RADIO 4 Confederate Statues

President Trump has criticized efforts in a number of states to remove statues honoring Civil War leaders who fought to defend slavery, saying that America’s culture and history would be ripped apart.

A 32-year old woman was killed and 20 people were injured at the week-end when violence broke out at a white nationalist protest against plans to take down one such statue in Virginia.

Mr Trump’s comments afterwards blaming both far-right groups and their opponents were widely condemned.

Our North America editor Jon Sopel considers the president’s latest intervention.

The white supremacists who converged on Charlottesville last week-end did so to protest about plans to pull down a statue of General Robert E. Lee, the leader of the Confederate forces in the Civil War, the forces fighting to preserve the right to own African slaves.

Across the South there are literally hundreds of statues to historic figures who fought against the Union Army.

With this intervention saying to remove them would rip apart our history, Donald Trump will have delighted those who insist these sculptures are part of America’s heritage but he will also have delighted the far right who see them as symbols of their superiority and will cause deep dismay to African-Americans who hate the statues for the opposite reason.

So to present this as purely an argument about history and heritage is misleading. These 19th century pieces of carved marble and bronze are also part of the toxic argument about the state of race relations today and the ongoing battle for African-Americans to find equality and respect.