

I am not a Moonie statue in Davis Square in Somerville

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April 6, 2022



In the 1980s I was the Pastor in Boston, MA. It came to my attention that there was this statue in Davis Square in Somerville, Ma across the river from Boston. The statue was part of a display of several statues in the Square. The statue was of this man holding a bouquet of flowers with a bucket of flowers on the ground by his feet. On the statue it read, "I am not a Moonie." Of course, I and others were not pleased at all with this statue and wanted it removed. I called all the agencies I could in Somerville and finally got someone who I could talk to about it. The man on the phone was very defensive and said it was not intended to be offensive to anyone.



I said that you would never allow another religious or racial group to have their name on a statue in such a fashion. I asked the city to remove it, or we would file a discrimination suit against the city. Eventually the city through the artist, or whoever, got the name Moonie removed. In preparation for this article, I googled the statues in Davis Square and found an article where the artist said that the name had been removed because of political correctness. I do not think that those words were even used back then, but in the 2018 article he mentions that term. He says there was a person who sold flowers there with that kind of writing on his shirt. I do not know how true that is, but what one wears on a shirt is far different than memorializing a bigoted slur on a statue situated in a public square. From reading the article on Google, it seems most of the statues have been vandalized, relocated, or removed. You can also see the before and after pictures of the statue.





Davis Square

By Jason Madanjian

Correction: The statue pictured above is of a flower vendor, not a homeless man as initially stated. His shirt originally read, "I AM NOT A MOONIE," in an effort to distinguish himself from members of the Unification Church, who were known as "moonies" and often sold flowers. The statue was changed to its current form per the church's request.

Only a few places I go still make me feel like a kid. Somerville's Davis Square is one of them. As a child, I used to go many times during the summer. My Auntie Boo would always take my brother, cousins and I. It was our home away from home. It was my escape.

Recently, I returned on a hot Tuesday afternoon during the dog days of summer. Although I've probably walked by it a dozen times, I noticed something in Davis Square. Outside the T station stands a statue of what I took to be a homeless man. He holds a bouquet of flowers, as if selling them, and his shirt bears a bold proclamation: "I AM NOT".

It's a surprisingly daring invitation of thought from a society that now seems so hell-bent on not having any. "What does it mean?" I asked myself. Perhaps, it's not to judge someone you don't know, a needed lesson for hardened city cynics — something which I myself have turned into. When I was a kid, I would always stop in front of the homeless people in Davis Square. My Aunt says I never asked anything, but always gave an inquisitive look. Now, I don't even acknowledge a homeless person, even when they are directly speaking to me.

I then thought that maybe this man wasn't homeless. Maybe he's not even selling flowers. What if he's waiting for his girlfriend at the T station with a bouquet? Or maybe he's just homeless. Either way, it doesn't matter. Because whatever you think, he assures you, he is not.

* * *

The destination my Auntie Boo always took my cousins and I to was the bowling alley, Sacco's. It was run-down but cheap. The alley wasn't so much retro as just old. Admittedly, even a child could appreciate its charm.

Now, I walk by that alley and get an overwhelming kick of nostalgia and bitter disappointment. Davis Square isn't merely a fun hang-out spot for me, it's a trip back in time. As a teenager on the brink of adulthood, sometimes escaping to a simpler period is all I need.

Besides the prices, the best part of the bowling alley was its lack of customers (something I'm sure ownership would disagree with). To have the whole bowling alley to oneself was like owning a palace, if only for a little while.



The



That's

I tried to go back there this past year, during my freshman year at Emerson College, with my friends. I wanted the new to meet the old. Alas, the old didn't exist anymore. It wasn't torn down, but it was revamped. I couldn't believe it when the hostess said the wait to bowl was two hours long. This, the place that was always so hard-up for customers, turned away the only one it ever truly had.

Now featuring a bar and oven-baked pizza, Sacco's was not the old lovable dump I remembered. It was hip and trendy. It was nothing more than a two hour wait. As I stood in front of it once again this summer, I looked back on all those wonderful memories. Even though it's not the bowling alley I remember, perhaps someday, it can be something else to me.

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Something that has remained un-tampered in my heart is the Somerville Movie Theater. As a vital artery of Davis Square, people flow in-and-out, buzzing about the latest flick on their way to dinner or a bar in the square. It's one of the theaters that sparked my passion in movie watching. With its six dollar matinee prices, option to buy watered-down beer instead of watered-down soda and occasional screening of classics like *Jaws*, it's a haven for movie lovers in the age of digital projectors, \$13 movie tickets, and *Ice Age* sequels. The theater's look is so old-fashioned that you expect movie-goers to run out screaming, for fear of the Blob.

For me, Davis Square is an odd concoction of the old and the new. It will forever hold my childhood memories and yet I watch it change before my eyes. A CVS pharmacy sits in the middle of Davis Square's beating heart. Trendy dive bars have replaced crusty old-taverns and booze barns. Still, I cannot deny the improvements. Davis Square is much cleaner and friendlier now. As I headed back toward the T station, I thought about my future with this square. For the past few years, I've been visiting it like the graveyard of my childhood, the keeper of my memories.

Then I realized that Davis Square shouldn't be an escape to my past. It should be an escape to my future. After all, "I AM NOT" a child anymore. It's time to make new memories with new friends. You can never escape your past and I never want to — but I never want to lose my future either.

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