THIS IS 1,200 WORDS, WHEREAS IT SHOULD BE 1,000. MY CUTS ARE OF COURSE JUST MY SUGGESTIONS: IT’S YOUR ESSAY.

Since moving back to my home state of Texas, I have found myself living about 400 meters from a statue commemorating a man who was the moving force behind a military and political uprising that led to the deaths of several hundred thousand U.S. soldiers; an uprising which was prompted by the lawful election of an American president who was widely seen as being insufficiently committed to the perpetual practice of black slavery; and an uprising which, even after having been put down, was followed by well over a century of often successful efforts to deny the franchise and other basic political rights to America's citizens of African descent - efforts perpetrated with suspicious concentration among those who revered the uprising and lived in the lands from which it was launched.

General Robert E. Lee, still so widely revered in the American South, has any number of endearing qualities and quotations that may be pointed to by any man who prefers that we see the warrior in a positive light rather than a negative one. But this is true of all men. His commemoration, and that of the Confederate entity for which he fought, is no less horrid - nor informative - by virtue of his having been similar to all men in possessing some good along with some evil. Relative to whatever mix of those two forces that existed in the North in the mid 19th century, the Confederacy possessed a greater degree of evil.The folly of his admirers is not merely an abstraction; it is, instead, a driving cultural and political force that informs the views of a significant portion of the American voting citizenry, and thus translates into a significant portion of American foreign policy. That a portion of the population consists of those who choose to celebrate a slave-based society - and do so in reference to its conflict with a free one to which they provide their advocacy in every other conflict before or after - is the world’s concern, rather than the abstract issue of sensitivity in which it is so often portrayed across the varieties of American conceptual life.

Such troubling affections are not limited to those whom one might disregard as inconsequential in the direction of his views aside from his status as a voter and potential small actor in the American structure

I HAD TO READ THIS TWICE

(and nor does that affection exist, necessarily, in those millions of southern Americans who are merely interested in their history or enamored of antique violence, as am I). Rather it may be found quite famously among the powerful and relevant; not long ago a popular governor and potential candidate for the presidency praised his southern state’s old “citizen’s councils” for having allegedly been a force for good in the turbulent onset of civil rights for blacks, when in fact they were so demonstrably effective in their racism that even racists themselves today acknowledge the fact. Certainly he was denounced, just as then-Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott was denounced and punished years back for proclaiming on the occasion of Sen. Strom Thurmond’s birthday that America would have benefited from the rule of the anti-negro Dixie Party which the old man had formed for a 1948 presidential run. Still, the governor, like Lott and others, was also defended - and not in the prominent places, usually, but in places that nonetheless exist, and which have their hands on a share of the levers of power by virtue of existing within a superpower where such levers are rather useful things to hold.

THIS IS THE HUMOR I LIKE

That any such comments would be made in the first place is due to I CUT THIS ONLY BECAUSE WORDS NEED TO BE CUT SOMEWHERE the quite verifiably false notion that the American Civil War rested less upon the practice of slavery than it did among some other concept, such as state’s rights, which constitutes a mistaken belief of many honest Confederate-backers as well as plausible deniability for those of them who assemble into organizations made up in quite unusually large part of active and anti-black racists. When in 2002 *Guardian* contributor Professor Jonathan Farley received the round of hate mail that black professors get for criticizing the Confederacy in print, quite a few of the death threats came from members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, some of whom were actual military veterans themselves. And many of them had been spurred to write by a rather one-sided article in *The Washington Times* which was written by an SCV member who several months afterwards gave a speech to the organization in which he exhorted them to defend the Confederate heroes against those who speak against them. Incidentally, that same journalist recently interviewed Sarah Palin’s husband and co-wrote a book with Sarah Palin’s biographer. He still writes for its various publications - though no longer its white nationalist websites - as such things not being of much concern in the U.S. MISSING WORD?

The state’s rights argument that aids and abets the existence of such organizations and such behavior has not become less popular simply by virtue of being ridiculous. State’s rights had been challenged before the Civil War and had not even been infringed upon in this case, and of course former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest did not found an organization to prevent excise taxes as applied from the federals; he founded the KKK to harass and kill blacks.

The U.S. provides a huge degree of leeway to those whose ideals counter its own, as it should. It is every Southerner's right to celebrate those of his ancestors who fought for what they believed to be a just cause, and to commemorate battles in which U.S. troops representing a nation devoid of slavery were killed by those who wanted a nation in which slavery is its backbone. It is also the right - as well as the responsibility - of those who prefer freedom to tyranny to point out the degeneracy and anti-Enlightenment tendencies inherent to such a pastime. And I say this as the ancestor of several Confederate soldiers and officers, too many of whom escaped their assault on freedom with their lives.

NICE ENDING