

Convicting the Historic Figures Is A Movement Gone Too Far

By **FURUMURA Haruhiko**

The current anti-racism movement that was triggered by the killing of Mr. George Floyd has been escalating. Some people involved in the movement are taking down the statues of Confederates' generals of the Civil War, that divided the United States between North and South. The streaming of the movie "Gone With the Wind" was suspended due to its depictions of African Americans. These are consequences beyond the appropriate purpose, because what is done will blind the nation from the historical events. In San Francisco, the statues of President Ulysses S. Grant, and of Francis Scott Key, a poet and the writer of The Star-Spangled Banner's lyrics, were taken down. Although President Grant was formerly known as a great leader of the North during the Civil War, today he is targeted for the criticism for having owned slaves until right before the War began, and that he would have allowed the continuation of slavery as long as it would not be a divisive issue for the United States.

President Abraham Lincoln is regarded as the most respected US president of all times, as the giant statue of him sits in Washington DC. We learn in Japan that President Lincoln was a great leader who abolished the slavery, and assume that is why giant statue of him was built in their capital city. Dr. KOMURO Naoki pointed out this, too, however, that it was not the main reason. What President Lincoln did greatly, hence his statue was built, was that he avoided the nation to split into two separate countries. Therefore, his biggest achievement was that he resumed the states to be united as one. The ending of the slavery was something that came along with it. As a matter of fact, the Civil Rights Act was established in 1964, about a century later.

No matter how one is progressive or at the cutting edge in their thinking in their time, needless to say it is no sooner than "behind the time" if seen from the people in the future. So, people today or in the future could criticize what happened in the past, but convicting the people then seems beyond their cause. There might be some anti-fascists, or 'antifa,' among the protesters in San Francisco. For them, Francis Scott Key who wrote the national anthem was one of those who were guilty. Then, why don't they exhaustively criticize him as much as they want, by exercising their freedom of expression, rather than destroying public properties?

If what they do is something like taking down his statue, their voice would not be appealing to many in the country, or worse, they are to be blamed then. The more the protests get escalated, the

more convincing President Trump's call for "law and order" gets. The protesters may be taking part in the movement to have President Trump not reelected, but they should be aware that their own deeds could be working against their will and cause.

(This is the English version of an article written by FURUMURA Haruhiko, Visiting Research Fellow, the Aichi University Institute of International Affairs, which originally appeared on the e-forum "Hyakka-Seiho (Hundred Flowers in Full Bloom)" of JFIR on June 29, 2020.)