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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The discussion in last week's Think Tank ("Jefferson's two families; Should Jefferson's descendants accept Sally Hemings?") on the Monticello Association's vote is ridiculous. The people discussing the issue prove by their comments they know nothing of the facts.

Bill Keene believes membership should have been opened to the Hemings family, giving them all the privileges that would entail. He also thinks it's regrettable the matter had to be decided by vote and should have been resolved by consensus. Based on what?

"I do believe that is a part of it. I just believe they didn't want any blacks within that organization. They wanted it to be lily white," he said.

We do have African-Americans in the organization – and Jewish-Americans, Italian Americans and Native Americans (90 percent of the membership claims direct descent from Pocahontas). Keene's comments are way off base and proclaim that he knows nothing of the facts about our membership.

Furthermore, Keene said the DNA evidence released in 1998 is inconclusive, because it allows that Jefferson's brother may have fathered Sally Hemings' children.

Still, in light of what he knows, Keene said, "if somebody asked me, 'Bill, do you actually believe that he fathered those children?' my answer would be 'I don't know.' "

If Keene doesn't know – and it is a fact that no one does – why would he have our organization approve membership for people who cannot prove their descent from President Jefferson based upon "I don't know"? Our decision was based upon adherence to our constitution, not political correctness.

"I think part of the situation as it relates to today is that a lot of the people who are in that organization are Southerners and, as a result, I still think they keep some lingering prejudices," Brna said.

This time, Brna proclaims he knows nothing about the membership of our organization. We have as many

Northerners (who voted against admitting the Hemingses) as we have Southerners in the organization.

JACQUES WALKER

Metairie, La.

The writer is a member of the Monticello Association.