

August 25, 2017

Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor of New York City
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

The New York Academy of Medicine thanks you for your leadership in calling for a thoughtful and deliberate review of the statues currently on New York City property. During the next 90 days, we know you will hear from many passionate individuals and organizations from New York and beyond in support of keeping or removing statues throughout the city.

The New York Academy of Medicine's mission is to advance solutions that promote the health and well-being of people living in cities worldwide, and one of our priority areas is reducing health disparities to ensure that all people have the same opportunity for a long and healthy life. It is through this lens that we submit our request today.

The Academy respectfully adds its voice to the many others in East Harlem—including Community Board 11 and City Council Speaker and District 8 Representative Melissa Mark-Viverito—calling for removal of the statue of J. Marion Sims, MD, located on 5th Avenue at 103rd Street on the grounds of Central Park.

The facts are well documented regarding Dr. Sims' practice of performing surgical experiments on enslaved women without anesthesia and without consent. While his actions led to advances in gynecology and obstetrics, this practice is not acceptable, and any defense of it is wrong.

Dr. Sims' practice is but one of many regrettable examples that have happened throughout history in the name of innovation and advancement in medicine and science and, as professionals and as a society, we must be continually vigilant to ensure they never happen again.

While these actions need to be acknowledged and accounted for in the history books, we should reserve public honors for those who have made achievements in health and medicine without infringing on the civil and human rights of others.

Thank you for your consideration of our request to remove the J. Marion Sims statue, and we look forward to continued work with your administration toward a shared goal of reducing health disparities across the city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo Boufford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping tail.

Jo Ivey Boufford, MD
President