

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Proud of Pottstown's diversity

Reacting to the fatal shooting of nine African Americans by a white supremacist at a Charleston church in 2015, the city of New Orleans ordered the removal of four monuments honoring Confederate leaders.

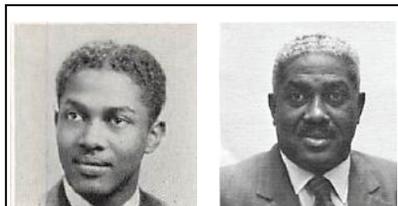
"These statues are not just stone and metal," said Mayor Mitch Landrieu. "They celebrate a fictional, sanitized Confederacy, ignoring the enslavement, ignoring the terror that it actually stood for."



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton

When violence broke out earlier this month in Charlottesville, Virginia, during a protest over the planned

removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee, cities and towns all across the country announced plans to remove Confederate statues.



**KENNETH HINES, Pottstown High School class of 1942, left, and as Pottstown School Board president in 1974, right.**

These initiatives have now spread to statues of other people considered racist, like former Philadelphia mayor Frank Rizzo.

All this controversy reminds me of one of Pottstown's finest qualities: racial diversity. When I moved to Pottstown in 1973, the president of

**ROBERT E. LEE STATUE is removed from its pedestal in New Orleans last May. It was one of four monuments to Confederate leaders removed by the city. A nationwide controversy has erupted over statues honoring people considered to be racists.**



the Pottstown School Board was a 1942 graduate, Kenneth Hines, an African American who had earned a degree from West Chester University and gone on to head Pottstown's water department before entering private industry.

Blacks have served almost continuously on the school board and Pottstown Council ever since.

In 1980, the school district voluntarily integrated its elementary schools by closing the former Jefferson School in the center of town (now senior housing) and redistricting the remaining five schools.

In the 1970s, most blacks lived either in Penn Village or the Washington Street area, but our neighborhoods are now fully integrated.

Our school district is a true melting pot, with almost equal numbers of white, black, and multiracial kids. No one seems to notice or care. The kids don't segregate themselves. That to me is our district's greatest strength and one that prepares our students for the real world better than the homogenous districts surrounding us.

One timely example: The 2017 Pottstown senior class president, Nyles Rome, an African American, is starting his freshman year this week on full scholarship at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.



**CONTROVERSIAL STATUE of Philadelphia mayor Frank Rizzo.**