During the recent convention of the Democratic Party, Michelle Obama said something that sur-
prised many. “I wake up every morning in a house that was built by slaves,” she told the audience of delegates. And that is a historical fact. Another historical fact is that some of the most venerable American universities also have strong ties to slavery, not only because some of them were built by slaves, but also because many of their founders and major benefactors were either slave holders or pub-
lcally supported slavery or clearly racist policies.

These troublesome facts were revived recent-
ly due to an incident that took place last June at Yale University. Corey Menafee, a dishwasher in Calhoun College’s dining hall (one of Yale’s residential colleges), purposely broke a stained-glass window with a brickmold because of its racist imagery. The window included images of three portraits of Calhoun, a former president of the university who was only 22 years old. Although Yale had planned to replace the window and had removed those three portraits of Calhoun, the university refused to change the college’s name, which drew sharp criticism. Following, public speaker, Peter Salovey, pres-
ident of Yale, declared that the decision to keep Calhoun’s name was not final. “It is now clear to me that the community conversation about these issues could have drawn more effectively on campus expertise. In particular, we would have benefited from a set of well-articulated guiding principles according to which a historical name might be removed or changed,” he said, reversing his original decision that the community conversation about the name remain in the interest of the university’s education-
al mission.

The connection between slavery and higher edu-
cation in this country has a long and troubled history. It is not at all unusual in this nation to find statues from its campus, or add historical explanations on plaques attached to them. Statues from its campus, or add historical explanations on plaques attached to them. Statues from its campus, or add historical explanations on plaques attached to them.

Yale’s decision was noted in the New York Times. The paper did not call for the removal of the statue. In fact, the newspaper wrote that Yale had made a good decision in keeping the statue. The paper noted that the university had made the right decision in keeping the statue.

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