

**LETTER
OF THE
WEEK!**

Bad lessons

Re: "Monuments to monsters" by Maxfield Morris (Feature, January 10):

I appreciate Maxfield Morris's reviewing of the monuments to figures from California's history with less than savory histories. I suppose it's necessary to bring the subject up every few years since the context of their acts is no longer taught in the schools these days. However, I attended Freepoint Elementary School in the early '60s. And I can still remember my history lessons from those early grades, to wit: Columbus brought the scourge of religion (Catholicism) to North America, Junipero Serra brought infectious diseases along with conversion by force to native Californians, Charles Goethe was a Nazi sympathizer, John Sutter was a slave driver. Oh, and Executive Order 9066 was a shameful act by an otherwise worthy president. My teachers taught it, I remembered it. But I fear that along with civics, unadulterated history is no longer taught in public schools. And it seems we need to be reminded that these people and their ideas are dead. Tearing down monuments to people we no longer honor removes the teaching lesson from future students that may not receive those lessons in class.

JAY STEBLEY
Sacramento / via email

History in context

Re: "Monuments to monsters" by Maxfield Morris (Feature, January 10):

The piece asked very poignant questions about how we acknowledge Sacramento's history. He is not the first person to question how local monuments to historical figures and structures in Sacramento have become sanitized of offending historical facts. The historical background and context of the men and women who had a hand in developing Sacramento are often times glossed over for the sake of brevity.

In the 21st century, this is not an excuse for not challenging some of the myths and urban legends surrounding historical events and individuals. But neither is it grounds for a wholesale removal of plaques, monuments and statues sprinkled throughout Sacramento.

The article inadvertently highlighted one of the core missions of the Sacramento Historical Society. Our monthly programs revolve around bringing a historical background and context to the people and events who have shaped Sacramento. Our November 2018 program featured a discussion about Chinese sojourners in California and the misunderstanding, and outright hostility they met. The December 2018 meeting reviewed the many African-American pioneers who are resting in the Historic Sacramento Cemetery.

The society's January program focused on William Leidesdorff—a mixed-race U.S. citizen whose entrepreneurial, financial and diplomatic genius led to his becoming the first Gold Rush millionaire in the American West. In February, our attention turns to the real John Sutter and who he was.

At the Sacramento Historical Society, we are trying to bridge the gap between the elementary school historical mentions and the fuller treatment of these historical figures by historians. We welcome all historical perspectives and encourage a vigorous public discussion about the facts and myths surrounding these individuals.

KEVIN KNAUSS
Sacramento / via email

GOP must speak out

Re: "Return of the Copperheads" by Scott Thomas Anderson (News, January 10):

People who display the Confederate flag feel that people who have dark skin aren't full people. If the Sacramento County Republican Party has "no statement" on the flag's use on a float in the Wilton Winter Festival, well that's like backing into a planer in wood shop.

RICH DAVIS
Citrus Heights / via email

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