



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10
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Resolution Regarding Removal of James Marion Sims Statue from Central Park

WHEREAS, James Marion Sims, a 19th-century physician, is noted for the development of pioneering tools and surgical techniques related to women’s reproductive health, and is credited as the “father of modern gynecology”; and

WHEREAS, Sims’ research was conducted on enslaved black women without anesthesia, medical ethicists, historians and others have called for monuments to Sims to be removed - or to be reconfigured as tributes to the enslaved women known to have endured his experiments; and

WHEREAS, Sims argued that the movement of the skull bones during a protracted birth contributed to trismus, designating patients by class and race, Sims experimented on enslaved infants. He took custody of them and with a shoemaker's awl, a pointed tool used for making holes in leather, tried to pry the bones of their skulls into proper alignment. According to his published articles, this procedure was only practiced on enslaved African babies. Because he "owned" these poor, innocent children, he had free access to their bodies for autopsies, which he usually performed immediately after death. Sims routinely blamed "slave mothers and nurses for infant suffering, especially through their ignorance."; and

WHEREAS, Sims, invented the vaginal speculum, a tool used for dilation and examination. He also pioneered a surgical technique to repair vesicovaginal fistula, a common 19th-century complication of childbirth; and

WHEREAS, the Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments and Markers was announced in September 2017 as the group that will advise the Mayor on issues surrounding public art and historic monuments and markers on City-owned property; and

WHEREAS, in 1853, Sims moved to New York and founded the Woman’s Hospital of New York in 1855. During the Civil War (1861 to 1865), Sims left the United States for Europe. He returned to establish a thriving New York practice and was elected president of the American Medical Association in 1876. Sims’ groundbreaking surgical methods and inventions earned him considerable renown. A popular subscription drive to erect this statue in his honor, organized through the Medical Record, solicited contributions from nearly 1,000 medical professionals. His techniques remain in use to this day; and

WHEREAS, the statue by German artist Ferdinand von Miller II (1842-1929) was cast in Munich, Germany in 1892 and dedicated two years later in what is now known as Bryant Park. In 1934, the sculpture was reinstalled at its current location opposite the New York Academy of Medicine, at Fifth Avenue and 103rd Street; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that on December 6, 2017, the Manhattan Borough Community Board 10, in light of the horrific and inhumane practices of the aforementioned James Marion Sims,

advocates the immediate and permanent removal of the James Marion Sims statue from Central Park by a vote of 25 in favor of 0 opposed 0 abstentions.