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Southern Utah Voices

Don't erase 'Dixie' as part of our past and future

Mr. Seifert, the editor of this paper, has kindly given me space to rebut his comments put forth in the Sunday Dec. 16 edition.

I will briefly recap. He stated his amusement over the controversy regarding the possible name change of Dixie College as it assumes university status. He also states that he is a fence-sitter on this issue and takes no position either way. However, he also states that people who feel strongly and who would be less supportive of an institution that erases its past and assumes a new sterile name are immature and show no leadership — his point seeming to be that anyone interested in coming to a new university with the radioactive label of Dixie would automatically see that this is a racist institution and would therefore stay away.

He seems to also state that for this new university to grow and flourish and attract business support it would have to divest itself of its "racist" heritage and expunge the name Dixie. I disagree with Mr. Seifert and don't think his assumptions are true.

Now, I'm no brain surgeon, but it is pretty clear to me that he has staked out a position and does have a dog in the hunt. I have seen in the past Mr. Seifert's willingness to get rid of history in the name of preserving the peace — most notably during the John D. Lee statue controversy in Washington City some years ago. He has not been concerned with the history but more the perception. I'm not a native to the St. George area, but have been here since 1975 and I am a native Utahn. I, too, have lived around the world and have seen attitudes displayed that are shocking, divisive and outright racist. I have not seen that around here.

I have acquainted myself thoroughly with the history of this area, and racism has never played a role. I submit that there is something wrong with people who see "racism" at every turn. They seem to think that our lives are guided by this one pervasive thought.

I was dismayed to see the removal of the statue at the college. When I looked at that statue, I saw heroism and loyalty and devotion to cause and to duty. I confess that I never once saw racism. Now that landmark is gone. We are allowing political correctness to rule our lives and our institutions and that is just wrong.

Institutions flourish because of the richness of their past. Dixie's university status can only be enhanced because of its very history, and Dixie is part of that history. It takes no maturity or leadership to simply try to expunge that heritage and create a new sterile disemboweled institution that has no ties to the past and hence has no direction and nothing on which to build, even if it is politically correct.

I urge those empowered in this choice to divest themselves of all the fuzzy thinking about this. This should be a no-brainer.

Jerold L. Hagen is a Washington City resident.