

Whom do we commemorate?

Source: [www.centralpark2000.com/ database/morse.html](http://www.centralpark2000.com/database/morse.html)

A number of well known figures in United States, including Presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, owned enslaved African Americans.

1. In your opinion., should Americans honor “heroes” who were slave holders, promoted racist ideas or profited from the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade?
2. Examine the statements about Samuel F. B. Morse and Dr. James Marion Sims. Both men are honored by statues in New York City’s Central Park. In your opinion, should these statues remain? Explain.

Samuel F. B. Morse [Statue unveiled 1871]
Born. Charlestown, MA, 1791 • died. New York, 1872

A statue of Samuel Morse, an American painter and inventor, is located at the entrance of Inventor’s Gate on the east side of Central Park near 72nd Street. Morse is shown standing next to his best known invention and holding a strip of Morse Code. Morse was a founder and first President of the National Academy of Design established in 1825. Its office is just outside the park.

Did you know that in his journal, Morse wrote that “Slavery . . . is not sin. It is a social condition ordained from the beginning of the world for the wisest purposes, benevolent and disciplinary, by Divine Wisdom”?



Sculptor: Byron M. Picket

Dr. James Marion Sims [Statue unveiled 1892]
born. Lancaster Co., SC, 1813 • died. New York, 1883

On the outside wall of Central Park near 103rd street is a statue of Dr. James Marion Sims. Because he developed new surgical procedures and surgical instruments, Dr. Sims is honored as a pioneer and founder of modern medicine and gynecology. His work as a doctor helped to save the lives of women with childbirth problems, including enslaved African women. In 1853, Dr. Sims moved to New York City and established the Woman’s Hospital of the State of New York. He later established the Cancer Hospital, which is now known as the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

Did you know that between 1845 and 1849, Dr. Sims performed experimental gynecological operations on countless enslaved African women in the American south including over 34 experimental operations on a single woman without the benefit of anesthesia or any type of antiseptic? Many of the women he experimented on lost their lives to infection.

