

October 2, 2023

Dear Council Member William Carroll, Council Member Cory Penn, Council Member C.J. Small, Council Member Ben Reynolds, Council Member Joel Daves, Council Member Josh Woods, Council Member Gina Gregory, and Mayor Sandy Stimpson:

As appreciative members of the Mobile community, we thank you for your invaluable leadership and service for the City of Mobile. Additionally, in view of your leadership and service, as concerned community members, we are writing to formally bring to your attention a long-neglected issue, the City of Mobile's continued honoring of Father Abram Ryan by means of a statue and honorary plaques in Ryan Park. This neglect is largely due to our city's general ignorance of Ryan's well-documented words and efforts to denigrate African Americans, to deny the civil and human rights of African Americans, and to justify violence to support white supremacist ideologies. In light of this information, which we will provide in this letter and the research attached, it is our hope that the City of Mobile will take corrective action regarding this statue and park, for the purpose of fostering racial respect and harmony.

To briefly convey the scope of Ryan's egregious racism in this letter, we offer the following ten representative quotes from Ryan's editorials and speeches, for your careful review. These quotes, expressed by Ryan, are not taken out of context, but are key points of editorials and speeches to which we provide direct web links for the full text of each. These archives include the Library of Congress, the Digital Library of Georgia, and other trusted archives.

- In Ryan's May 2, 1868 editorial, Ryan wrote: "For, if he [an African American person] pursues any such course as these [some form of non-cooperation], then will and must come a war of races—and if it comes, his race dies." Source: [The banner of the South. \(Augusta, Ga.\) 1868-1870, May 02, 1868, Page 4, Image 4 « Georgia Historic Newspapers \(usg.edu\)](#).
- In his August 29, 1868 editorial, after dismissing the "folly" of women's suffrage, Ryan wrote: "Suffrage, then, being a civil or political privilege, ... the State, alone, should confer the privilege, and give to the worthy and intelligent the right to vote, without leaving them (always a minority,) to the mercy of the vile herd of ignorant Voodooists [African Americans] ... We see no injustice in restricting suffrage, ... nor injustice in this being a pure White Man's Government." Source: [The banner of the South. \(Augusta, Ga.\) 1868-1870, August 29, 1868, Page 4, Image 4 « Georgia Historic Newspapers \(usg.edu\)](#).
- In his January 30, 1869 editorial, Ryan wrote: "We hold that the White Race is superior to the Black, ... and that the Government of the United States and its several subordinate State and Municipal Governments belong to the white people of the land." Source: [The banner of the South. \(Augusta, Ga.\) 1868-1870, January 30, 1869, Page 4, Image 4 « Georgia Historic Newspapers \(usg.edu\)](#).
- In his March 20, 1869 editorial, responding to the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, Ryan wrote: "It is an infamy, because it requires an unnatural, an unjust, and an unconstitutional thing of the people. It forces them to give to Negroes not only the right to

vote, but to hold offices of honor, trust, and profit.” Source: [The banner of the South. \(Augusta, Ga.\) 1868-1870, March 20, 1869, Page 4, Image 4 « Georgia Historic Newspapers \(usg.edu\).](#)

- In his April 24, 1869 editorial, Ryan wrote: “We ... believe that it is the right of the white man alone to rule in this country. The main question ... simply is: Whether the earnings of the white race are to be at the mercy of an ignorant and facile horde of pauper barbarians [African Americans].” Source: [The banner of the South. \(Augusta, Ga.\) 1868-1870, April 24, 1869, Page 4, Image 4 « Georgia Historic Newspapers \(usg.edu\).](#)
- In his July 30, 1870 editorial correspondence Ryan described the Fourth of July in Mobile, Alabama: “Dear Banner: Last Monday, the glorious Fourth was celebrated here – by no one save the Negroes; and even they evinced very little enthusiasm, beyond a march for a few hours, – a few fights, much drinking and now and then a stupid hurrah for – they knew not what. I was delighted to see the Star Spangled Banner upheld by ebony hand and floating over its dear colored children. The flag was in its fitting place; – unworthy now to be borne by the hand of Southern man. ... It is well that it should become the exclusive possession of a race whose rare characteristics are stupidity and ignorance ...” Source: [The banner of the South. \(Augusta, Ga.\) 1868-1870, July 30, 1870, Page 4, Image 4 « Georgia Historic Newspapers \(usg.edu\).](#)
- In his June 23, 1872 editorial, Ryan trivialized the oppression of enslaved people in the South writing: “With African slavery the failure to do the day’s work entailed nothing but a whipping;” and “Negro slavery was fat and sleek, it was well cared for in sickness and old age.” Source: [The morning star and Catholic messenger. \[volume\] \(New Orleans \[La.\] 1868-1881, June 23, 1872, Morning, Page 4, Image 4 « Chronicling America « Library of Congress \(loc.gov\).](#)
- On June 29, 1873, Ryan wrote in response to the efforts of General Beauregard, a former Confederate general, and other Southerners in the Unification Movement, a movement whose purpose was to reconcile and unify White and Black people as well as Northerners and Southerners: “As Editor-in-Chief of this Journal ... we enter our protest, at once and forever, with all our energy of conviction, strength of will and power of word, against the resolutions adopted at the Unification meeting held week before last in New Orleans.” Ryan also addressed specific resolutions, for example, school integration: “... we protest against that particular resolution of the meeting which endorses and recommends the indiscriminate mingling of white and colored children in the same institutions of education. ... Now, if we so oppose the public schools on account of the dangers to faith and morals, will not the danger to morals increase the more when white and colored children frequent these schools God alone knows what would be the consequences of such a state of things.” Source: [The morning star and Catholic messenger. \[volume\] \(New Orleans \[La.\] 1868-1881, June 29, 1873, Morning, Page 4, Image 4 « Chronicling America « Library of Congress \(loc.gov\).](#)

- In his July 13, 1873 editorial, directly opposing the central premise of equality for all human beings in the Declaration of Independence and opposing the Unification Movement, Ryan wrote: “Our political creed is this: ‘In the political order all men are not – equal, all men cannot be made equal. We would not allow all men to vote. We would, could we, prevent large numbers of white men from voting. Universal suffrage, we think is a farce.’” Source: [The morning star and Catholic messenger. \[volume\] \(New Orleans \[La.\]\) 1868-1881, July 13, 1873, Morning, Page 4, Image 4 « Chronicling America « Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#).
- In his November 19, 1874 speech to the White League, a white-supremacist, paramilitary, and terrorist organization, which had just weeks before led an armed and violent taken over of the Louisiana state government, Ryan proclaimed: “... if there ever comes up a question in the world as between race and race, and the interests of one race against the instincts of another, common human interests tells me, and religion does not prohibit me, I stand by the white race. ... if history be a manifestation of Divine Providence, it is the divine mission of the white race to march in the van of civilization to lead the entire world ... it was the pale white brow that gave to the world its philosophy, out of which the world deduces its own intellectual life. ... Men by reasoning came to the conclusion of what was right and just and legitimate, and that under all laws there always existed and always will exist, the right of resistance against that which is wrong. ... sometimes, my friends, ... arguments fall upon the ears of those who are opposed to those who argue. ... Sometimes, and perhaps most oftentimes, petitions may be written, but they avail nothing. What must a man do then? The bullet must reason, the rifle must reason, the cannon must reason.” Source: [20 Nov 1874, 1 - The New Orleans Bulletin at Newspapers.com](#).

Thank you for your patience in reading through these representative examples of Ryan’s words and for your consideration. For those of you who would want to delve deeper and more completely into Ryan’s words and the historical context, please refer to the following research document, [A Re-Examination of Father Abram Ryan](#), which is attached with this letter.

How is it possible that Mobile has an honorary statue of a man who preached that “the White Race is superior to the Black,” and who characterized African Americans as “an ignorant and facile horde of pauper barbarians,” “the vile herd of ignorant Voodooists,” and “a race whose rare characteristics are stupidity and ignorance;” how? Similarly, how is it possible that Mobile has an honorary statue of a man who preached a “pure White Man’s Government,” who preached that African Americans should be denied the right “to vote” and be denied the right “to hold offices of honor, trust, and profit,” and who preached that when white supremacy does not prevail politically, then the “bullet must reason, the rifle must reason, the cannon must reason;” how? This extreme and shameful state of affairs has persisted mostly out of a lack of awareness, but now with the facts presented here, all of us, as members and leaders of our community, need to correct this.

To be clear, our purpose in advocating the removal of the Fr. Ryan statue has nothing to do with any of his affiliations, including Ryan being Catholic, being clergy, or being Confederate. Furthermore, we make no effort to deny any good deed credited to Ryan. Rather we seek the removal of the statue honoring him, because Ryan steadfastly and passionately promoted a

racist, white-supremacist ideology. Additionally, we would like to reiterate that these quotes from Ryan are not off-hand comments or words taken out of context, but rather these quotes are central points from his widely-read editorials and his well-attended speeches. Finally, we should all clearly understand that Ryan was a leader among the racist elements of his day, and he vigorously opposed those who sought to promote racial justice, harmony, and reconciliation.

Ryan's words, presented here, are clearly authenticated direct quotes. Today, we know these as historical facts, and if we, as a city, continue to honor Ryan, then the City of Mobile is maintaining a hostile, community environment that is disgraceful to our community, to the clergy, and to generations past, present, and future. As we all know, racist ideologies, like Ryan's, have no place in any community's public spaces. Accordingly, the City of Mobile should rise above this sad aspect of our past by removing the statue of Ryan and renaming Ryan Park.

As concerned members of this community, we cannot be complacent about the symbols of racism in our community, and further we cannot be complacent about the inevitable wounds that will come to persons in our community, because of the honor that we, as a city, bestow on a person, like Ryan, who dishonored so many people on the basis of their skin color. On the other hand, if we are complacent, then we are also dishonoring the good City of Mobile, the outstanding virtues of our community, and the many good clergy and citizens who gave of themselves so generously to oppose racism.

Thus, we appeal to you and your good hearts, confident in your leadership and your service to Mobile, and we heartily encourage you to help Mobile rise above this element of our racist past. Mobile, as we all know, can be a beacon of racial harmony and the civil rights of all. So, let's make an honorable and informed decision, united in our respect for each other and for all the people in our city. Thus, in confidence and hope, we urge you, in the best interests of all the people in our city, to remove the Ryan statue and to rename and repurpose the park to reflect what is most admirable about our beautiful city. Let's build a better Mobile that we can all be proud of for ourselves and for our descendants!

Thank you for reading this appeal and giving your consideration to this request. Thank you as well for all your efforts to do what is in the best interests of the City of Mobile. Please, let us know, if you have any questions, or if there is anything we can do to help you in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

[Signature area] TO SIGN NOW

• USE THIS QR-CODE >>>>>

• OR GO TO THE LINK BELOW:

<https://forms.gle/FXHLY2Sk2yrBKEWx8>

