

VIGIL, XAVIER I.

From: City of Santa Fe <noreply@santafenm-gov.com>
Sent: Monday, February 23, 2026 8:29 PM
To: Governing Body Public Comment
Subject: New submission from your Governing Body Public Comment form

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Submitted on: Monday, February 23, 2026 at 8:29pm

- First Name: Abby
- Last Name: Shepard
- Your Email Address: [REDACTED]
- Your District: District 4
- Meeting Date: Special Meeting
- Section of Agenda you would like to comment on: Public Comment
- Your Comment: My name is Abby Shepard, an O'ga P'ogeh/Santa Fe resident and a Yoga student and teacher.

Yoga means union. There are thousands of teachings, multiple lineages, and a whole framework on what this means for how we live our lives, personally and collectively. Core to these teachings are some key questions that Yoga teacher and educator Susanna Barkataki lays out as key to supporting the true practice of Yoga. These questions apply well in this situation:

Is the action causing Separation?

Does this action create connection?

Does it lead to unity and liberation? Does it contribute to systemic change for human uplift – of all?

Whether you're a yoga practitioner or not, I think all of us can resonate with these questions because we all want to belong. We all want connection. And, these questions also call us to take into account the contexts of power and systems of oppression that are at play in every situation.

So what happens when we apply these questions to the suggestion to rebuild the Soldiers Monument in the Plaza?

The answers are clear. Rebuilding and maintaining the monument causes separation. It fails to lead to connection, unity, and liberation because it is a product of colonialism and dehumanizes Indigenous people. Colonialism requires separation. Separation from the land, separation between people, and separation of our bodies and minds.

Thus, rebuilding this monument fails to do what Mayor Garcia himself claims to be working toward, to “unite the city” once again.

Actually, believing a single monument can unite the city is itself a delusion.

“Uniting the city” requires hard work that throwing money at feasibility studies will never solve.

So the question is, are you, as the mayor and council, and are we, residents of O’ga P’ogeh, willing to do the hard work that will actually move toward unity and liberation?

That requires us to be willing to turn inward, to see our own conditioned supremacy, to recenter the leadership of Indigenous people – especially Indigenous women and femmes – to have hard conversations, and to let go of a monument that represents and entrenches separation.

Uniting the city requires us to reckon with the atrocities of colonialism that are still perpetuated today. It requires discernment, truth-telling, hard conversations, and radical action to repair the centuries of violence, oppression, and genocide that this city is built on and continues to benefit from, at the expense of Indigenous people.

This monument has been controversial for at least 115 years. Rebuilding it will only continue the division we have come to know all too well in our world today.

I urge the City Council to consult the Tribes most impacted by this monument, the Dine, Mescalero, and other Tribes from the Civil War era. Listen to their concerns and what they want to see happen with the monument.

Instead of wasting our public tax dollars on rebuilding what would now be an ahistorical monument, remove the monument completely from the Plaza. This would allow more room for community events, and to create a fully inclusive gathering space that truly serves all.

Relocate the salvaged pieces to a place like the New Mexico History Museum, where a more full and truthful history can be shared and visitors can see the monument with consent (rather than have a painful history forced on them in a public space).

And then commit to doing the hard work to engage the community in conversations about racism, settler colonialism, and ethnic pluralism in O'ga P'ogeh in Northern New Mexico; to accurately reflect the complexities of our history, in public spaces and public education, and the impact that Anglo American colonialism has on both Hispano and Indigenous communities; and to recenter Indigenous histories, presences, and futures as a path forward where we can all thrive.

This is the path of Yoga, of union, of connection, and of belonging.