

STATEMENT OF THE NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC DEFENDER COMMITTEE ON
RACIAL EQUITY ON CONFEDERATE STATUES AND MONUMENTS
NOVEMBER 28, 2017

In light of recent events in Charlottesville, Durham, Chapel Hill and around the country, the North Carolina Public Defender Committee on Racial Equity (“NC PDCORE”) calls on state and local leaders to take every step possible to remove Confederate monuments from their places of honor at courthouses and other judicial buildings around the state. These monuments should be relocated to historic and/or educational sites, such as museums or graveyards, around the state. The monuments that must be relocated include, but are not be limited to, the statue of former North Carolina Supreme Court Justice, confederate sympathizer, and slave owner Thomas Ruffin at the North Carolina Court of Appeals. Statues like Ruffin’s have become symbols of modern white supremacy and undermine the highest ideals we strive for as public defenders.

On the official seal of the Judicial Branch of North Carolina, the Latin Words, *Suum Cuique Tribuere*, appear underneath the personification of justice. As long as these confederate monuments stand, this aspirational goal to “give each their due,” will remain unfulfilled. While we cannot choose our history, we can choose who we honor and who North Carolinians see when they appear in court. As Rick Jones, President of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers stated, “We must be committed to eliminating the racism and sexism and classism that delegitimizes our American system of justice.” By eliminating these icons to institutionalized bigotry, we can take a small step towards realizing a judicial system that treats all North Carolinians equitably.