

OPINION

The Times-Union

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Editorial board: Nusbaum, Clark, Bobby Martin, Roger Brown and citizen members.



The Grand Army of the Republic, the main Union veterans association, erected this statue at Evergreen Cemetery on North Main Street. The inscription reads, "In memory of our comrades who defended the flag of the Union, on land and sea, 1861-1865." It is surrounded by the graves of 10 Union veterans; many other Union and Confederate veterans and officials are buried elsewhere in the cemetery. [MIKE CLARK/FLOIDA TIMES-UNION]

OUR VIEW: HISTORY OF MEMORIAL DAY

A moving and overlooked moment

Most Americans know the basic story of Memorial Day. Originally called Decoration Day, it involved decorating graves of military personnel who died in the Civil War. As many as 25 cities claim to have originated the remembrances of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. One of the first observances occurred in 1866 in Columbus, Miss., when a group of women visited the cemetery of graves of Confederate soldiers from the battle at Shiloh. They also decorated the on-site graves of Union soldiers. Also in 1866, Congress officially declared Waterloo, N.Y., as the birthplace of Memorial Day. In a New York Times column, historian David Blight wrote that Memorial Day ceremonies helped "forge national reconciliation" around the sacrifices of all soldiers. Blight, however, found what he described as the "earliest and most remarkable" Memorial Day. It occurred in Charleston, the city where the Civil War began. It was May 1, 1865, some three weeks after Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee had surrendered. The Confederates had evacuated Charleston. More than 20 African-American workmen went to a former race course that had been converted into an outdoor prison camp for captured Union soldiers, many of whom later died and were buried in a mass grave. The workmen reburied the Union soldiers in a dignified fashion, and then built a high fence around the newly created cemetery. They also built an archway over an entrance bearing these words: "Martyrs of the Race Course." The men then staged a parade with 10,000 people that included newly freed slaves, white missionaries and teachers. It was led by 3,000 black children carrying roses and singing "John Brown's Body." Black women followed with baskets of flowers, wreaths and crosses. After the women, there was a procession of black men, followed by Union soldiers. In the cemetery, a black children's choir sang "We'll Rally Around the Flag," "The Star Spangled Banner" and spirituals — followed by a number of black ministers who read from the Bible. Finally, there were picnics, speeches and drills of soldiers. A correspondent for The New York Tribune described the event as "a procession of friends and mourners as South Carolina and the United States never saw before." Let us take a moment at 3 p.m. on Memorial Day to remember those who have fallen.

Times-Union Editorial Board



A member of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans Kirby-Smith Camp #1209 walks among the grave markers of Confederate soldiers during 2008's annual Confederate Memorial Day ceremony, held that year at the Old City Cemetery in Downtown. [FLORIDA TIMES-UNION]

A VERSE FOR TODAY

"There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked."
Isaiah 48:22

ANOTHER VIEW

Any plans for the Memorial Day Weekend?



ANOTHER VIEW

Greene can make an impact by supporting arts education

By The Rev. Kimberly Hyatt

During the candidate interviews that eventually led to her being named superintendent of the Duval County Public Schools, Diana Greene made a strong statement in support of arts education as essential in educating the whole child. While acknowledging that short-term adjustments may be necessary given the Duval district's \$62 million shortfall, Greene noted that as superintendent of Manatee County schools, she began investing in the arts once that school system reached a fund balance over 3 percent. That is encouraging because as Duval's new superintendent, Greene will find a community eager for investment in the arts — and a community blessed with educators and community

partners eager to collaborate.

Our children deserve all of that and more. They need our elected officials, especially at the state level, to adequately invest in public schools and give public-school superintendents like Greene the same kind of flexibility given to charter schools. They need everyone across all levels of our district to realize that lower-income students who regularly participate in the arts have a 96 percent graduation rate, compared to only 76 percent among their peers. They need business leaders to embrace the fact that arts education creates tomorrow's leaders because it empowers students to analyze, problem-solve and innovate. If we really want to equip students for the jobs

of tomorrow, we must give educational leaders like Greene the tools that enable their districts to cultivate creative thinking among students. Responding to a question about the growing school choice movement, Greene pointed out that in Manatee County she was able to bring students back into the district; Greene said she worked with principals to make their schools more attractive options for students — and then actively engaged those students once they enrolled in the public schools. If Greene wants to attract and engage students in Duval County, there is no better way than through the arts.

The Rev. Kimberly Hyatt is president and CEO of the Cathedral Arts Project in Jacksonville.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Times-Union report validated concerns about dredging

Congratulations to the Times-Union for its excellent investigative report explaining the connection between JaxPort dredging and increased flood risk in Jacksonville. The report only further validated the St. Johns Riverkeeper's concerns about environmental harm to the river. It also made clear that the dredging presents a huge economic risk to Jacksonville's homeowners and businesses — the risk of flooding from storm surge and high tides. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says the few additional inches of water level caused by dredging is inconsequential. Well, tell that to the homeowners who had water just inches from their doors during Hurricane Irma. But there is still one easy thing we can do that will immediately lower the risk to our city: don't deepen the channel. Jacksonville can still have a thriving port without it. Let's put the interests of Jacksonville's residents and businesses over those of Asian shipping companies.

Jim Schwarz, Riverside

Whitewashing history keeps us from learning its lessons

In a recent "Another View" piece, the Rev. Gregg Kaufman wrote that we must augment history to make it "inclusive for a variety of ethnic groups." Kaufman implied that everyone should always feel comfortable in museums and parks. Really? Whitewashed history may be more palatable, but it is clearly no longer truth. We learn from the truth of history what NOT to repeat. Is it possible that as a preacher Kaufman has not seen those made uncomfortable by the crucifixion of Christ? So will he erase the cross? My experience in traveling the country and experiencing the history imbedded in our incredible nation is that history is not the least bit comfortable. But it is an incredible learning tool for those who know it, taste it, study it and write about it. Some of the participants in Southern history, like Robert E. Lee, Joshua Chamberlain and Stonewall Jackson — did I hear some readers faint? — are worthy of modeling IF you know your history. About 20 years ago, I went

to the Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C. I was very uncomfortable, but my heart was moved deeply because I went. Shall we change history? Shall we take down monuments so that everyone can feel comfortable? Silly, isn't it?

Diann Catlin, Jacksonville

Trump has wasted no time making America great again

Yes, President Donald Trump divided voters into those who wanted America to be great and those who liked socialism and wanted America to keep going downhill. Fortunately, those who wanted America to be great were able to vote Trump into office. The press doesn't want to truthfully report how Trump has turned our economy around to the point where it's now booming on numerous fronts. Under Trump we are seeing the kind of progress that former President Barack Obama said could not be achieved. Trump deserves our gratitude for making our country so much better during his mere 18 months in office. Bravo, President Trump!

George Bingen, Jacksonville

LETTERS POLICY

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