

## Jessamine County Courthouse – Civil War Statue

# It's History

### A Presentation to the Jessamine County Fiscal Court by Robert Barney, Wilmore

#### Introduction

When I moved to Jessamine County in August 1997, a new immigrant from Canada, one of the first things I needed to do was visit the County Courthouse to change over my vehicle licenses. During that visit I noticed the statue of a soldier in the courtyard. It was obviously an image from the Civil War period. Being a Civil War enthusiast for years, thanks in part to Ken Burns and his PBS Civil War series, I was very curious to see what that statue was commemorating. I walked up to the statue and read the plaque on the base. That's when I realized it was a memorial to Confederate soldiers who had died.

Unlike some who object to that statue, I did not have any adverse reaction to it. Before I moved to the U.S. my wife and I had visited the Gettysburg battlefield and we had been to Fort Sumter. Most recently, this past spring, I visited the Vicksburg battlefield during a 3 week tour of southern historical sites including Civil Rights museums and memorials.

In those Federal Parks I have seen many memorials to the Union dead and many memorials to the Confederate dead. I know that those whose ancestors served the North, paid for and erected memorials to their dead. Like them, the descendants of those who served the South and fought for the Confederacy paid for and erected statues to their dead. None of these memorials offend me. These people wanted to honor the memory and ultimate sacrifice that their ancestors made, whether that sacrifice was right or wrong, popular or unpopular.

The presentation that follows is my response to the "statue removers" who are asking for Confederate statues to be taken down. More specifically it is my response to those statue removers who are demanding that Jessamine County remove the statue that has stood in our County Courthouse yard for 125 years.

#### **I am dedicating this response to the dead who are not with us today.**

There are two groups of dead that I am referring to.

First there are those who died fighting the Civil War, those Confederate dead for whom the statue was dedicated. They are not here today to answer your questions or to tell us what they think about the removal of that statue. They cannot speak for themselves and they cannot

defend that memorial. The only thing we can be certain of is that they died for whatever views they had, and those views died with them. They were not even alive when the memorial was erected.

The second group of dead people are those who paid for and erected the statue over 125 years ago. Like the first group they cannot speak for themselves today. They cannot answer your questions or tell us what they think about the idea of removing the statue that they erected to honor dead soldiers.

And for that reason this is NOT a fair fight. We have the living here, some trying to undo what the dead did long ago. We don't have the dead here, to respond to them. I will try, on behalf of those dead to respect them and to give them some voice that they cannot give themselves.

### **Leave it Alone**

Personally I believe that it is wrong, to be tearing down a statue that the second group of dead felt strongly should be erected. Those folks secured permission to erect the statue at its current location, they raised the money to pay for its purchase, and it has stood for over 125 years.

Actually, let me correct that. The statue was removed almost 30 years ago. It was taken down in about 1995/1996. The reason for that removal was so that the statue could be repaired and restored. All of that was done at county expense and under the leadership of a Democrat County Judge Executive and a Democrat majority Fiscal Court. You would think, with the need and expense of removing and refurbishing it, that those Democrats would have paused and realized that might be a good time to just remove it and not replace it. They didn't; why not?

I find it particularly ironic that today, less than 10 years after we have a Republican Judge Executive and a majority Republican fiscal court, that this matter is being pressed so hard by Democrats. It is even more ironic that those same Democrats will blame Republicans if their demands are rejected. To listen to them you would think that it was Republicans that erected the statue in the first place.

### **The Politics of Statue Removal**

Yes, I just said things that are very political. Make no mistake about it, it is as political as it gets.

This is a very partisan issue and the notion that ANY decision can be made that will make "everyone happy" is simply impossible. In this battle the winners will be happy and the losers will be unhappy.

For those who decide what to do about this, the question is who do you want angry with you? Do you want to appease the statue removers who are already angry and have been angry for years or do you want to anger those who would be offended by removal?

I believe the latter are in the majority. How big is that majority? How unhappy would they be? I think I have some very concrete evidence to present that says that the majority is a sizeable majority. Do you want to anger them or make them unhappy?

### **How Did I get Involved in This?**

My involvement in the “politics” of statue removal began after the May primary of 2020. I had been campaigning for Matt Lockett in the 2020 primary (held May 19, 2020). After that primary and Lockett’s victory I turned my attention to his Democrat opponent, Caroline Dupont, a history professor. As a Democrat I knew that there would be many things that she stood for that I would take exception to, but I wanted to identify a key issue that I took serious exception to, an issue that she fully embraced, an issue that would be an affront to most voters. I didn’t have to look far.

As fate would have it, on June 12<sup>th</sup> Governor Beshear’s appointed “Historic Properties Advisory Commission” voted to remove the Jefferson Davis statue from the Capitol Building in Frankfort. Beshear ordered and executed the statue removal the following day, June 13<sup>th</sup>. When has government ever worked so quickly?

An example of the sort of media stories that resulted is attached as Tab A. There were many such news reports and the media covered the story extensively. The media were happy with the removal of that statue.

Beshear’s action to remove the statue was controversial and most Kentucky voters were aware of it. Many, like myself, did not like what Beshear did. But how many other voters felt like I did? I was pretty sure that I was in the majority but I was unsure and so I thought this would be a great issue to investigate because I also knew that Caroline Dupont had a reputation as an aggressive statue remover. I knew that she was using her position as a history professor as a platform to call for the removal of Confederate statues.

Attached at Tab B is an article from 2015 that underlines Ms. Dupont’s position and activity quite clearly.

### **I Called and Spoke to 1,000 Democrats in Jessamine County**

On or about June 16, 2020 I drafted a telephone survey/script to make phone calls to learn more.

The first night of calling netted 25 survey results. Only 5 people supported removal of the statues. At that point my suspicion that most voters agreed with me was confirmed. I was convinced that the issue was important to the campaign as Ms. Dupont was so clearly on record as being for the removal of statues. This was a position, as it turned out, that most Democrats were against.

I devoted as much time as I could to making calls and completing surveys.

My focus was to speak to Democrats who were 3 out of 4 or 4 out of 4 voters. For those reading this, who may not understand what I am referring to, let me explain. While the Secretary of State has no idea who a voter votes for, they know how many times in the last 4 elections a voter has shown up to vote. A 4 out of 4 general voter means that in the last 4 general elections that voter showed up to vote in all 4 of them. 4 out of 4 voters are important as any knowledgeable politician knows.

A 3 out of 4 general voter means that voter missed one of the last 4 elections. 3's and 4's were my focus and that is who I was calling. They were called in alphabetic order.

By contrast a 0 out of 4 voter is someone who did not vote at all in the last 4 elections. I have little interest in speaking with people who are 0 out of 4 voters because they don't vote. No matter what they say or believe, they do not exercise their right to vote and so their view is unimportant. Of course some 0 out of 4 voters are people who have left the county and no longer vote here. Either way, I have little interest in the opinions of people who do not vote.

By the end of October 2020 I spoke to 1,000 Democrat voters in Jessamine County. Once again, those are Democrats voters who show up to vote. They can vote for you or they can vote against you. I recommend that you pay attention to what they say and believe.

I have attached at Tab C the phone script that I used to make the calls. Into the script I have added the final results of the answers to those questions. My last calls were made at the end of October 2020, after I hit 1,000 surveys.

### **The Timing of the Survey Was Perfect**

It was clear to me that the timing for this phone survey was perfect.

Attached at Tab D is a June 17<sup>th</sup> Jessamine Journal story based upon an interview with County Judge Executive David West.

Attached at Tab E is a July 2<sup>nd</sup> Jessamine Journal story based upon an on-line petition begun by a Jessamine County teenager. By the time of that story she had obtained 663 on-line signatures to support removal of the statue.

**NOTE:** The petition was open to anyone and everyone, NOT just those from Jessamine County. People from outside Jessamine County were allowed to vote in that survey.

With all that activity it made me more determined than ever to press on very hard with the survey. The number 663 also gave me an objective. I knew that 100 survey results would not be compelling and my objective was to have several hundred.

## The Logic of the Survey Questions and My Observations Of Results

The first question in any telephone survey that I construct is designed to get a general sense of the voter's view on the topic being surveyed, and not so specific as to cause them to hang up on me for asking a question that is too personal or seen as prying.

Governor Beshear's removal of the Jefferson Davis statue was the perfect first question. And even though it was Governor Beshear's action that precipitated the removal, his name was purposely NOT mentioned in the question to make the question as benign as possible.

The reference to Jefferson Davis was important so that there was NO confusion as to which statue I was referring to. I do not recall anyone asking me who Jefferson Davis is/was. I do not recall anyone who said that they did not know about the removal of that statue.

I believe that the answer to the first question gives a very general sense of whether a person supports the idea of removing statues or not.

67% of the 1,000 respondents were opposed to the removal of the Jefferson Davis statue. 11% were undecided and only 21% supported that removal.

**REMEMBER:** I was speaking to Democrats and NOT Republicans. These are the Democrats who actually turn out to vote.

**IMPORTANT:** I believe that some of the most fervent supporters of statue removing in Jessamine County are Democrats. Those statue removers do NOT represent the majority of their own party. The majority of Democrats in Jessamine County are NOT supportive of statue removing.

The second question omitted, for a reason, the fact that the statue in Jessamine County is a Confederate memorial. I wanted to find out the voter's view about removing the statue first. I wanted to know **after** asking the second question, if it would change people's view when they were then told by me that it was a Confederate memorial.

**NOTE:** If a person answered the survey's first two questions with yes and yes, meaning that they supported statue removals in general, and more specifically removing the statue in the courthouse yard, then I thanked them and ended the call. I assumed that if they thought the Jessamine statue should be removed that they knew it was a Confederate memorial.

To make certain the results of the survey could not be legitimately accused of being contrived, I added the third question. I knew that there would be a number of people who did not know the statue was a Confederate memorial. I wanted to find out the number. It was somewhat surprising to me that 39% of the 814 people I asked the third question of, did NOT know that the statue in the courtyard was a Confederate memorial.

I assume that this ignorance is partly based upon the fact that Jessamine County is a growing community and that many of the respondents were not originally born and raised in Jessamine

County. I wonder to what degree local Civil War history is taught in our public schools. Are the children of Jessamine County residents taught the history of the statue? Are they taught about Camp Nelson? Do they know Kentucky was not a part of the Confederacy but that it was divided in support for the war? Do they know about the battles fought in Kentucky?

Regardless of the reasons for the ignorance, anyone who told me that they did NOT know the statue was a Confederate memorial was asked a follow-up question (not in the script). I asked if that changed their mind about removing the statue (question 2). If it changed their mind I let them change their vote on the second question. I did not attempt to talk them out of changing their vote.

So the question is, “How many changed their minds?”

Actually, that is a very simple calculation. If you take the total number of people who were asked the 3<sup>rd</sup> question (814) and subtract the number of people who I asked the 4<sup>th</sup> question (687), you will know how many changed from a No to a Yes (or undecided) vote.

Remember, if someone voted Yes and Yes on the first two questions, I did not continue asking questions. That’s why the number of answers dropped from 1,000 to 814 from question 2 to 3. If one of the 814 changed their mind, I did NOT ask the 4<sup>th</sup> question.

To calculate the number who changed their minds:  $814 - 687 = 127$ . 127 of those who wanted the statue removed changed from a No to Yes (or undecided) vote after learning, for the first time, that the statue was a Confederate memorial.

**IMPORTANT:** None of those who voted “No” to the second question was ignorant of it being a Confederate statue. If they didn’t know it when the call began, they knew it as a result of my telling them it was a Confederate statue.

If I had done it any other way, it could have been said that the survey was manipulative. I have myself been subject to manipulative surveys. They are often nicknamed “push polls”. Such push poll surveys are NOT primarily designed to learn the voters’ views but are instead pushing a narrative to get the voter to support a particular view.

To summarize, knowing full well that the statue is a Confederate memorial, 71% of the Jessamine County Democrats I spoke to did NOT want that statue removed. 19% want it removed, and 9% are undecided.

I believe a sampling of 1,000 Democrats in Jessamine County should be ample evidence that removing that statue would be a serious political mistake.

I would also draw your attention to page 4 of the 2015 article at Tab B. The third paragraph, talking about the Jefferson Davis statue, says:

A recent Bluegrass Poll showed that 73 percent of Kentuckians think the statue should stay where it is.

## **It's History**

I titled this presentation "It's History" for a very specific reason. I heard the words "It's History" over and over from people I was surveying.

"It's History" was the most common knee jerk comment I got to the 3<sup>rd</sup> question from those who said "Yes" they knew the statue was a Confederate soldier. And I know exactly why they said it, because I heard it so often and many elaborated.

Up to that point in the survey the voter had NO IDEA whether I personally was for or against removing the statue. Having answered two questions and having told me that they didn't want statues removed, they felt the need to defend themselves when my third question raised the subject that the Jessamine statue was a Confederate. They could have easily assumed, at that point, that I was trying to convince them the statue needed to be removed because it was a Confederate memorial. Remember, this was a time when removing Confederate statues was in full swing. The voter I was speaking to, who was against statue removals, felt the need when they heard the third question to defend the statue and to defend their own view that it should be left alone.

After telling me "It's History", many voters would go on to elaborate and tell me in much greater detail why history was important. Many offered me information about what they knew about the history of the statue. Some of it was correct, some of it was incorrect. The more people I talked to the more I learned about the history of the statue.

## **My Survey Effort Becomes Public**

Attached at Tab F is a copy of a September 2, 2020 Jessamine County article about myself and the survey. Having worked hard through the summer, and having completed over 700 surveys, I went to the press with the results.

On page 3 of the article both Moses Radford and Carolyn Dupont, who were interviewed for the article, complained that it was politically partisan.

## **Yes, the Survey Had a Partisan Political Angle**

There is NO doubt that the 4<sup>th</sup> question in the survey was strictly a Dupont question and it was intended to effect support for her. I freely admit that, but the same charge cannot be made about the first 3 questions or the answers I received. I also acknowledge that without the first 3 questions the 4<sup>th</sup> question does not have the same political impact on Dupont's election, but it is the 4<sup>th</sup> question and the 4<sup>th</sup> question alone which was partisan.

I wanted Democrats who did NOT support statue removal to know that Carolyn Dupont did support statue removal. And I was certainly very interested to see how many knew about her views given that she was the Democrat standard bearer in that election. You will see that of the 687 Democrats that I spoke to at that point, that only 9% of those Democrats knew about

the connection between Dupont and statue removal. Many were surprised and wanted to learn more.

## **The Statue Removers Attacked My Survey and My Efforts**

The September article (Tab F) carried the comments of Reverend Moses Radford, a leading voice of the Jessamine County statue removers. Reverend Radford was one of the Democrats that I surveyed. Reverence Radford, to his credit, is a 4 out of 4 voter. I remember my call(s) with him. Actually, it wasn't one call, there were two calls separated by about 20 minutes.

When I first called Reverend Radford (I did not know who he was), I asked him the first two questions which he answered Yes and Yes. To review what Yes and Yes mean, Reverend Radford supported the removal of the Jefferson Davis statue and he wanted the Jessamine County statue removed. As I did with ALL those who answered Yes and Yes I thanked him for participating in the survey and I said good-bye. That first call was a brief call.

About 20 minutes later I was called back by Reverend Radford who began to interrogate me. Such "call backs" are rare and most are memorable, as was Reverend Radford's. When people call me back to ask me "Who are you?" and "What are you doing?" I am candid and transparent. I do my best to answer their questions truthfully. I did so for Reverend Radford and the conversation ended up being lengthy. It was not acrimonious, but he clearly had an agenda.

The article says:

"We went round and round for a good while," said Radford, who called Barney's tactics "manipulative".

The first part is quite accurate. The call was lengthy. But I again underline that it was NOT I who called Reverend Radford the second time, it was he who called me. We did not go "round and round" in the first call, which is precisely how MOST calls went. Remember, I did 1,000 surveys.

As background, I do NOT try to change people's minds when I do political surveys. There is an old saying that I use often, "He has made up his mind and doesn't want to be confused by the facts." Speaking to as many strangers as I do, about political issues, I can assure you that most people cannot be talked out of their views or talked into different views. This applies especially to 3 or 4 out of 4 voters who I would characterize as "politically engaged". The best you can do in a conversation is to listen and find out what they believe. Perhaps you will have a chance to provide them with some factual information that they did not have before. When I do it is usually by sending them an email or sending them to a website.

The second point is to NEVER make the voter you are calling angry. All that does is motivate the opposition. There is no benefit from doing that, so I attempt to be as nice as I can. I do not shrink from my position but I always do my best to avoid offense



I would summarize the overall charge of “manipulative” as unfair and untrue. I understand why Reverend Radford made the comment, he is a passionate and motivated statue remover. His problem is that he thinks the majority of people share his views; they do not. He won’t be happy about that, but that is the fact.

The article said:

Dupont said she heard similar complaints.

Dupont said she is running a campaign to “raise the level of our political discourse, to help us transcend the incredible contentious political climate, and these attacks are just the opposite of that.

“They increase the animosity and the hyper partisanship and diminish all of us.” she said.

Earlier in the article, Dupont had said in responding to Lockett’s statement that I [Bob Barney] was not part of his campaign:

Dupont doesn’t believe it.

“What he is doing is not a survey, it’s a smear tactic.” Dupont said, calling Barney, “Matt Lockett’s errand boy.”

So much for raising political discourse. Clearly Dupont was angry. In addition to what was set out in the article, I was hearing reports that she was being confronted about her statue position as she went door to door visiting Democrats. She was after the same 3 and 4 out of 4 general voters that I was calling, and some I had already informed about her views on statues. It became so bad for her that she did two things to respond.

First, she blamed the phone campaign on Lockett, as you can see above. As any Jessamine County Republican politician knows, who has worked with me in the past 10 years, I do NOT do the bidding of Republican politicians and I am not part of their campaigns. I find I am more effective if I engage in my own independent effort separate from the campaigns of those candidates that I support, or against the candidates I am opposed to. I certainly am happy to inform the candidates that I support of my plans and what I am doing, and I am open to their advice, but my efforts are my efforts alone. I am no one’s errand boy.

Second, Dupont denied wanting to remove the Jessamine County statue. In the third page of the article it says:

Dupont said she hasn’t taken any position on the statue at the Jessamine County Courthouse.

It’s a county issue, she said, and she’s running for a state office.

That response should tell an astute politician that Dupont was confirming the results of my survey.

If the majority of Democrats meeting Dupont at their door were telling her that they wanted our statue removed, she would have been eager to embrace that issue and even taken credit for leading the charge. After all, she had been on the record many times advocating the removal of Confederate statues. She went out of her way to stick her nose into jurisdictions that were not hers and to lobby for statue removal nationwide.

Her need to hide on the issue was based upon the blowback that she was getting from Democrats. She suddenly discovered that the majority of Jessamine County Democrats had no stomach for statue removers. That's why she was beating a retreat as evident in this article. It's also one reason why she faired so badly in that election, losing 61 percent to 39 percent.

But Carolyn Dupont did say one thing that our county's leaders need to focus upon: "It's a county issue". Yes it is. And no matter what happens outside Jessamine County, or what people outside Jessamine County may think, our leaders need to pay attention to what the voters of Jessamine County think. They will determine your fate as a Jessamine politician, NOT those outside.

And finally, the real political damage for Dupont, as a result of the phone campaign, was the follow-up email that I then sent to those who gave me their email address. Attached at Tab G is one of the first emails I sent. The email has a link to the article at Tab D.

A fair reading of that article by the voter, which I quote in the email, would inform the voter that Dupont was a zealous statue remover who was a leader of groups wanting to remove statues. With that information in hand, the denial by Dupont that she had not taken a position on the Jessamine statue was going to ring very hollow. The claim she was making, that she did not have a position on the issue, was false. Now I ask, who was being manipulative?

As time went on, and as I found out more and more about what Dupont had publicly said and did regarding statues, my email to the voters became longer. I was adding and was providing many more links to articles and videos that showed Dupont strongly advocating for statue removal. If anyone wants me to provide them with a copy of the more recent emails that I sent to Democrat voters that I spoke with in October of 2020, you can request that from me by emailing me at [bob@compulife.com](mailto:bob@compulife.com).

Once again, Dupont was crushed in that election 61 percent to 39 percent. Keep that in mind as you consider the fate of that statue in the front yard of the courthouse.

## **Statue Removal is History Revision**

I will end by sharing my own thoughts about statue removal.

Asking for statues to be removed is an attempt to alter history. Removing statues is changing history, it is revising history; “cancelling” history.

You cannot deny the statue is history. The existence of the statue is a historical fact. How it got there is a historical fact. How long it has been there is a historical fact. The Civil War is a historical fact. That there were Confederate soldiers in Kentucky is a historical fact. That there were Confederate soldiers from Kentucky is a historical fact. That Confederate soldiers died in Kentucky is a historical fact. All of this is history. The statue’s plaque is a historical fact. What it says is what it says and that has not changed for 125 years. The statue is a memorial to dead Confederates, no particular Confederate, just dead Confederates.

And I am not alone in my view. The statement, “It’s History”, was repeated to me over and over when I spoke to those who did not want the statue removed. And that underlines the fact that this is the view of most voters in Jessamine County. Remove the statue and you revise history. I do NOT support history revision.

## **But It’s Bad History**

Those who want the statue removed say that the statue is more than that. They will say it is a symbol that supports slavery. They will say it is a symbol that supports racism, hate and oppression. There are those who say they are so deeply offended by what they believe the statue represents to them that it must be removed. They believe it must be torn down so that they will no longer be offended and so that they can have peace of mind.

Attached at Tab H is a letter to the editor of the Jessamine Journal. It speaks for itself.

This is how the “cancel culture” functions. Erase what you don’t like and you will somehow feel better. The problem is that catering to this logic and argument only generates a longer list of what must be done to provide peace of mind. Changing history does not bring peace of mind, it simply moves us on to the next part of history that they argue must be changed.

Recently a statue of Teddy Roosevelt was removed. We have people wanting statues of Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln torn down. Where does all of this end? It does not end if you keep removing statues in response to demands from those who say they are offended. There will always be someone who is offended, whether there is a reason to be offended or not.

And what if the person who has been offended is the one that is wrong? What if what they are saying is based upon false beliefs? What if they cause something to be destroyed because they were wrong? How do you get it back after it is gone? Are we really being kind to people by taking actions based upon their false beliefs, no matter how sincerely they believe it?

## **For ALL Have Sinned**

If the “pure” are the only people we can honor then ALL statues need to be torn down. The Bible is clear, and I would argue that it is a historic fact. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no not one. All our righteousness is like filthy rags.

Any human being that we honor with a memorial is a person that we should not honor because there will be something about that person which offends someone.

In my Christian belief the only human being to ever walk the earth without sin was Jesus Christ. And Jesus dying for me was the greatest thing any human being could do for another. And Jesus died for all humanity, not just some. I believe that should be honored but in these present days we dare not honor Jesus in a public place with a statue or a plaque because there are many, and I would argue most, who would be offended by that.

Once again, if you cater to the argument that you must tear down the statue and/or its plaque because someone is offended, then you would need to tear down every statue and plaque and never erect another ever again. Are you prepared to do that?

I hope you don't remove the statue. I hope you leave it alone, and that you leave it as it is. Good or bad, it is history.

If you think there is something about history that is missing, then write another history book. Don't burn the old history book because you don't like it. Remember, the history book is also history.

If you think that there is a person or event that is not being honored or remembered adequately, and that it should, then erect your own plaque or statue. But stop destroying the memorials of others you don't agree with. Show a little respect for others. Do onto others as you would have them do onto you.

## **A Final Word of Advice**

For those who have the final decision in the removal of the statue, and thinking seriously of removing it to appease the statue removers, I would advise you to put the matter on a county wide ballot at the next election.

The question is simple: **Do you support removing the Confederate Statue from the Jessamine County Court House yard?**

Let those who want the statue removed campaign in our community and persuade the voters that it is the right thing to remove the statue. And if the majority of the voters want the statue removed, it's their county and they can do what they like. On the other hand, I would not want to be the politician that goes against the voters on this.