



NAACP

Arlington Branch 7047

July 27, 2020

Contact: Keshia Tensley, Branch Secretary

Phone: 1-877-501-6417

E-Mail: 7047@arlingtonnaacp.com

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Authors:

Mr. Julius D. Spain, Sr., President, Arlington Branch NAACP

Ms.Carolynn Kane, Member, Arlington Branch NAACP

Dr. Emma Violand-Sánchez, former Arlington School Board Member and Chair

SYMBOLS MATTER

Arlington County's most prominent symbol is its logo and seal. A symbol that is everywhere ... on government correspondence, uniforms, buildings, vehicles, websites. A symbol of a slave labor camp. A symbol of the southern plantation economy designed to ensure White privilege and Black subjugation. A place that the National Park Service named, "Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial." This is the symbol placed in the center of our flag. A divisive and racist branding of our diverse, usually progressive community. It is a symbol that divides, rather than unites us. Yet, despite community members bringing this problem to their attention, it appears that the County Board is uninterested in changing its logo. Instead the County proudly states in its manual that this symbol reflects its "values ... identity ... traditions;" and tells residents that there are "good sides" to this racist plantation symbol.

We ask, how can the County have courageous conversations on race, tackle the inequities in Arlington, heal the deep historical wounds here or enact its platform to address racial inequities when it will not confront and change its own symbol? If it refuses to acknowledge its own blindness to the logo's meaning, it cannot. The County Board must end its embrace of this symbol of Black bondage, oppression and pain. The County's Robert E. Lee Memorial logo, flag and seal needs to be "retired" and a new era of inclusiveness and equity ushered in immediately. We call on the County Board and County Manager to stop delaying, put this item on the Board's Agenda, and vote. Now.

