



Time to put Harriet Tubman on the \$20 bill

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Presidential candidate Donald Trump made it clear that he was no fan of the Obama administration's plans to replace the image of Andrew Jackson on the \$20 bill with that of abolitionist Harriet Tubman.

In 2016 campaign appearances, he called the announcement an example of "pure political correctness" and suggested that Tubman, who escaped slavery and led hundreds of people to freedom through the Underground Railroad, might be better suited for a lesser denomination, maybe the \$2 bill.

"Andrew Jackson had a great history, and I think it's very rough when you take somebody off the bill," said Trump, who is known to have a special affection for the nation's seventh president. "Andrew Jackson had a history of tremendous success for the country."

So, when Trump's Treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, announced last week that the release of the Tubman bill was being postponed from 2020 until 2028, few were buying his explanation that the delay was needed to focus on "counterfeiting issues" with the \$10 and \$50 bills.

Who gets on U.S. currency and when is pretty much up to the secretary of the Treasury. Those honored have so far been prominent figures, such as presidents and Founding Fathers. But the only specific requirement is that the person on the cash must be dead.

The current lineup, which has been in place in 1929, all happen to be dead white men. Yes, Susan B. Anthony and Sacagawea, got some facetime on \$1 coins, but the paper legal tender still remains all about the Benjamins ... the Georges, the Abrahams and the Andrews.

Martha Washington was featured alone on the face of the \$1 silver certificate in 1886 but was later moved to the back of the bill and featured next to her husband, George.

Other than that, women have been left out of the folding money exchange. The United States is one of 84 countries and territories that don't feature any women on their banknotes. That list includes North Korea, Russia, China and Saudi Arabia.

That was the backdrop for the Obama administration's plans to put a woman on the \$20 bill in 2020 to mark the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote.

In a campaign called "Women on 20s," selected voters were asked to choose three of 15 female candidates to receive the honor. Tubman was the top choice from a list that included former First

Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Civil Rights icon Rosa Parks, and Wilma Mankiller, the first female chief of the Cherokee Nation.

The plan was to put Tubman on the front and move Jackson to the back.

The switch would be filled with cultural significance: In addition to the long-overdue recognition of a woman on major currency, the white, slaveholding Jackson would be replaced by the fierce black abolitionist Tubman. The president who forced the Trail of Tears on American Indians would be displaced by a woman who freed so many of her people that she became known as the American Moses.

And in one final irony, Jackson was famously opposed to the Central Bank and used part of his farewell address to warn Americans about the evils of paper money. So, he might not be all that broken up about losing his place on the double sawbuck.

So, far from being political correctness run amok, Tubman could be the perfect choice for Trump to embrace. Given the times, she was much more likely to be a Republican than a Democrat, was a devout Christian and even has pretty solid Second Amendment bonafides. The GOP trifecta.

“If anyone ever wanted to change his or her mind during the journey to freedom and return, Tubman pulled out a gun and said, ‘You’ll be free or die a slave!’” according to a Library of Congress account of her life. “Tubman knew that if anyone turned back, it would put her and other escaping slaves in danger of discovery, capture or even death.”

How do you like her now, Andrew Jackson?

Even the conservative Cato Institute has weighed in on Tubman's behalf.

“Tubman fought enormous injustice and promoted human liberty,” the group said in [a post on its website](#). “She advocated genuine equality of opportunity, allowing women to vote, rather than the sort of PC notions of equality popular today.

“She exhibited courage in fighting and breaking unjust laws. She was no ivory tower theorist but took the lead in putting her views into action. She never saw her work as done, but constantly joined anew the battle for freedom. Never did she wait for bureaucrats, politicians, judges, lawyers, and others to act. Instead, she acted to rescue the oppressed.”

Congress should lobby the administration to reconsider the delay in the redesign. The only question is whether the \$20 bill is good enough for Harriet Tubman.