AIC Position Statement

On Confederate and Other Historic Public Monuments

September 2017

In the past few weeks in response to events in Charlottesville, Virginia, Confederate statues have been destroyed in protest or hurriedly dismantled. These and other historic public memorials fall at the intersection of conflicting social and political views. In this regard, the AIC Board appreciates the insight of our organization's Equity and Inclusion Working Group.

The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC) is dedicated to the preservation of the material evidence of our past so that we can learn from it today and understand it in the future. Paragraph III of the AIC Code of Ethics states, "While recognizing the right of society to make appropriate and respectful use of cultural property, the conservation professional shall serve as an advocate for the preservation of cultural property." Therefore, AIC cannot condone the vandalism or outright destruction of Confederate or other historic public memorials.

We recognize that preservation planning for these monuments is an emotionally difficult process and requires the active engagement of all stakeholders. We recommend that those who undertake such deliberations be conscientious, open to a wide range of preservation outcomes, and accountable for their decisions.

Conservation professionals can provide valuable advice to custodial communities and their elected officials when evaluating a wide range of preservation options for controversial public monuments. Preservation outcomes can include maintenance and interpretation in-situ or dismantling and relocation. If it is determined that a work is to be reconfigured or moved, AIC recommends thorough documentation, safe and systematic dismantling, and storage or exhibit in appropriate, sustainable conditions. The role of conservators in furtherance of these decisions must be respected; no AIC members should be endangered or harassed in carrying out their professional duties.

—AIC Board of Directors