valley

cc:

LWV of Alabama State President: Barbara Caddell

