

Chicago advisory committee calls for removal of 41 monuments

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By Hans Gruber

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An advisory committee in Chicago has issued a recommendation for 41 monuments to be taken down.

The statue of Christopher Columbus was removed from Grant Park in Chicago in July 2020 when violent altercations broke out between protestors and police officers after some protestors tried to tear it down. The statue has remained in storage ever since.

At the time, The Monument Commission's report stated that "the image of Columbus has become a bitter reminder of centuries of exploitation, conquest and genocide."

The city of Chicago will now review the 41 monuments which have recently fallen under scrutiny from The Chicago Monuments Project. The public will also be allowed to have input.

"We couldn't do this work without a rich public dialogue, this is about a Democratic process," said Mark Kelly, Commissioner of Chicago's Dept. of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.

Former President Abraham Lincoln's statue is on the list of those to be considered for removal. Despite Lincoln having issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which ended slavery, some groups have bashed his legacy for his treatment of native tribes.

"He's also a president who made a number of decisions that brought true harm to American Indians, so our American Indian community rightly have asked that these monuments also be considered," Kelly said.

Black Youth Project manager Chris Brown, who attended several Black Lives Matter protests, said of the matter: "It's definitely something that can be a good conversation starter, but let's not stop there. It would be nice to see an Ida B. Wells statue put into place where the Columbus statue was and any with Lincoln needs to come down."

Mayor Lori Lightfoot previously issued a statement saying that safety measures have to be considered when either putting back or leaving a contentious statue in place. Lightfoot said she is still "haunted" by visions of clashes between police and protestors.

"No. 1, what's important is to make sure that we're really respectful of, I think, legacy projects that people across the city care deeply about, and particularly those that have been the subject of controversy," Lightfoot said. "I'll say, the Columbus statue in Grant Park, in particular, making sure that if that statue comes back — which I fully expect that it will — that we have a safety plan in place."