

The National Park Service's memorial to Ulysses S. Grant.

Remarks by Robert M. Morgenthau, formerly Manhattan's district attorney, at the General Grant National Memorial, June 6, 2016:

In the aftermath of the Civil War, Mark Twain remarked upon this great mystery: how it could be that physical courage should be so common in the world, and yet moral courage so rare.

It is fit and proper that all communities remember those whose physical courage led them to sacrifice on the field of battle. But today I would like us all to pause to honor as well that rarer virtue: moral courage.

The soldiers and sailors commemorated in this park died because a founding document told them, "all men are created equal"—and yet they knew that every day, somewhere in this nation, that principle was being violated by the master's lash. That violation they could not abide; and when their nation called them, they took up arms. That is what we mean by moral courage.

And so they won the war, and so the Union was preserved; and so the Constitution received its crown, the Civil War amendments, outlawing slavery, along with every badge and incident of slavery—and indeed prohibiting any provision that might deny any American the equal protection of the law.

It was, by any measure, a great victory. And yet today, I sometimes fear that, just as the great monument to the Union soldiers has fallen into disrepair, so have the principles for which that monument stands.

I worry that today we still see some flying the confederate flag, claiming that they do so only to honor the dead—but, in too many instances, slandering the living as well. . . .

It is not just monuments that must be restored. The ideals that they represent that must be restored as well. . . .

As we restore our monuments, let them inspire others as well, to find within themselves the courage—the *moral* courage—to preserve the ideals upon which the true greatness of this nation shall always rest.

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