

# **Sanitizing American History: The Confederate Monument Removal Controversy**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá kontroverzním tématem Konfедераčních monumentů ve Spojených státech Amerických. Občanská válka byla jedním z největších konfliktů, která zasáhla celou Ameriku. Bylo instalováno mnoho monumentů na počest válečných vůdců a na památku padlých vojáků. V poslední době se však konfедераční monumenty staly terčem útoků ze stran liberalistů, studentů a také amerických černochů, jelikož nejsou z jejich strany považovány za politicky korektní. Cílem této práce je objektivně argumentovat, proč by tyto monumenty neměly být odstraněny.

Klíčová slova: Konfедераční monumenty, Konfederace, Spojené státy, politická korektnost, liberalismus, rasové vztahy, americká historie.

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor's thesis deals with the controversy over Confederate monuments in the United States. After the Civil War, many monuments to military leaders and dead soldiers were erected throughout the South. Recently, the Confederate statues are under attack, mostly by liberals, blacks and students, because they are not politically correct. This thesis lists objective arguments as to why Confederate monuments should not be removed.

Keywords: Confederate monuments, Confederacy, South, United States, Political Correctness, Liberalism, Race Relations, American History.

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## INTRODUCTION

At around 3AM, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017, in New Orleans, a Confederate memorial was removed from its pedestal on the orders of the city council. The crew, wearing helmets, body armor and masks was tasked with removing racist statues. Despite the hour, the removal did not go unnoticed, but was observed by supporters and opponents of the operation. The police were also there to quell any violence. The memorial, to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, was just one of four scheduled for removal. The city council's decision to remove these monuments was in response to both a racism-motivated shooting at an Episcopal church in Charleston, South Carolina, which left nine blacks dead, and a later protest turned violent in Charlottesville, Virginia.<sup>1</sup> Such events led to preemptive actions across the South, including the removal of Confederate memorials in city centers (Annapolis, Baltimore, Memphis, Jacksonville, FL) and on university campuses (Austin, Durham). And more removals have already been approved.<sup>2</sup> This thesis deals with the current controversy over Confederate monument removal. It argues that the vast majority of monuments, such as the New Orleans monument to Jefferson Davis, were not erected for racist reasons and should therefore not be considered offensive; thus, the monuments should be kept for their historical and educational value. Americans, awash in political correctness, are trying to hide or forget their past, and this is a mistake, for as the old adage says, those who forget their past are doomed to repeat it.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Adelson, "Another New Orleans Monument Removed: Jefferson Davis Statue Taken Down Overnight," *New Orleans Advocate*, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017, accessed April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, [https://www.theadvocate.com/new\\_orleans/news/article\\_672de358-361a-11e7-a3f0-d7bca50ad3a1.html](https://www.theadvocate.com/new_orleans/news/article_672de358-361a-11e7-a3f0-d7bca50ad3a1.html);

<sup>2</sup> "Confederate Monuments Are Coming Down across the United States. Here Is a List," *New York Times*, updated August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017, accessed April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/16/us/confederate-monuments-removed.html>.

## 1 BACKGROUND

### 1.1 The Civil War and Reconstruction

Between 1861 and 1865, 2.1 million Northerners fought 880,000 Southerners, resulting in the deaths of 2.5% of the American population.<sup>3</sup> The Civil War altered the course of American development, by ending slavery and freeing approximately 4 million blacks.<sup>4</sup> However, the war was not fought just over slavery; states' rights were also at stake, specifically the federal government's right to pass a law (in this case, against slavery) that would injure certain (Southern) states. Although the issue of slavery was decided by the northern victory, states' rights continued to hang in the balance, especially after the Redemption of the southern states in the 1870s, and the final withdrawal of federal troops from the South in 1878. With the federal military presence gone, Southerners were free to commemorate the war as they saw fit.

### 1.2 To Be Free or Die

The Civil War ended slavery, but it also created problems that needed solving: the role of blacks in southern society and the role of the South in the United States.<sup>5</sup> For many, the two problems were related, as the northern victory assured blacks of U.S. citizenship within a region controlled by whites, who mostly considered blacks inferior and altogether unworthy for anything other than manual labor. Although defeated on the battlefield, southern whites were still prideful of their society and resentful of blacks and their new place in it. Such feelings led southern whites to embrace Lost Cause mythology, which was an interpretation of the Civil War by the Southerners that secession was not a partisan act but rather a heroic reaction to protect Southern sovereignty.

The Lost Cause is built on the following ideas:

1. Secession, not slavery, caused the Civil War.
2. Blacks were "faithful slaves," loyal to their masters and the Confederate cause and unprepared for the responsibilities of freedom.

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<sup>3</sup> American Experience, "The Civil War by the Numbers," PBS, accessed 23 January 2019, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/death-numbers/>.

<sup>4</sup> PragerU, "Was the Civil War about Slavery?," YouTube, accessed 23 January 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcy7qV-BGF4>.

<sup>5</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press), 31.

3. The Confederacy was defeated militarily only because of the Union's overwhelming advantages in men and resources.
4. Confederate soldiers were heroic and saintly, and the most heroic and saintly of all Confederates, perhaps of all Americans, was General Robert E. Lee.
5. Southern women were loyal to the Confederate cause and sanctified by the sacrifice of their loved ones.<sup>6</sup>

Embracing this mythology were white southern women who had lost their husbands and sons on the battlefield but not in their hearts and minds.<sup>7</sup> These women started to create organizations (chief among them the United Daughters of the Confederacy) that were committed to providing appropriately respectful graves for their (approximately 200,000) men, whom they viewed as martyrs for the Cause. They also established Confederate Memorial Day on April 26<sup>th</sup>, giving them a day to visit the graves and honor the men who had died protecting them and their way of life.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the women sought to educate the following generation about the Cause and about the heroes of the Confederacy. To ensure this, school textbooks in Southern states referred to sources and stories from the Southern point of view. Additionally, no positive references to Abraham Lincoln were made. This is how the Lost Cause became heritage for the vast majority of Confederate descendants.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3 The Reconstruction Era

With the end of the war came hunger. Most of the plantations were damaged or destroyed, infrastructure was destroyed, and the livestock was no more. Not only did the Union troops have almost free power to take anything from white Southerners, but they also gave the 'keys' to African Americans, who were obviously happy to take any crops, horses or any other property.<sup>10</sup>

Other problems needed solving. Even though the Union had fought for the rights of blacks, not even the North was prepared to provide blacks with voting rights and,

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<sup>6</sup> Encyclopaedia Virginia, "Lost Cause," [https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Lost\\_Cause\\_The#its1](https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Lost_Cause_The#its1), accessed March 18, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Encyclopaedia Virginia, "Lost Cause."

<sup>9</sup> Vox, "How Socialites Rewrote Civil War History," YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOkFXPblLpU-3.41-4.51>, accessed March 18, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Gary B. Nash, et al., *The American People: Creating a Nation and Society* (New York: HarperCollins College, 1996), 457-58.

obviously, nor was the South. The voting rights for the blacks were granted by the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified by Congress in 1868. However, blacks did not desire the right to vote as much as they did land ownership. The promised “40 acres and a mule” went unfulfilled. With rising tenancy in the South, blacks and poor whites were dependent on the merchants and the plantation owners. And blacks were charged higher prices than whites.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.4 The Rise of Violence, Redemption

Throughout the Reconstruction struggles, Southerners were still protecting state’s rights. In doing so, they were ensuring that the racial hierarchy would remain the same, with whites on top. This was accomplished through violence and intimidation towards blacks, such as ensuring ‘Democratic Tickets’ with guns.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the brutality was not against blacks only. Even whites in leading positions were threatened or even killed. A white senator was hanged with a sign stating, “Beware, ye guilty, both white and black.” The notorious Ku Klux Klan was behind many such events.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.4.1 Monuments and the Mourning Women Who Erected Them

Women contributed substantially to erecting Southern Confederate monuments. In the post-war era, it was natural that wives and daughters of the Confederate soldiers wanted to remember the heroes of the Lost Cause. Additionally, gatherings were restricted by the Republican authorities in the South, so the women responded with monuments, which were acceptable means of commemorating Confederate sacrifices. Moreover, women in the North were not as active as women in the South. They played rather a supportive role. The federal government invested money to memorialize fallen Yankee soldiers, whereas Southern women had to be more creative in raising money. They did so through bazaars and some competitions.<sup>14</sup>

By 1866, ladies’ memorial communities, such as the Ladies’ Memorial Association, organized events in memory of their dead fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. The first monuments were mostly erected in cemeteries, and Decoration Day, now known as

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 466, 470, 474-75.

<sup>12</sup> David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 191.

<sup>13</sup> Nash, et al., *The American People*, 480-81.

<sup>14</sup> Lisa Tendrich Frenk, *Women in the American Civil War* (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO, 2008), 392-93.

Confederate Memorial Day (April 26), became one of the major celebrated events. During Reconstruction, the monuments were not only in the cemeteries, but in public spaces and on roads as well. Decoration Day helped the defeated Southerners to deal with the defeat.<sup>15</sup>

A thirteen-foot tall monument in South Carolina was the first of the Confederate monuments, honoring sixty-two Confederate soldiers who were burned in the town. Another monument was built in North Carolina in Cross Creek Cemetery. Cemeteries were a typical location for the monuments in the beginning. Thereafter, the monuments were built in public places, such as parks or city centers, or in front of court houses.<sup>16</sup>

The erection of the monuments did not end during the Reconstruction. In fact, it was during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, from 1890 to 1920, that the most monuments were erected.<sup>17</sup> This is because veterans were aging and were increasingly nostalgic, and they had the economic resources to memorialize their actions.

As monument erection increased, so did Lost Cause sentiment. The United Daughters of the Confederacy increasingly erected monuments in order to remind the younger generations of the heroic acts of Confederates. A typical example might be Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia. The first erected monument was of General Robert E. Lee, followed by monuments of General J.E.B. Stuart and President Jefferson Davis in 1907, and later of General Stonewall Jackson and Confederate Navy officer Mathew Maury.<sup>18</sup> All these monuments were revealed to the public with great publicity. Additionally, reunions of Confederate veterans were held near the monuments.<sup>19</sup>

## 1.5 The Jim Crow Era, 1896-1954

During the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, as whites were trying to maintain their power over blacks, they passed state segregation laws mandating, for instance, separate railroad cars, schools, cemeteries, dining rooms, hotels, bathrooms and water fountains, etc. Interracial relations were forbidden, and nobody of the opposite gender and race could spend the night together.<sup>20</sup> The 1896 Supreme Court decision, *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, made

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Perman and Amy Murrell Taylor, eds., *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction: Documents and Essays*, (Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2011), 481.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 100-113.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Jackson Sun*, "Examples of Jim Crow Laws," accessed April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, [http://orig.jacksonsun.com/civilrights/sec1\\_crow\\_laws.shtml](http://orig.jacksonsun.com/civilrights/sec1_crow_laws.shtml).

“separate but equal” the law of the land.<sup>21</sup> The problem for blacks was that whites, who controlled the money and the state and local governments, followed only the first half of the law. They did not grant blacks equal access to resources or to public spaces.

This separation and lack of equality also influenced monument construction in the first half of the twentieth century. Since whites controlled the government, the legal system, the purse strings, and the public spaces, they built monuments to other whites. They controlled the public narrative. Blacks, unequal, had little opportunity to memorialize, except through oral history. In fact, only one national monument dedicated to a black person was erected in during the Jim Crow Era, this being a monument to George Washington Carver, erected in 1943 in Missouri. This monument, the “first to be dedicated to an African-American,” was, according to one source, “ahead of its time.”<sup>22</sup>

### 1.5.1 The Fight Over Segregation and the Civil War Centennial

The Civil War centennial was not commemorated by Southerners only, but by all Americans and was supported by the federal government. Civil War centennial commissions were created at federal, state, and local levels. White organizations like the UDC were initially against holding these celebrations, fearing that the North would simply hijack them. However, they relented on the grounds that the centennial provided a great opportunity to show how united the states had become. In fact, one Georgia brochure stated that the Civil War was a conflict that united the nation and made it even stronger. Such brochures urged the commemoration of valiant men like Robert E. Lee as heroes, not as selfish nor arrogant.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) warned that the Civil War centennial could harm the Civil Rights Movement. It encouraged people to “draft statements for release to the press, radio and television expressing your resentment at efforts to commemorate the Civil War with meaningless pageants and spectacles which overlook the real meaning of the War.”<sup>24</sup> Notwithstanding the initial disagreement of the UDC with centennial commemorations, white women, such as those in the UDC, probably enjoyed the celebrations the most,

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<sup>21</sup> Evan Andrews, “Was Jim Crow a Real Person?,” *History*, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014, accessed April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.history.com/news/was-jim-crow-a-real-person>.

<sup>22</sup> The Wilderness Society, “13 Parks and Monuments that Celebrate Black History,” accessed April 23, 2019, <https://www.wilderness.org/articles/article/13-parks-and-monuments-celebrate-black-history>.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Cook, “(Un)Furl that Banner: The Response of White Southerners to the Civil War Centennial of 1961-1965,” *Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 4 (2002): 879-912.

<sup>24</sup> “Warns ‘Pro-South’ Civil War Propaganda Can Be Harmful,” *Detroit Tribune*, 25 March 1961, accessed March 25<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92063852/1961-03-25/ed-1/seq-1/>.

organizing balls, bake-offs, and beauty pageants, and dressing in period costumes.<sup>25</sup> Blacks were allowed to attend events, but as might be expected, they generally did not.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.5.2 Separate but Equal, Not Anymore

The Civil Rights Movement began during the Jim Crow era. The goal was to desegregate. Some contend that Confederate monuments were mostly erected during the Civil Rights Movement, however this is not true. Most of the monuments were built between the 1890s and 1920s, when the Civil War soldiers were still alive, or, when they died, their families erected the monuments in their memory.<sup>27</sup>

The first step towards desegregation came in 1948, when President Truman desegregated the military. *Brown vs. Board of Education* ended segregation in public schools in 1954. One year later, the savage murder of Emmitt Till shocked the nation, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott desegregated public transportation. Eisenhower signed the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, protecting voter rights. In 1960, “sit-ins” successfully desegregated restaurants. In 1963, 250,000 people marched on the capital and listened to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech. Less than a month later, a bomb exploded in a black church in Birmingham, killing four girls. In 1964 and 1965, Civil Rights Acts were signed into law by President Johnson. Also, Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965, and King, Jr. in 1968.<sup>28</sup>

While blacks were fighting for their rights, whites were commemorating the Civil War. Such a commemoration unified the nation during the Cold War, but weakened the Civil Rights Movement. On account of the Civil War Centennial and Civil Rights Movement, the Confederate battle flag became a disputed symbol.

### 1.5.3 The Battle over the Confederate Flag

The origins of the flag date back to the Civil War battlefields. There were many different flags used during the war, but the flag mostly commonly used today was the one adopted

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<sup>25</sup> Cook, “(Un)Furl that Banner,” 8-10.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>27</sup> John Kruzel. “Did Confederate Symbols Gain Prominence in the Civil Rights Era?,” *Politifact*, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017, accessed March 25, 2019, <https://www.politifact.com/punditfact/statements/2017/aug/15/joy-reid/did-confederate-symbols-gain-prominence-civil-righ/>.

<sup>28</sup> History.com, “Civil Rights Movement Timeline – HISTORY,” accessed March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement/civil-rights-movement-timeline>, last updated August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018.

as a symbol of memorial by the UDC.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the flag became a symbol of fighting for freedom against oppression.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, it also became a symbol of the KKK and of white supremacy. For instance, the flag was raised at the University of Mississippi right after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, in protest against school desegregation. And it was raised over Columbia, South Carolina in 1962, during the Civil War centennial and the Civil Rights Movement, with supporters of the latter arguing that the flag was raised against them.<sup>31</sup> As the battles over the flag increased, so did the battle over other symbols of commemoration, such as monuments. One popular commercial in South Carolina asked, “Will the Civil War Monuments at the State House and across South Carolina be next for attack? Will we be forced to change the names of our roads and schools? Make no mistake about it, the extremists who are viscerally attacking the Confederate flag will not be happy until all records and remembrances of those days are obliterated.”<sup>32</sup>

Many, such as members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), argued that the Confederate flag is a symbol of “heritage not hate.” In 2000, 59 percent of Americans polled considered the Confederate flag as a symbol of Southern heritage and pride, while only 28 percent saw it as a symbol of racism. But by 2015, the numbers had slightly changed – 54 percent perceived it as a symbol of Southern pride and 34 considered the flag as racist. Of those, 69 percent of blacks and 23 percent of whites considered it racist.<sup>33</sup> In response, a senior member of the SCV, Don Young, stated that the Confederate flag was “stolen” by white supremacists during the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>34</sup> In response, some states passed laws against the Confederate flag. Georgia was one of them. As a result, the Georgia Civil War Museum shut its doors in 2017 in response to the prohibition, claiming there was simply no way it could continue operations, absent the Confederate flag.<sup>35</sup> Even

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<sup>29</sup> The Good Stuff, “The Complicated History of the Confederate Flag,” Youtube, accessed March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1VnD-PRVh8,1.08-3.43>.

<sup>30</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 276.

<sup>31</sup> Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War*, 312-313.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>33</sup> Cameron D. Lippard, “Heritage or Hate?” *Learning and Teaching* 10, no. 3 (2017): 56-78. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2018.100305>, 56-57.

<sup>34</sup> Rick Neale, “Sons of Confederate Veterans Insist It’s Heritage, Not Hate,” *Florida Today*, August 26, 2017, accessed March 28<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://eu.floridatoday.com/story/news/2017/08/25/sons-confederate-veterans-insist-its-heritage-not-hate/546009001/>.

<sup>35</sup> Julia Zorthian, “Confederate Flag Dispute: Georgia Civil War Museum Closes,” *Time*, May 25, 2017, accessed March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <http://time.com/4795124/civil-war-museum-confederate-flag-closes/>.



so, Georgia and the nearby state of Mississippi have kept the flag as part of their statehood symbols.<sup>36</sup>

## 1.6 Black Lives Matter

Barrack Obama's election in 2008 signaled a new era and brighter future for American blacks. "Racism in America is over," said a *Forbes* editorial in December 2008. Blacks were optimistic, thinking that Obama would end racial prejudice.<sup>37</sup> Such optimism, however, proved unfounded.

In 2012, a 17-year-old boy, Trayvon Martin, was shot and killed by George Zimmerman, a white man, who suspected the boy of being "up to no good." Martin, it turns out, was unarmed, but Zimmerman pled self-defense and was found innocent. Obama sympathized with the black community, stating, "if I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon."<sup>38</sup>

In 2013, Michael Brown, an 18-year-old black, was shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, a St. Louis suburb. Brown was unarmed, but the police officer was determined to have acted appropriately. In response, violent protests erupted within the black community.<sup>39</sup>

Three black activists created a BlackLivesMatter.tumblr.com page and encouraged activists and organizations to share their experiences. Trayvon's death was an impulse to establish this project. The project became a nationwide movement,<sup>40</sup> with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter spreading over social media. When Eric Garner and Michael Brown, black men, died during police arrests, the hashtags and protests continued.<sup>41</sup> Critics

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<sup>36</sup> Libby Nelson, "Georgia and Mississippi Are Still Flying Versions of the Confederate Flag," *Vox*, June 23, 2015, accessed March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2015/6/22/8826957/confederate-flag-georgia-mississippi>.

<sup>37</sup> Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 141.

<sup>38</sup> Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, 148.

<sup>39</sup> *New York Times*, "What Happened in Ferguson?," accessed March 30<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/08/13/us/ferguson-missouri-town-under-siege-after-police-shooting.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Jazelle Hunt, "Black Lives Still Matters to Grassroots and Black Media," *Black Voice News*, accessed March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <http://blackvoicenews.com/2015/01/13/black-lives-still-matters-to-grassroots-and-black-media/>.

<sup>41</sup> Pew Research Center, "From July 12, 2013, to March 31, 2016, #BlackLivesMatter Was Used Eight Times As Often As #AllLivesMatter," August 12, 2016, accessed March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019, [https://www.pewinternet.org/2016/08/15/social-media-conversations-about-race/pi\\_2016-08-15\\_race-and-social-media\\_3-01/](https://www.pewinternet.org/2016/08/15/social-media-conversations-about-race/pi_2016-08-15_race-and-social-media_3-01/).

expected the movement to fade, as it lacked leadership, but when whites killed blacks, which happened often, it gained steam.<sup>42</sup>

As the BLM movement stated on their website, they aim “recommit to healing ourselves and each other, and to co-creating alongside comrades, allies, and family a culture where each person feels seen, heard, and supported.”<sup>43</sup> Many blacks believe that Confederate memorial removal can “heal” them and make them feel less offended by their past. The movement was somewhat successful in Confederate flag removal and has now turned its attention to Confederate memorials.<sup>44</sup> They do so by vandalizing the memorials or by organizing rallies against them.

## 1.7 White Liberalism

Concurrently with the Black Lives Matter Movement came a rise in white liberalism. After watching shocking videos of violently arrested blacks, whites began to think consciously yet again about racism in the United States.<sup>45</sup> As Thomas Sowell, a black writer claimed, when blacks failed in some situations, blaming others became a standard among white liberals. “If blacks do not pass bar exams or medical board tests as often as whites or Asians, then that shows that something is wrong with those tests, as far as many white liberals are concerned.”<sup>46</sup> According to a study from 2017, 61% of Americans believe that America needs to continue making changes to give blacks equal rights. In political parties, 64% of Democrats think that racial discrimination is the main reason why many blacks cannot get ahead. Furthermore, the research shows that Democrats have become more liberal on race questions. For instance, 62% of them agree that “slavery and past discrimination still hold back black people today.” Besides that, another 55% suggested that “over the past years, black people have gotten less than they deserve.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, monuments that were standing over a century became an object of discussion, as, in the

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<sup>42</sup> Sara Sidner and Mallory Simon, “The Rise of Black Lives Matter: Trying to Break the Cycle of Violence and Silence,” CNN, December 28, 2015, accessed March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/28/us/black-lives-matter-evolution/index.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Black Lives Matter, “What We Believe,” accessed April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/what-we-believe/>.

<sup>44</sup> Marisa Lerer, and Jennifer K. Favorite, “Confederate Monuments and the Black Lives Matter Movement: Interview with Sarah Beetham,” *Public Art Dialogue* 7, no. 2 (2015): <https://publicartdialogue.org/newsletter/fall-2015/confederate-monuments-and-black-lives-matter-movement>.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew Yglesias, “The Great Awokening,” VOX, updated April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, accessed April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2019/3/22/18259865/great-awakening-white-liberals-race-polling-trump-2020>.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Sowell, *Black Rednecks & White Liberals* (New York: Encounter Books, 2005), 52.

<sup>47</sup> Yglesias, “The Great Awokening.”

opinions of white liberals, such monuments cause harm to blacks who still suffer from slavery and discrimination.

## 1.8 Political Correctness

“Political correctness is tyranny with manners.”<sup>48</sup>

Charlton Heston

This leads us to political correctness, which is the idea that words and actions that could be offensive to others, especially those relating to gender and race, should be avoided.<sup>49</sup> Political correctness is highly influential in American life. Movements such as those orchestrated by the LGBT community, #BlackLivesMatter and feminists fight for what they perceive as correct behavior. In relation to memorialization, the governor of Alabama, Gerard Allen, asked if “all parts of American history [are] subject to purging, until every Ivy League professor is satisfied, and the American story has been re-written as nothing but a complete fraud and a betrayal of our founding values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?” For instance, protests at the American Museum of Natural History in New York occurred over Columbus Day, with calls to “decolonize this place.”<sup>50</sup> And in April 2019, Vermont replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples’ Day.<sup>51</sup> But is cancelling Columbus Day the right approach? Columbus changed the world for good and bad, and these changes are worth remembering, so that history might be learned from.

A study from 2018 shows that the majority of Americans dislike political correctness and are exhausted by it. Over 70% of young people aged from 24-29, 82% of Asians, 87% of Hispanics and 88% of American Indians see political correctness as a problem. Additionally, 79% of whites and 75% of blacks see it as a problem.<sup>52</sup> Yet, political correctness is a basis for arguments supporting monument removal, as it calls into question not just the monuments themselves but the motivations behind their erection. Travis Timmerman argues that Americans are morally obliged to remove Confederate monuments

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<sup>48</sup> Good Reads, “Charlton Heston > Quotes > Quotable Quotes,” accessed April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/20357-political-correctness-is-tyranny-with-manners>.

<sup>49</sup> “Politically Correct,” Cambridge Dictionary, accessed April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/politically-correct>.

<sup>50</sup> Ashoka Jegroo, “Tearing Down Monuments of Oppression Is the First Step to Decolonization,” Truthout, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017, accessed April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://truthout.org/articles/tearing-down-monuments-of-oppression-is-the-first-step-to-decolonization/>.

<sup>51</sup> *Washington Post*, “Vermont Passes Bill Abolishing Columbus Day in Favor of Indigenous Peoples’ Day,” April 20, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/04/20/vermont-passes-bill-abolishing-columbus-day-favor-indigenous-peoples-day/>.

<sup>52</sup> Sinéad Baker, “Political Correctness Is Widely Unpopular with Americans of All Ages and Races, a Study Finds,” October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018, accessed April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/political-unpopular-with-americans-all-ages-races-2018-10>.

because racism was the motive behind them. He sees no difference between a Confederate monument and a monument to, say, Bill Cosby, a famous comedian who sexually assaulted multiple women.<sup>53</sup> On the contrary, Martin Hill, a black Floridian, pointed out that nobody's lives are improved by tearing down the statues, and that statues should not be removed just to make someone feel better, as there is no certainty that it will.<sup>54</sup> In other words, tearing down Confederate memorials will not help blacks get a better education or improve their standards of living.

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<sup>53</sup> Travis Timmerman, "Ethics Left and Right: The Moral Issues that Divide Us," Academia, edited by Bob Fisher, accessed April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019, [https://www.academia.edu/37247340/A\\_Case\\_for\\_Removing\\_Confederate\\_Monuments\\_forthcoming\\_in\\_OUPs\\_Ethics\\_Left\\_and\\_Right\\_The\\_Moral\\_Issues\\_that\\_Divide\\_Us](https://www.academia.edu/37247340/A_Case_for_Removing_Confederate_Monuments_forthcoming_in_OUPs_Ethics_Left_and_Right_The_Moral_Issues_that_Divide_Us).

<sup>54</sup> Martin Hill, "Keep Confederate Statues Standing," Sunshine State News, August 28<sup>th</sup> 2017, accessed April 6<sup>th</sup> 2019, <http://www.sunshinestateneeds.com/story/keep-confederate-statues-standing>.

## 2 THE CONTROVERSY

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Dylann Roof, a young white man, showed up heavily armed at a black Episcopal church in Charleston, South Carolina, and killed 9. He said he did it because “somebody had to do something. Because black people are killing white people every day.”<sup>55</sup> The shooting renewed discussions over the Confederate battle flag, because Roof appeared in photos with the flag, which he considered a symbol of white supremacy. This initial controversy led to a renewed debate over Confederate monument removal as well. One such debate led to a decision to remove the Confederate monument of Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia. White supremacists opposed this decision, and in a protest turned violent, one woman died, and 34 others were injured.<sup>56</sup> The center of the controversy, the monument of Robert E. Lee, which is on the National Register of History Places (NRHP) list, has not yet been removed.

At a university in Austin, Texas, a monument of Jefferson Davis was moved to a location deemed more appropriate – near the history building. In Kentucky, a Confederate monument was moved from a university campus to a small town nearby. In 2017, New Orleans responded to the Charlottesville event with the removal of four Confederate statues.<sup>57</sup> A former mayor of New Orleans, Mitch Landrieu, stated: “In a city that I represent, that’s 67% African-American, to have a young African-American girl pass by that statue and look at it every day, I ask myself, ‘Am I really preparing for her-- a really good future? Is she feeling like she's getting’ lifted up by the government or is she being put down?’ I mean, I think the answer's pretty clear.”<sup>58</sup> However, the approach of removing monuments to appease blacks has proved ineffective. In fact, this ‘solution’ has only increased violence and controversy.

Timmerman compared the Confederate battle flag with the swastika, stating that the harm the flag causes blacks and the harm the swastika causes survivors of World War II are the same.<sup>59</sup> However, this is a false comparison. True, swastikas are forbidden to be

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<sup>55</sup> *USA Today*, “Dylan Roof Laughs in Video Confession of Church Shooting,” YouTube, December 10, 2016, accessed April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZnld9StOQQ>. 1.20-1.27.

<sup>56</sup> Adam K. Raymond, “A Running List of Confederate Monuments That Have Been Removed,” *New York Intelligencer*, updated August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017, accessed April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/08/running-list-of-confederate-monuments-that-have-been-removed.html>.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Anderson Cooper, “The History and Future of Confederate Monuments,” CBS News, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018, accessed April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-the-history-and-future-of-confederate-monuments/>.

<sup>59</sup> Timmerman, “Ethics Left and Right.”

worn in some European countries, such as Germany, but they are not forbidden in the United States. The U.S. Bill of Rights guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of expression and waving a flag or wearing a swastika both fall under that category. As a professor from the University of Chicago stated, “What Germany does is what Germany does. They learned different lessons” from history. “The lesson we learned is not to trust the government to decide what speech is okay and what speech is not okay.”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, as a basic American right, the freedom to wave the flag, any flag, should be protected.

According to some, the current discussion over the symbols of the Confederacy is not important. For instance, the flag of Mississippi controversy proved insignificant. In response to a 2001 referendum over the flag, which contains Confederate symbols, one black Mississippian said that he is not bothered by the state flag. What bothered him was the state’s poor economy. Likewise, in Georgia, although one eighty-year old expressed a feeling that the state flag, which contained a Confederate symbol, was dividing the races, a former civil rights activist stated he did not “give a damn” about the flag but wanted the state representatives to take care of more important things. Additionally, 70 percent of Georgians polled over the flag debate said that the debate itself was divisive, had a negative influence, or that it was a waste of time.<sup>61</sup> Based on this evidence, it seems that political correctness over the symbols of the Confederacy exaggerated the importance of the issue, creating a problem where there really was none.

However, the state flag of Mississippi was ordered out of park near Statue of Liberty by governor of New Jersey. He ordered to replace the flag with the United States flag, because it contains Confederate symbol. Even though Mississippians decided to keep the current design of the flag in a 2001 referendum, it still remains controversial.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Sarah Wildman, “Why You See Swastikas in America but Not Germany,” Vox, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019, accessed April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/8/16/16152088/nazi-swastikas-germany-charlottesville>.

<sup>61</sup> James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 308-9.

<sup>62</sup> Stephanie Haney, “‘The Mississippi State Flag Is Reprehensible and Does Not Reflect Our Values of Inclusivity and Equality’: New Jersey Governor Orders Flag Out of Park near Statue of Liberty because It Features Confederate Emblem,” *Mail Online*, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, accessed April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6966679/New-Jersey-governor-orders-Mississippi-flag-park-near-Statue-Liberty.html#comments>.

### 2.1.1 The Motivation for Memorialization

“It Is History That Teaches Us to Hope.”<sup>63</sup>

Robert E. Lee

Motives behind the erection of most Confederate monuments were not primarily racial but rather honored men who made sacrifices for their country. Take for instance the Robert E. Lee monument in Richmond. When it was erected in 1890, some in the North responded negatively. Philadelphian newspapers compared Robert E. Lee to Benedict Arnold, a Revolutionary War figure whose name is associated with treason. However, *The New York Times* described Lee as an honorable and brave man whose “memory is, therefore, a possession of the American people.” In this spirit, over 100,000 people attended the unveiling of the monument. Col. Archer Anderson “dedicated the Lee Monument not as a memory to the Confederacy, but as a testament to ‘personal honor,’ ‘patriotic hope and cheer,’ and an ‘ideal leader.’”<sup>64</sup>

Robert E. Lee was an exceptional Southern figure. President Abraham Lincoln asked him to lead the Union troops but, as Lee explained in a letter to his sister, “I have not been able to make up my mind to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, my home.” Therefore, he resigned from his position in the U.S. army and expressed hope that his skills as a general would not be needed. Later, as a Confederate general, he led his troops admirably. Even though he was not a supporter of slavery or of secession, he fought for the Confederacy and for what it was. After his surrender at Appomattox Court House in 1865, he served as president of Washington College in Virginia (now Washington and Lee University) until his death in 1870.<sup>65</sup> Southerners honored him for his moral virtues and for his loyalty to Virginia, his home. Thus, a monument to him was erected to honor a great man and a great leader, not to reinforce white supremacy.

Secondly, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, widely known for his battle strategies and victories, after the war became the first grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. On the one hand, he could be honored for his military talents, and for the fact that he represents the fulfillment of the American dream for many Americans. He came from poverty-stricken conditions, and he had to take care of his family when his father died.

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<sup>63</sup> Abbeville Blog, “It Is History That Teaches Us to Hope,” accessed April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <https://www.abbevilleinstitute.org/blog/it-is-history-that-teaches-us-to-hope/>.

<sup>64</sup> Tina Griego, “Past and Present: The Many-Sided History of the Monument Avenue Debate,” *Richmondmag*, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015, accessed April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://richmondmagazine.com/news/news/monument-ave-history/>.

<sup>65</sup> Clifford Dowdey, “Robert E. Lee,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Robert-E-Lee>.

Still, he overcame his childhood hardships to become one of the wealthiest businessmen in the South.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, he was pro-slavery, he owned and traded slaves before the war, and after the war he was briefly the head of a racist organization that did untold damage to Southerners both black and white. However, he ordered the KKK to disband in 1869. This change of heart stemmed both from his fading energy and conversion to Christianity. Notwithstanding, the KKK, a white supremacist organization, became active again in the 1920s, and especially during the Civil Rights Movement. As a result, Nathan B. Forrest's legacy is contested. Ultimately, however, he repudiated his involvement in the KKK, and lived a quiet life until his death in 1877.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, in memory of his leadership qualities together with his later enlightenment, monuments honoring him should not be torn down.

### **2.1.2 Diversification Resulted in Unification**

Some historians claim that the motive for the erection of monuments throughout the South was to support white superiority during the Jim Crow Era. They further point out that monuments were erected after *Brown vs. Board of Education* and other events connected to the Civil Rights Movement, such as sit-ins or peaceful marches. Moreover, the Confederate battle flag was present at the memorial dedications, and it was there, in their opinion, as a symbol of opposition to the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>68</sup> These historians conclude that the memorials should be torn down or moved to museums, as they clearly support white supremacy. However, what these historians fail to recognize is that the Confederate battle flag was present at these monument dedications, not because of the Civil Rights Movement, but because of the Civil War Centennial, which was occurring at the same time.

Additionally, not only the South organized reunions for their veterans. The *New York Times* urged its readers not to celebrate the semicentennial (1911-1915), and newspapers around the country printed pictures of commemorations. Moreover, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the site of the largest Civil War battle, organized a semicentennial commemoration, and all veterans who fought in the Civil War were invited, regardless of

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<sup>66</sup> Robert L. Glaze, "Nathan Bedford Forrest," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nathan-Bedford-Forrest>.

<sup>68</sup> Michael Todd Landis, "Most 'Civil War' Memorials Have Nothing to Do with the Civil War," TribTalk, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017, accessed December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, <https://www.tribtalk.org/2017/08/28/most-civil-war-memorials-have-nothing-to-do-with-the-civil-war/>.



side. From its first conception in 1909, the theme of the reunion was national harmony and patriotism.<sup>69</sup> But the centennial celebrations were different than the semicentennial, because the centennial celebrations coincided with the Civil Rights Movement.

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<sup>69</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 383-5.

### 3 REMOVED OR ALTERED MEMORIALS

Jefferson Davis urged Southerners to keep the memories alive, which they obviously did, via renaming streets, squares, parks, and university buildings, and by erecting memorials. Moreover, school textbooks told the story of the Lost Cause.<sup>70</sup> Children basically grew up surrounded by memories of the South, which instilled in them a sense of Southern pride and a Southern set of values.

#### 3.1 Values

Discussions depict the current and past values of a society. The proponents of the removal of the statues argue that the current values are in conflict with the past.<sup>71</sup> This is clear, however, how can we attack the motivations behind the erection of the statues or how can we judge previous values? It should be depicted as a fact that slavery happened. Moreover, the South commemorated its fallen soldiers and leaders because they were fighting for their rights, and in the case of slavery, for their property rights. Slavery was a Southern fact of life, and there were many defenses for it (socioeconomic, scientific, and religious), so Southerners should not immediately be condemned for having owned slaves. Therefore, military, political and social leaders, like Nathan Bedford Forrest, should be remembered, but at the same time, complete information should be provided about them. Furthermore, the Civil War should be remembered for what it was and not sanitized for a better, more politically correct, future. The monuments should be kept as symbols and as reminders of a past that the nation does not want to experience again. For instance, Dachau and Auschwitz are memorials to the Holocaust, and they remain so that we, as humans, never forget what happened there. Should we bulldoze Auschwitz so that no one can be offended by it?<sup>72</sup>

#### 3.2 Schools, Universities

In November 2007, in Montgomery, Alabama, a century-old Confederate memorial was defaced. Across one of the original inscriptions was sprayed “N.T. 11 11 31,” and

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<sup>70</sup> Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War*, 25-26.

<sup>71</sup> Colin Frick and Scott R. Stroud, “Values Preserved in Stone: The Ethics of Confederate Memorials,” Media Ethics Initiative, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018,

[https://www.academia.edu/37720529/Values\\_Preserved\\_in\\_Stone\\_The\\_Ethics\\_of\\_Confederate\\_Memorials](https://www.academia.edu/37720529/Values_Preserved_in_Stone_The_Ethics_of_Confederate_Memorials).

<sup>72</sup> Lawrence Kuznar, “I Detest Our Confederate Monuments. But They Should Remain,” *Washington Post*, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, accessed March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/i-detest-our-confederate-monuments-but-they-should-remain/2017/08/18/13d25fe8-843c-11e7-902a-2a9f2d808496\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.7974a1543cb8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/i-detest-our-confederate-monuments-but-they-should-remain/2017/08/18/13d25fe8-843c-11e7-902a-2a9f2d808496_story.html?utm_term=.7974a1543cb8).

faces and hands were painted black. Sons of Confederate Veterans suggested it was a joke by young students, until they realized the reference of the spray-paint – Nat Turner’s death on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1831. Therefore, some then argued it was a hate crime. However, the SCV were right. The vandals were indeed students, who “learned this stuff in school...Folks are wondering what was going on, what the message was, and it was a statement against slavery.”<sup>73</sup> Even though the event happened in 2007, it clearly illustrates the controversy over the memorials among students. Students study about slavery, the Jim Crow era and lynchings, and then they see old monuments that remind them of such times, and they naturally respond, often emotionally.

For this reason, the University of Texas, Austin, moved a statue of Jefferson Davis from its original location on the campus green to the Briscoe Center for American history. The center then organized an exhibition that provides information about the statue, from its erection in 1916 until 2015, when it was taken down. The exhibition is called “From Commemoration to Education.” However, a common criticism of the exhibition is that it provides more information about the statue as art and it does not provide historical context about Davis himself, such as his career before the war, when he served honorably as a U.S. senator from Mississippi and as the secretary of war, and how he opposed secession but resigned as senator when Mississippi seceded. Moreover, the exhibit provides insufficient information about the ‘Lost Cause’ mythology and the Jim Crow era.<sup>74</sup>

Despite such shortcomings, the response of the university to the Confederate memorial controversy is appropriate – it removed the statue but tries to keep the historical value. However, more information should be provided based on the feedback the Briscoe Center received. After the white-nationalist demonstration in Charlottesville, Va., the University of Virginia, located in Charlottesville, removed three more Confederate statues – Robert E. Lee, John Reagan (U.S. senator until the country seceded from the Union), and Albert Sidney Johnston (served in three different armies, including the Confederate army). These statues were added to the collection of the museum but will not be displayed publicly, according to Wright. Moreover, the university also removed a statue of Woodrow Wilson, a former U.S. president (1913-1921), and relocated a statue of a former Texas Governor,

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<sup>73</sup> Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said: Race, Uplift and Monument Building in the Contemporary South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 25-26.

<sup>74</sup> Cailin Crowe, “What Happened when One University Moved a Confederate Statue to a Museum,” *Chronicle*, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, accessed April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/What-Happened-When-One/244481>.

James Hogg, as a part of a new design plan.<sup>75</sup> Why the statues should be hidden from public view remains debatable. The university seems to be overreacting to the violent event that took place in town. Instead, the university should display the statues and educate the public about them, including why they were erected and why they are now controversial.

Changing the names of schools in the South, because the names are now controversial, has become a regular thing. Jefferson Davis public school in Mississippi was renamed after Barack Obama.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, the University of Cincinnati is considering renaming its McMicken College of Arts and Sciences because Charles McMicken, who donated the money to found the college, was a slave owner.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Florida State University decided to relocate the statue of its founder, Francis Eppes VII, a grandson of Thomas Jefferson, because he was a slave owner. Further, the name of the B.K. Roberts College of Law was changed, because of Roberts's pro-segregation opinions in the 1950s.<sup>78</sup> Once more, blacks went through horrific times during enslavement and later throughout the fight for their rights, but deleting the names of white men who were politicians or who established universities will not change the past. Judging the past actions of these men by current standards, especially when such actions, such as slave owning, were common, is not fair to them. Should the name of the U.S. capital, Washington D.C., be changed because Washington was a slave owner?

The "Silent Sam" monument at the University of North Carolina was torn down by protesters on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018, despite the fact that it did not mention slavery but was instead dedicated to "sons of the university who died for their beloved Southland, 1861-1865."<sup>79</sup> True, slavery was one of the causes of the Civil War, and maybe even its main

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Madison Park, "Richmond School Drops Confederate Name in Favor of Barack Obama," CNN, updated June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, accessed April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/19/us/richmond-school-name-change-barack-obama/index.html>.

<sup>77</sup> Kristen Swilley, "University of Cincinnati Grapples with the Legacy of Slave-owning Founder Charles McMicken," Channel 9 WCPO Cincinnati, updated December 13, 2018, accessed April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.wcpo.com/news/education/higher-education/uc-news/university-of-cincinnati-to-reconsider-its-relationship-with-slave-owning-founder-charles-mcmicken>.

<sup>78</sup> Maya Eliahou and Christina Zdanowicz, "This University Is Removing a Statue of Its Slave-Owning Founder," CNN, updated July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, accessed April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/18/us/florida-state-statue-relocated-trnd/index.html>.

<sup>79</sup> Amir Vera, "UNC Protesters Knock Down Silent Sam Confederate Statue," CNN, updated August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018, accessed April 6<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/08/20/us/unc-silent-sam-confederate-statue/index.html>.

cause,<sup>80</sup> but what is so wrong about memorializing young men who died fighting for their country?

In November 2017, a drunk driver drove into a statue of an unnamed Civil War soldier and started a debate at University of Mississippi, about whether to spend money to repair the statue or simply remove it. The university decided to repair the monument, even though they received permission from the state to remove it. However, they changed the inscription of the statue, adding information: “It must also remind us that the defeat of the Confederacy actually meant freedom for millions of people.” The university does not have a Confederate statue only. A statue in honor of the university’s first black student, James Meredith, who entered school in 1962, is on the university campus as well. The majority of students have no problem with the Meredith statue, but they want the Confederate statue gone, claiming that it doesn’t represent their Mississippi and the traditions do not compel them.<sup>81</sup> The past is the past and will not change. What changes are the values and perceptions of individuals. Should memorials from the past be changed simply because the current generation is bothered by them? What is certain is that future generations will have different values and perceptions than this one. If generations remove memorials erected by previous generations, there will be no memorials left, and history will have to be actively sought out rather than presented in public spaces for all to learn from.

### 3.3 Confederate Memorials in Washington, D.C.

Each state chooses two people to be honored in the US Capitol, mostly displayed in Statuary Hall. The southern states have statues displayed there too ten of which are remembering Confederate-era figures, such as Jefferson Davis, Alexander Stephens (the vice-president of the Confederacy, Robert E. Lee or John Calhoun). In 2009, before wide national discussions, a statue of Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry, a Confederate officer, politician and author, was replaced with a statue of Helen Keller. And currently, a statue of Charles Aycock, a “father of public education” who widely promoted segregation, is going to be replaced with a statue to Rev. Billy Graham. Some of the memorials are extremely controversial today, e.g., John C. Calhoun, who argued that slavery was not evil but

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<sup>80</sup>David B. Allison, *Controversial Monuments and Memorials: A Guide for Community Leaders* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), 6.

<sup>81</sup>Phil McCausland, “Confederacy Still Haunts the Campus of Ole Miss,” NBC News, updated June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018, accessed April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/confederacy-still-haunts-campus-ole-miss-n820881?cid=related>.

“good.”<sup>82</sup> However, history can be controversial, because values change over time, and the lives and achievements of Southerners needs to be evaluated objectively, in context, before their memorials are removed.

A statue of author Albert Pike was erected in Washington D.C. by Freemasons in 1898. Pike, who was a member of this organization, was also a Confederate general and a former member of the KKK. Therefore, D.C. officials sent a request for removal to the National Park Service.<sup>83</sup> Ironically, Pike once wrote, “what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal,”<sup>84</sup> obviously without realizing that a future generation would want him, and his actions forgotten.

Two stained glass windows in the Washington National Cathedral, which depicted Confederate generals Lee and Jackson and were installed in the 1950s in time for the Civil War centennial, were removed and put in storage in 2016, to demonstrate that the church is a place for everyone.<sup>85</sup> As church officials stated, “we are committed to finding ways to offer a richer, more balanced expression of our nation's history.”<sup>86</sup> Hiding the windows in storage, however, is not offering a balanced expression. They should be displayed publicly, with more information about slavery and the role of Christianity during the war. After all, both men were devout Christians who openly looked to God for guidance. Lee considered slavery an “evil institution,”<sup>87</sup> while Jackson “desire[d] to bring the word of God to the slaves.”<sup>88</sup> What is wrong with memorializing Christian soldiers in a Christian church?

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<sup>82</sup> Bill Theobald, “Controversial Confederate Statues Remain in U.S. Capitol Despite Being Removed Elsewhere,” *USA Today*, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018, accessed April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/09/19/confederate-statues-remain-u-s-capitol-despite-opposition/1269270002/>; Mark Barrett, “Bill Graham Statue Likely to be Placed in U.S. Capitol,” *Citizen Times*, March 5, 2018, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://eu.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2018/03/04/billy-graham-statue-likely-placed-u-s-capitol-replacing-one-gov-charles-aycock/390080002/>.

<sup>83</sup> *Washington Post*, “A Homeless Confederate: Albert Pike’s Complicated Legacy Leaves Statue in Limbo,” October 30, 2017, accessed April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/a-homeless-confederate-albert-pikes-complicated-legacy-leaves-statue-in-limbo/2017/10/16/40fe05d6-aa10-11e7-92d1-58c702d2d975\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/a-homeless-confederate-albert-pikes-complicated-legacy-leaves-statue-in-limbo/2017/10/16/40fe05d6-aa10-11e7-92d1-58c702d2d975_story.html).

<sup>84</sup> The Famous People, “57 Albert Pike Quotes on Death, Truth, Creation, War and Faith,” accessed April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://quotes.thefamouspeople.com/albert-pike-4232.php>.

<sup>85</sup> Mikaela Lefrak, “Here Are the Confederate Monuments in Washington and Where They Stand,” WAMU, updated September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017, accessed April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://wamu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Whites-Ferry-1.jpg>.

<sup>86</sup> Bill Chappel, “National Cathedral Is Removing Stained-Glass Window Honoring Confederate Leaders,” NPR, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017, accessed April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/09/06/548929726/national-cathedral-is-removing-stained-glass-windows-honoring-confederate-leader>.

<sup>87</sup> Dowdey, “Robert E. Lee.”

<sup>88</sup> *Washington Times*, “Jackson’s Relation with Slaves,” April 6, 2007, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2007/apr/6/20070406-103241-8494r/>.

### 3.4 U.S. Dollars

American paper money contains portraits of famous politicians, mostly presidents, Alexander Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin being exceptions. Since 1928, Andrew Jackson has graced the 20\$ bill, but there are now plans to redesign it and replace Jackson with Harriett Tubman, a former slave who helped other slaves to escape. Likewise, there is talk of putting Martin Luther King, Jr. on the \$5 bill.<sup>89</sup> Tubman would be the first woman (not to mention the first black) portrayed on a U.S. paper bill. In comparison, Czech notes are decorated with two famous Czech women, Emma Destinová and Božena Němcová, who highly contributed to the Czech national heritage. The decision to put these women on Czech money was made in 1993, in a time when women were already considered equal to men.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, the decisions about US paper money were made prior to 1965, when women still did not have equal rights. The selections of the white men represented on American bank notes involved honoring the men who contributed to the foundation and preservation of the United States. Tubman's depiction would be a marked departure from tradition. The question is, does America want to appease feminist activists and white liberals or keep its heritage.

### 3.5 Changing the Plaques of the Memorials

"...I just hope one day that we can all respect everything that happened in this country and learn from all of it and stop all this national navel gazing," said a Texas state representative during a debate on his House Bill 583, which proposes that statues older than 40 years cannot be relocated, moved, renamed or destroyed and not even altered. If a state monument has been up between 20 – 40 years, its change would require a majority vote of the legislature. If a city's or county's monument has been standing between 20 – 40 years, then it could only be altered, relocated, or destroyed if voters approve. If the statues are less than 20 years old, the government can alter any of them. The representative also noted that the bill does not just protect Confederate statues, but also memorials of African-Americans and Hispanics, whose areas are now affected by gentrification.<sup>91</sup> This way to

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<sup>89</sup> Chris Morris, "The Harriet Tubman 20\$ Bill Plan Has Been Put on the Back Burner," *Fortune*, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, accessed April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <http://fortune.com/2018/04/19/harriet-tubman-20-dollar-bill-delayed/>.

<sup>90</sup> ČNB, "Kdo je kdo na našich bankovkách," accessed April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019, [https://www.cnb.cz/cs/platidla/bankovky/o\\_bankovkach/kdo\\_je\\_kdo.html](https://www.cnb.cz/cs/platidla/bankovky/o_bankovkach/kdo_je_kdo.html).

<sup>91</sup> Alex Samuels, "Texas Legislation Aimed at Protecting Monuments of All Kinds Sparks Heated Debate over Confederate Markers," *Texas Tribune*, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019, accessed April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.texastribune.org/2019/04/10/texas-confederate-monuments-debate-heats-over-proposed-protection-law/>.

keep the national heritage might be effective, but it has many opponents. As a result, the bill is pending. However, one monument in Texas has been altered, when its plaque stating that the Civil War “was not a rebellion, nor was its underlying cause to sustain slavery,” was removed.<sup>92</sup> This seems an adequate compromise, as the monument remains, but the plaque describing it will be updated in a proper historical way.

### 3.6 Funding of Memorials

Opponents of the memorials claim that the monuments were funded by Jim Crow Era governments.<sup>93</sup> However, organizations such as the UDC made every effort to raise money for the memorials. Women organized fairs and dinners to raise the money. For instance, women from Anderson, South Carolina were raising money for nearly eighteen years to erect the city’s monument.<sup>94</sup> Such efforts, heroic in themselves, should not be undermined, especially when the women were raising the money to memorialize fallen soldiers and war heroes.

### 3.7 Confederacy Remembered, Slavery Forgotten

A frequent counterargument is that the Confederacy is being remembered and slavery forgotten, such as in the Beauvoir Museum honoring Jefferson Davis. The focus of the museum is to represent life after the Civil War, meaning the period after slavery was abolished. It depicts the Civil War itself as well. The Sons of the Confederate Veterans, an organization of male descendants of “any veteran who served honorably in the Confederate armed forces,” operate the museum. Moreover, Thomas Payne, the former executive director of the site, stated that he wanted people to know that Southerners fought to maintain slavery, but not every Southerner owned slaves and that Northerners kept slaves as well. As a result, he sought to lead a museum that would disregard political correctness. Demonstrating pictures of former slaves who stayed on site after the war, the museum depicts slavery as well as the fact that some freedpeople chose stay at the houses of their former masters after the war.<sup>95</sup> However, more information should be provided about the attitude of the leaders before the war, such as Georgian politician Alexander Stephens, who

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Brian Palmer and Seth Freed Wessler, “The Costs of the Confederacy,” *Smithsonian* 49, no. 08 (2018): 58.

<sup>94</sup> John J. Winberry, “‘Lest We Forget’: The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape,” *Southeastern Geographer* (2018): 24. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/sgo.2015.0003>.

<sup>95</sup> Palmer, and Wessler, “The Costs of the Confederacy,” 59.



gave a speech depicting slavery as a ‘normal condition for the negroes who are not equal to whites.’<sup>96</sup>

There are more than 1,700 symbols of the Confederacy throughout the United States: Over seven hundred monuments, more than one hundred schools and three colleges are named after Confederate figures, 80 counties and cities named after Confederates, and 9 state holidays in five states are celebrated.<sup>97</sup> Some blacks, white liberals and Democrats argue that these public symbols are humiliating blacks by mocking their history. However, black history has not been forgotten. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, a national holiday, is the third Monday in January, while February is Black History Month in the United States. Then there is the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, opened in Montgomery, Alabama on Confederate Memorial Day in 2018.<sup>98</sup> And of course there is the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati.<sup>99</sup>

In addition, the argument that the South does not want to admit its’ racist behaviour towards blacks before, during and after the Civil War is incorrect. For instance, a website about the Deep South provides access to information about the Civil Rights Movement and its origins.<sup>100</sup> Actually, the portrayal of blacks in slavery is geared more towards emancipation than victimization. The first monument to a black was proposed by Congress in 1943, to George Washington Carver for his innovative idea of rotating crops.<sup>101</sup> And the National Memorial for Peace and Justice documents the black experience “from slavery to incarceration.”<sup>102</sup> It is important to remember the past of blacks as well as of whites. Nevertheless, monuments erected to “faithful slaves” should be removed, and any Confederate monument celebrating slavery, like the one in Columbia, North Carolina, should be altered or removed too, as they are racist.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>97</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, “Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy,” February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, accessed April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>.

<sup>98</sup> EJI, “The National Memorial for Peace and Justice,” <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/memorial>.

<sup>99</sup> National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, <https://www.freedomcenter.org/>

<sup>100</sup> Deep South, “Civil Rights in the Deep South USA,” accessed April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.deep-south-usa.com/civilrights>.

<sup>101</sup> The Wilderness Society, “13 Parks and Monuments that Celebrate Black History,” accessed April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.wilderness.org/articles/article/13-parks-and-monuments-celebrate-black-history>.

<sup>102</sup> The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, “The National Memorial for Peace and Justice,” accessed April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/memorial>.

<sup>103</sup> Kali Holloway, “‘Loyal Slave’ Monuments Tell a Racist Lie about American History,” *The Nation*, March 25, 2019, accessed May 1, 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/loyal-slave-confederate-monuments-civil-war-slavery/>.

### 3.8 Different Leaders Memorialization

Caligula was probably one of the cruelest figures of the Roman empire, having organized gladiator events and having killed hundreds, sometimes just for telling a joke, but no one considers removing his busts from public places.<sup>104</sup> So why are the statues of the best Confederate general, Robert E. Lee, or even the first and third presidents of the United States, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, now being questioned? Again, today, owning a slave is generally considered appalling, but it was the norm in the antebellum era. Therefore, the truth should be told, but it should not be erased.

If people who owned slaves should not be remembered, then many Northerners and Southerners, who might have otherwise lived exemplary lives, should be forgotten. If Confederates were traitors not worthy of memorialization, then most Southerners from that period should be forgotten. If these facts are true, then Czechs should reconsider their memorialization of President T.G. Masaryk, the father of Czechoslovakia. Under his presidency, laws against ‘gypsies’ were issued, which specified rules gypsies had to follow, and which required them to carry a special gypsy ID card.<sup>105</sup> Nowadays, gypsies could protest against monuments to Masaryk, because the laws he passed are now considered racist. Yet, Masaryk is commemorated as an honorable man of great virtues, who founded the federal republic of Czechoslovakia.

### 3.9 Inscriptions on Memorials

"This marble minstrel's voiceless stone, in deathless song shall tell, when many vanished age hath flown, the story how they fell. On fame's eternal camping ground, their silent tents are spread, and glory guards with solemn round, the bivouac of the dead."<sup>106</sup> This inscription of a statue in front of the Lumberton courthouse in North Carolina poetically describes the fall of Southerners on the battlefield. Furthermore, the inscription of a statue dedicated to Confederate dead in Monticello, Georgia reads, "To the Confederate soldiers of Jasper County, the record of whose sublime self-sacrifice and undying devotion to duty, in the service of their country is the proud heritage of local

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<sup>104</sup> M.R. Reese, "The Madness of Caligula: Rome's Cruellest Emperor?" *Ancient Origins*, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019, accessed April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-famous-people/madness-caligula-rome-s-cruellest-emperor-002132>.

<sup>105</sup> "Zákon č. 177/1927 sb. z. a n. "O Potoulných Cikánech" ze Dne 14. Července 1927," *Holocaust*, accessed April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.holocaust.cz/zdroje/dokumenty/pronasledovani-a-genocida-romu-2/zakon-ze-dne-14-cervence-1927-o-potulnych-cikanech/>.

<sup>106</sup> Winberry, ""Lest We Forget,"" 6.

posterity.”<sup>107</sup> Most of the Confederate monuments were erected in this sense, and therefore, they should be left undisturbed, as they depict a part of Southern history, which was the deaths of soldiers fighting for their homeland. Other inscriptions on monuments, such as one in Manning, South Carolina, depict another motivation behind the erection of the monuments: ‘In 1914 when this memorial is erected to the Confederate soldiers when the sun of life of the few who remain hovers in the western horizon...’ Therefore, Confederate monuments were not erected to the fallen soldiers only, but also to those who survived, albeit in defeat. Another motive was portrayed in a speech made at the dedication of a monument that was erected in the early 1900s. Again, it was in memory of the soldiers, but also to the Confederacy. “Dixie land now blossoms like a rose, she has trampled disaster under her feet. The busy hum of the Confederate Soldier’s hammer has made music as she rose from her ashes.”<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, some monuments simply commemorate military service, such as the one in Gainesville, Georgia which states, “In Memory of the 79 militia men under command of Cpt. Nathan S. Blount who marched from this site to Gainesville to muster into the CS army rendering gallant service from April 10, 1862 – April 26, 1865.”<sup>109</sup>

Monuments with inscriptions similar to this one should be kept, as they are in memory of soldiers’ actions, which should not be forgotten, as they are an important part of U.S. history. It took over a century for the country to move forward after the Civil War, and these memorials are ‘witnesses’ to history. Americans are “becoming the nation that our founders may have actually envisioned but were powerless to create in the context of their times,” but they should not forget the path it took to get here.<sup>110</sup>

### 3.10 Historical Value

As Boyd Cathey noted, the symbols of any culture are influential for the future of the generations that follow. The symbols, including monuments and markers, represent the values that the culture has held. Such symbols might give future generations a lesson of what they might want to keep and what they do not want to keep. Because, through remembering who we were we can influence who we are and will be in the future.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>109</sup> William B. Lees and Frederick P. Gaske, *Recalling Deeds Immortal: Florida Monuments to the Civil War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 107.

<sup>110</sup> Lees and Gaske, *Recalling Deeds Immortal*, 4-5.

<sup>111</sup> Boyd Cathey, “The Land We Love: The South and Its Heritage,” *Confederate Veteran* (May/June 2019): 16-17.

Stacey Abrams called for the removal of the Confederate figures from Stone Mountain, Georgia.<sup>112</sup> A fundraising campaign for this monument started in 1915 and the carving itself was finished in 1972.<sup>113</sup> However, Michael Thurmond, the first and only black CEO at Stone Mountain Park stated, the Civil War was a pivotal moment for the United States. The monument is proof for the current and future generations that movements based on racism failed. Moreover, a black woman considers Stone Mountain as a reminder of her past. Her mother worked for a family involved in the Ku Klux Klan. She said, “Good or bad, history is history. You can’t erase the fact of history. Slavery wasn’t right, but you can’t go in the textbook and remove it or take it out, ever.”<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *New York Times*, “Confederate Monuments Are Coming Down Across the United States.”

<sup>113</sup> Debra McKinney, “Some See the Monument as “the Largest Shrine to White Supremacy in the History of the World,”” Southern Poverty Law Center, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, accessed April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2018/stone-mountain-monumental-dilemma>.

<sup>114</sup> Khushbu Shah, “The KKK’s Mount Rushmore: The Problem with Stone Mountain,” *The Guardian*, accessed April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/ng-interactive/2018/oct/24/stone-mountain-is-it-time-to-remove-americas-biggest-confederate-memorial>.

## CONCLUSION

The Civil War changed radically the American nation. The costs of the war are ‘recorded in stone’ in memorials to those who died and those who served. That some men fought on the losing side makes their sacrifices no less honorable or worth remembering. The motivation for memorialization was most often not racial, but rather commemorative and respectful towards the qualities and achievements of individuals. Arguments that Confederate monuments were funded by Jim Crow governments to enforce their power are generally untrue. Based on the evidence, most of the monuments were paid for by private donations, and it took many years, for instance, for the UDC to collect enough money to fund the construction and instillation of a monument. Additionally, suggestions that slavery is being forgotten while the Confederacy is being remembered are completely misleading. Monuments to blacks exist, but they rather praise those who fought against slavery, or tell black success stories. Finally, Confederate monuments are of historical value. Thus, Confederate monuments should not be vandalized, removed or torn down. Instead, plaques should be added to them that provide objective information about the Civil War and its causes. Likewise, changing the names of schools simply because their founders fought for the Confederacy or were slaveholders, e.g., Washington and Lee University in Virginia, is similarly inappropriate, as such men played important roles in U.S. history and should be remembered. And statues in the U.S. Capitol should stay on display, as they are chosen by their states and represent the history of those states. And one state’s history is no less valuable than any other. True, representatives of the Southern past are controversial, but so are representatives of the American past. Here also, objective historical information is key, as it can go a long way towards appeasing anyone who might be offended by a historical monument. Most of the inscriptions on Civil War monuments prove that they were erected to honor those who fought and sometimes died for their country, however, those mentioning fighting for the ‘Lost Cause’ should be altered, or the term should be removed. Again, appropriate information about them is important, so that they provide a complete historical lesson. Clearly, removing monuments because they contain Confederate symbols is an exaggerated emotional response, often fear driven by political correctness. Instead, let the monuments be, as they serve a purpose. Moreover, monuments already removed, usually in the middle of night, should be placed in museums instead of in storage units, collecting dust, like those in New Orleans. Monuments speak to

us from the past not only about the people or events they memorialize but about the people who erected them, and we should continue to allow them the opportunity to do so.

“Those who do not know history are destined to repeat it.”<sup>115</sup>

Edmund Burke

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<sup>115</sup> Good Reads, “Edmund Burke Quotes,” accessed April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019, [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/17142.Edmund\\_Burke](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/17142.Edmund_Burke).

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