

Statement on the Dignity of the Ancestors of the Milwaukee County Grounds Cemeteries

Judy Klimt Houston

Descendant Community of Milwaukee County Grounds Cemeteries, Inc.

Thank you for allowing me this moment to speak on behalf of these remarkable Ancestors our descendant community holds dear.

At this crucial moment, we're joining a discussion of something higher, about humanity, about human dignity, about human freedom.

Please do not refer to these people with labels of **paupers**, **afflicted**, or **unknown**, but as the courageous souls who faced unimaginable trials.

On Our Ancestors

- For those born into **enslavement**, they were sold at least once in their lives, and found they were free at last in Milwaukee, but with their exhumation, they were enslaved again. **Respect.**
- They were **immigrants** who came to America for a better life, but found significant struggles without any family support. **Respect.**
- They were **Civil War soldiers**. In fact, 3 million soldiers served in this War for freedom and 620,000 died due to injury and disease—that was 2% of the population. **Respect.**
- These were 198 vulnerable **babies**, little boys and girls, murdered by intentional neglect at the Children's Home. **Respect.**
- They were **women** who could not legally have an abortion and set their newborn babies in the river after birth. **Respect.**

These Ancestors are **heroes** and deserve unwavering respect and dignity.

A Call to Ethical Responsibility

To those handling their remains, know that you lack our **consent**, **respect**, and **trust** because we were never asked. The harm inflicted by this lack of transparency and accountability cuts deep.

While some of you have shared their stories with reverence in your research, our permission was never sought or granted. Though laws may permit such actions, **legality does not equate to morality**.

History has shown us the grave consequences of unjust practices, due to social marginalization, eugenics, and White supremacy, and we cannot stand idly by as our Ancestors' dignity is disregarded.

I implore you to refrain from discussing the children and showcasing the remains of these little ones who had their only chance at life stripped away from them because of White supremacy.

Instead, let us uplift these individuals with **dignity** and **reverence**. In doing so, you honor not only our Ancestors, but also the descendants who carry their legacy forward.

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