



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 1773-2017, **Version:** \*

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### Res. No. 1773

Resolution supporting the efforts of Community Board 11 of Manhattan, along with advocates and residents, to remove the statue of Dr. James Marion Sims from Fifth Avenue at 103<sup>rd</sup> Street.

By Council Member Barron

Whereas, Dr. James Marion Sims (Dr. Sims) was a physician who is referred to as the “father of modern gynecology” because of his development of innovative tools and surgical techniques in women’s reproductive health; and

Whereas, Dr. Sims was born in Lancaster County, South Carolina, where he later graduated from South Carolina College in 1832 and studied medicine at Jefferson College in Philadelphia in 1835; and

Whereas, Dr. Sims practiced medicine in Lancaster County and went on to establish a practice in Montgomery, Alabama; and

Whereas, While in New York, Dr. Sims founded the Woman’s Hospital of New York in 1855 and was later elected president of the American Medical Association in 1876; and

Whereas, As a result of his groundbreaking surgical methods and inventions in the medical profession, statues of Dr. Sims have been installed in South Carolina, Alabama and New York City; and

Whereas, The statue of Dr. Sims was originally installed in New York City at Bryant Park on October 20, 1894, and was later moved to its current location near the New York Academy of Medicine at Fifth Avenue and 103<sup>rd</sup> Street in 1934; and

Whereas, Although Dr. Sims received praise for his innovative medical techniques that are still used today, he was also a slave owner who performed a series of medical experiments on enslaved African-American women that led to treating vesicovaginal fistula, which results from difficult childbirths; and

Whereas, These medical experiments have raised ethical questions among the public because the women involved did not give consent and anesthesia was not used during the experiments, and

Whereas, For many years, residents and advocates of East Harlem have called for the statue of Dr. Sims to be removed because of these experiments on enslaved African-American women; and

Whereas, Many jurisdictions around the nation have begun to remove or relocate statues that commemorate leaders of the Confederacy, the political entity that fought against the outlawing of chattel slavery; and

Whereas, On Saturday, August 12, 2017, white supremacists gathered for a scheduled protest in Charlottesville, Virginia, against the city's plan to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee; and

Whereas, The protest resulted in the death of a 32-year-old woman and more than a dozen people injured who were counter-protesting the white supremacists; and

Whereas, The violence in Charlottesville led to Mayor de Blasio announcing that members of the Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments and Markers would conduct a 90-day review of all symbols of hate on city property; and

Whereas, City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito urged Mayor de Blasio to specifically include the statue of Dr. Sims in the review of all symbols of hate on city property; and

Whereas, According to the *Daily News*, members of Community Board 11 have expressed that the Dr. Sims Statue is “just as offensive as those Confederate monuments being removed in other states”; and

Whereas, The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) offered to install a plaque beneath the Dr. Sims statue that would honor three of the women who were subjected to his unnecessarily barbaric experiments; and

Whereas, In June 2016, Community Board 11 of Manhattan (CB 11) voted at their full board meeting to reject the plaque as presented and called for the removal of the statue; and

Whereas, After CB 11's vote, CB 11 Chair Diane Collier stated that a plaque “is simply not an adequate

response to the atrocities that were committed and as East Harlem is a neighborhood predominantly made up of people of color, it is particularly egregious that this statue is installed here”; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York supports the efforts of Community Board 11 of Manhattan, along with advocates and residents, to remove the statue of Dr. James Marion Sims from Fifth Avenue at 103<sup>rd</sup> Street.

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