

**Planning in the Shadows of Supremacy:  
Confederate Monuments, Public Spaces & the  
Contemporary American South**

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May 2018

## **Abstract**

This paper explores issues of contested heritage and memory, expressions of power in the design of public space and civic monuments, and the articulation of cultural and racial identity as it relates to the built environment and urban planning. The Confederate monument debate in the contemporary American South serves as the focus for this discussion. This paper utilizes three monument-specific case studies from Chapel Hill, NC, Durham, NC, and New Orleans, LA to serve as templates for future research of the region's other contentious monuments and to help frame ongoing discussion on the topic across the country. As arbiters of public space, these debates present major challenges for urban planners, urban designers, and other practitioners in cities across the country, particularly in states where civic monuments are protected by law. This research re-envision the role urban planners and other public officials must play in facilitating constructive dialogue and working with communities to address issues of representation in civic space and, more importantly, the creation of inclusive public spaces that project modern values and unite rather than divide.

## **Résumé**

Cet article explore les questions du patrimoine et de la mémoire contestés, des expressions du pouvoir dans la conception de l'espace public et des monuments civiques, et de l'articulation de l'identité culturelle et raciale en rapport avec l'environnement bâti et l'urbanisme. Le débat sur les monuments confédérés dans le sud des États-Unis modernes est au centre de cette discussion. Cette recherche utilise trois études de cas spécifiques aux monuments de Chapel Hill, NC, Durham, NC et Nouvelle Orléans, LA pour servir de modèles pour la recherche future d'autres monuments controversés de la région et pour aider à orienter la discussion sur le sujet. En tant qu'arbitres de l'espace public, ces débats présentent des défis majeurs pour les urbanistes, les designers urbains et autres praticiens dans les villes à travers le pays, en particulier dans les états où les monuments municipaux sont protégés par la loi. Cette recherche réévalue le rôle que les planificateurs urbains et les autres fonctionnaires doivent jouer pour faciliter un dialogue constructif et travailler avec les communautés pour aborder les questions de représentation dans l'espace public et, plus important encore, créer des espaces publics inclusifs qui projettent des valeurs modernes et qui unissent au lieu de diviser.

## **Acknowledgements**

I could not have better framed a case study, an argument, or this thesis without the resourceful and wise Nik Luka. Thank you, professor, for your continued guidance, support, direction, and critique that have strengthened my research and helped produce a paper of which I will forever be proud. You made yourself available whenever I had a question or needed last minute edits, even while traveling. For all your time spent helping me complete this project, I am truly grateful.

I would also like to acknowledge Professor Ipek Türeli, in the Architecture Department for your invaluable insight, feedback, and perspective on my work. To Gladys, and the rest of the Urban Planning faculty, I thank you for your abilities to deliver and settle the dust in such a cloudy time for me and my fellow classmates buried in our own words.

Lastly, writing this article forces one to keep one foot in the past and the other in the present. I would not be able to do that without all of my friends, family, and colleagues for the emotional support and unrelenting love received over the last three months. Thank you all for keeping me focused and distracted when necessary. To Nicholas, Amy, Milie-Jade, and Kat your endless moral support and advice allowed me to see the bigger picture, one with screen time devoted more to wig reveals than relics of my country's complicated past—a true sign of social optimism.

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# **Introduction**

On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old self-proclaimed white supremacist, entered the Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, a historically African American congregation in Charleston, South Carolina (Robles, Horowitz, & Dewan, 2015). Roof had never attended a service there before, but the congregants welcomed him unaware that he had concealed a handgun upon entry (Robles et al., 2015). In the middle of Bible study that day, Roof opened fire killing nine black congregants before escaping to nearby North Carolina. On June 18<sup>th</sup>, Roof was arrested in Shelby, North Carolina and charged with nine counts of murder and a Federal hate crime (Robles et al., 2015). Nearly a year later, it was announced by both state and Federal prosecutors that Roof would face the death penalty for his crimes, becoming the first person in modern American history to face death sentences from two levels of government (Kozlowska, 2016). For the time being, Roof remains on Federal death row in Indiana awaiting his execution date (Byrd, 2017).

Roof's hatred of African Americans and desire to start a "race war" to resegregate America motivated his actions in Charleston (Robles et al., 2015). Roof is not alone in his understanding of race, racial identity, and the centrality of race-based conflict in American society, both past and present. Today, racial issues have permeated every aspect of American society and infiltrated politics at all levels of government (James, 2012). Race and racial identity are fundamentally social constructs enforced on an individual level and maintained legislatively and politically at a societal level (James, 2012; Kendi, 2016). Race as a social construct traces its origins to the slave-based society that precipitated the rise of America prior to the Civil War (James, 2012; Kendi, 2016). Since Africans were first forcibly brought to America, race has served as a group-defining identity—an identity that has been used exhaustively by powerful white Americans to differentiate their "pure" identity from African Americans as a means to both diminish their 'blackness' and assert the centrality of America's Western European roots (James, 2012; Kendi, 2016). Since slavery, race has been imposed upon America's non-white minorities by white Americans to divide, control, and define every aspect of non-white American life—often through the use of violence and the promotion of white supremacist ideals (James, 2012; Kendi, 2016). Although the Civil War put an end to a race-based slave system that precipitated the rise of America's hyper-racialized society, the subjective social construction of race continues to persist in America and undoubtedly influenced Roof's upbringing and eventual actions in Charleston (Kendi, 2016). This

foundation is equally important in understanding the contemporary debate over Confederate monuments that will be discussed more fully throughout this paper.

Roof's views on race were further confirmed when a photograph surfaced of Roof brandishing a gun in one hand and carrying a Confederate flag in the other calling for "'drastic action' to take back America from 'stupid and violent' African Americans" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015). The massacre in Charleston shook the nation as many began to grapple with the state of racial inequality and continued racial violence in 2015—150 years after the end of the Civil War. Meanwhile, Roof's fondness for Confederate symbols and white supremacy ignited an intense discussion in the South over the presence of such symbols in public spaces across the region. Many began to question what these symbols reflect about their society and whether it is an appropriate reflection of modern, democratic values. These symbols are invariably a part of the region's past and there are those who still feel strongly about protecting their heritage in public space. However, these symbols also reveal a darker side of American history that is steeped in oppression and violence centered upon the very American construct of race. While some streets and schools were renamed, and some monuments, flags, and markers brought down in the immediate aftermath of the Roof massacre, the majority of the region's Confederate symbols remained—largely protected by state heritage laws.

In America, and other modern nations, monuments, and other historically-significant statues, are ubiquitous reminders of the nation's continued dedication to and reverence for its military, political leaders, and cultural icons. For some, they are treasured works of art and important tools for citizens to learn from the nation's diverse history. However, others see them as repositories of preferred memory and an attempt by powerful individuals to glorify certain selected narratives, while ignoring others. Regardless of the interpretation, in America, many states have gone far to protect state heritage and public monuments fearing that they will be hastily removed out of concerns for public safety or political correctness. The contemporary Confederate monument debate has further fueled the fire, particularly in the South. While some southern states have had heritage protection laws on the books for decades, others have hastily passed their own versions since the early 2000s, specifically concerned with the swift removal of Confederate monuments.



Notably, these laws tend to overlook the history of racial violence and white supremacy associated with these sites of American memory.

Between 2015 and 2017, conservative state governments introduced these new “heritage protection laws” that usurped the removal process from local jurisdictions and effectively outlawed the removal of Confederate symbols—monuments in particular—from publicly-owned space altogether. Modeled after a statute that has existed in Virginia since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi introduced similar laws that effectively prevented communities from addressing the divisive symbols that feature prominently in their own public spaces (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015). In these states, elected officials have largely taken the matter into their own hands ensuring that any historically-significant civic monuments located on public property cannot be removed without prior approval. Unfortunately, this has resulted in an environment in which local jurisdictions have no power in addressing the concerns of their citizens, notably when public safety is involved as these sites have become gathering spaces for white supremacist and other white nationalist rallies. It has also preempted the ability of local communities and public officials to effectively engage in constructive dialogues concerning the future of contentious symbols in their built landscapes.

Although certain monuments and symbols were brought down in the region following the Charleston massacre, little has been done to address the centrality of Confederate monuments in public spaces across the region. The removal process has largely been stalled first by state laws—discussed above—and second, by the active, sometimes violent, movement against it. This conflict over Confederate symbols in public space reached new heights in 2017 when white nationalists descended upon Charlottesville, Virginia to protest the renaming of a public park and the proposed removal of a monument of Confederate general Robert E. Lee. On August 12, 2017, white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and members of the modern Ku Klux Klan gathered in the newly named Emancipation Park—formerly Lee Park—to circumvent the removal of the Lee monument (Stolberg & Rosenthal, 2017).

The groups that gathered that day in protest of the monument’s removal saw the proposal as an affront to their heritage, an attempt to oppress their views and beliefs, and the eradication of their

legacy from public space (Stolberg & Rosenthal, 2017). Counter protestors viewed the Lee monument as an icon from a bygone era and a remnant of the region's racist past—not a symbol that deserved to be preserved in the present. The day took a violent turn when one protestor rammed his car into a crowd of counter-protestors, killing a local citizen named Heather Heyer (Stolberg & Rosenthal, 2017). The events in Charlottesville further fueled the conversations that had previously begun with the Charleston massacre, gathering additional steam because these symbols now represented a liability and a safety concern to many southern communities. For planners, designers, and other policy makers, these safety concerns serve as further impetus for addressing these monuments and their roles in articulating public space. Public spaces should be safe spaces open to all citizens; public spaces that prominently feature Confederate symbols do not fit this ideal of public space and do little to assuage the safety concerns of everyday citizens. It is a planner's prerogative to promote safe public spaces and to reorient civic spaces that are deemed unsafe and unrepresentative of the surrounding community.

Today, Confederate symbols remain ubiquitous in the landscape of the American South and center civic spaces across the country. Shortly after the Charleston massacre, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) assessed the region's Confederate heritage. According to their report, 1,500 symbols of the Confederacy continue to exist across the country—718 of which are civic monuments specifically (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015). They are invariably a part of the region's history and cultural landscape, and they are potent symbols of oppression, violence, and continued racial inequality that diminish the realities of the African Americans who lived through slavery and segregation. They are powerful reminders of the continued role that race as a social construct plays in American society and that has plagued the nation since before the Civil War. These are issues that remain unresolved and the presence of these monuments in cities across the South do little to assuage these ongoing conflicts. However, the South that once segregated all aspects of society based on the socially-constructed category of race and installed these monuments to further solidify white claims over public space no longer exists to the extent that it once did. As evidenced by Charlottesville and Charleston, white supremacy and racial violence is still a major issue in the South, but it is nowhere as apparent as it once was when race-based violence occurred daily. Today, the South is one of the fastest growing regions in the country attracting new residents both from outside the region and from abroad, resulting in an increasingly

diverse population that is no longer as dominated by a white majority (Cohn, 2014). These trends have raised further questions over the way in which contemporary society can and should reconcile diversity and modernity with civic monuments that represent the values of a society that is no longer relevant or as powerful.

Herein lies the problem at the heart of this paper. Confederate monuments still dot public spaces across the region embodying years of racial violence and oppression at the behest of white supremacy. The white supremacist values and beliefs these monuments continue to convey are no longer appropriate reflections of contemporary society. Unfortunately, the heritage laws passed to protect them have created an environment in which planners, designers, and other practitioners cannot act upon their roles as arbiters of inclusive public space and promoters of open discourse surrounding the built environment and its historic origins. Even more so, they are unable to engage the public in an open dialogue that addresses lingering issues of inequality and representation in public space. However, in states where Confederate monuments are not protected by state law, planners, designers, and other public practitioners do invariably have a role in addressing issues of representation and equality in public space and should act upon that role to help rectify the wrongs of the past and facilitate societal reconciliation. As civic monuments, whether Confederate or otherwise, they are intended to represent the citizens who live among them and they should thus reflect the values and beliefs of the society at large, not just a subset of it. Civic monuments are central to the construction of public space in a democratic society—space which is designed specifically to be open, inclusive, and accessible, not closed, exclusive, or inaccessible. Confederate monuments, however, do not fit the mold or ideal that embodies public space and civic monuments in America and thus deserve intense scrutiny and attention in the communities where they can and should be addressed. Planners must play a role in reorienting these public spaces to include civic monuments that better represent the ideals of the surrounding public and exclude civic monuments that do little more than divide and exclude.

The imperative of reconciliation calls upon planners and other public practitioners to facilitate dialogue among disparate groups in the community. Reading into the contemporary debate, there is a clear disconnect in understanding of what these monuments mean to different groups of people and the different histories each group espouses about the origins of these monuments. As the region

continues to grow and diversify, there is an increasing need to reconcile these differences and help communities engage in open dialogues that generate better understandings of the historic origins of these monuments, the memories they are designed to house, as well as their place in contemporary society. Specifically, the discussion should focus on the values and beliefs that are shared by a plurality of a community, not just a select subset of it. As arbiters of public space and discussion, planners, public officials, and other public practitioners must guide these public discussions towards the hopeful creation of safe, inclusive public spaces that better reflect the region's diversity of narratives and cultures.

The facilitation of a balanced, open discussion is one of the central goals of the research presented in this paper. Specifically, this paper aims to answer the following questions: (1) In addressing contentious monuments, what type of public dialogue should occur and what role can planners play in making that happen? (2) What role should grassroots organizations and citizens play in the decision-making process? (3) In jurisdictions where monument protection laws exist, what options are there to challenge or overturn these binding laws that prevent practitioners from effectively addressing the everyday concerns of their citizens? Leveraging the examples presented by three thoroughly researched case studies in North Carolina and Louisiana, this paper provides practitioners with a better understanding and perspective of the origins of these civic monuments and the effects they have on the public spaces they inhabit, specifically in the context of the racial violence and white supremacy. This paper focuses on how civic monuments affect the people who live among them. Moreover, this research showcases a method for analyzing Confederate monuments on an individual level and frames the Confederate monument debate in a way that employs key principles of urban design and heritage conservation. Through this approach, planners, public officials, grassroots organizations, and other public practitioners can facilitate public discussions on the future of contentious monuments in public spaces across the country. More crucially, these facilitated discussions will help steer communities towards eventual societal reconciliation and a renewed sense of the values that best represent their cities.

Although important to this research and subject matter, this paper will not fully explore the spatial aspects of memory as it relates to memorials and civic monuments, nor will it delve into issues of colonial urbanism outside of the American context. Future research about Confederate monuments

should explore both issues more thoroughly to provide additional context into the American debate and ideas for addressing contentious civic monuments more generally. Instead, this research is intended as a guide for planners to address divisive monuments in their communities through guided discussion, historical and theoretical analysis, and community-based design discussions that embrace creative expression and modern democratic values.

The paper is broken down into the following three major sections that will inform the concluding discussion:

### Section I: General Foundations – Chapters I-III

Chapter I presents a review of urban design and planning principles and preoccupations that will help inform the analysis of Confederate monuments in public space. Chapter II traces the social, political, and economic developments that ultimately led to the proliferation of Confederate monuments during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to provide a general understanding of the societies that initially erected them. Lastly, Chapter III surveys the legislative and governmental environment that currently dictates the future of monuments throughout the region—with a focus on North Carolina and Louisiana. This section lays the necessary historic and contemporary foundations to properly analyze the three case studies.

### Section II: Monument Case Studies – Chapters IV-VI

Each of the three chosen case studies traces the historic origins of the monument before analyzing contemporary interpretations and public discourse. Specifically, these chapters will answer questions regarding the major actors and actions involved in funding and erecting the monument, what purpose these monuments served to the societies that erected them, and what contemporary discussion surrounds their presence in modern society. Chapter IV through VI details the narratives of (1) the Silent Sam monument that centers the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, (2) the Confederate Soldier monument that stood outside the Durham County courthouse in North Carolina, and (3) the Robert E. Lee monument that was recently removed by Mayor Mitch Landrieu in New Orleans, Louisiana. Each chapter will draw upon primary and

secondary archival research, press releases, speeches, newspapers, and other materials made available through the public record and state historic archives.

### Section III: Discussion – Chapter VII

The final section articulates key lessons from the preceding chapters for planners, public officials, community organizers, and other civic actors, offering a lens through which they can better engage the diverse publics of the American South in constructive debates over the region's divisive and problematic heritage. More importantly, this section will comment on the specific dialogue that should occur in jurisdictions that are not currently bound by monument protection laws and how active engagement with grassroots organizations and society at large can help cities grapple with issues presented by Confederate monuments, reconcile with the past, and move forward together. For jurisdictions currently bound by monument protection laws, this section will briefly discuss potential avenues for challenging these laws as well as additional areas for future research into the topic of contentious monuments in public space.

# **Chapter I**

## **Theoretical Foundations**

The following chapter serves as the theoretical frame for understanding both the rise of Confederate monuments in the American South as well as the contemporary debate over their continued existence in public spaces across the region. Scholars of urban planning, architecture, and urban design have discussed many of the following themes in the literature. This chapter introduces key preoccupations as they relate to and inform the analysis of public spaces and Confederate monuments vis-à-vis this paper. Confederate monuments have become contentious because they are at once significant historic artifacts for the region and physical manifestations of racialized power in public space. In the contemporary context, this divisive debate has become increasingly irreconcilable. Although issues of power and control form the heart of the argument against Confederate monuments, the debate cannot ignore the inextricability of these powerful symbols from the region's historic cultural identity.

The first section showcases the way in which power and control can be channeled into the built environment through the deliberate decision-making processes of practitioners—such as planners, architects, and urban designers—and politically powerful individuals or groups. Generally, the scholarship explores how these decisions can both emancipate and limit individual freedoms, with a tendency to focus on the negative consequences while ignoring the positive intentions. Whether these interventions are for the greater good of society and a better functioning-built environment or to reinforce preferred ideals and behaviors is central to this discussion. In the following pages, we explore how affordances, functionalism, and symbols all help to understand how physical artifacts are introduced into the built environment to inform the way in which individuals articulate their physical surroundings and, in turn, shape their connections with their culture and society at large. This foundational understanding of the environmental determinants of behavior and identity led to the proliferation of icons of collective memory and cultural identity during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century nation-building movements. During this period, consolidation of a national heritage and cultural identity was vital to ensuring the longevity of national regimes and cultures. This movement also led to the rise in importance of heritage conservation as a field. The preoccupations of each of these major themes are essential to understanding the contemporary debate over American's Confederate legacy.



## **Functionalism**

Environments are innately complex structures that are often difficult for individuals to articulate without clear direction regarding use-value and meaning. To improve upon individual and collective perception of the environment, humans have learned to adapt to and better articulate their surroundings through the reconstruction and manipulation of their natural environment. According to N.J. Habraken in his book *The Structure of the Ordinary: Form and Control in the Built Environment*, “change and renewal are keys to our knowledge of the built environment” (Habraken, 1998). Through the manipulation of natural surroundings, humans have been able to improve upon their knowledge of the built environment to facilitate human existence. This idea of restructuring the natural environment to more carefully direct the human experience is firmly rooted in the functionalist approach to architecture and design (Lang & Moleski, 2010). Often associated with 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism, a period in which cities, buildings, and public spaces were designed to value human utility, experience, and convenience over aesthetics, the functionalist approach is preoccupied with the intentional design of buildings and spaces for fixed uses. More specifically, functionalism seeks to actively shape and influence human behavior and, by extension, improve the legibility of the built environment for its users (Lang & Moleski, 2010). Functionalists also emphasize preferred human interactions within the built environment—often at the expense of unwanted human activities—through purposeful design interventions and the optimization of individual problem solving (Lang & Moleski, 2010). Functionalists thus actively channel power and control through design interventions that target the environmental determinants of behavior both to emancipate and to limit individuals within the built environment. For functionalists, the environmental determinants of human behavior are firmly grounded in the theory of affordances.

## **Affordance Theory**

According to affordance theory, an idea first posited by perceptual psychologist James J. Gibson, user behavior is dependent upon what the environment offers or provides its users. These affordances are ubiquitous in the environment and are dependent upon individual needs and the physical and learned abilities of the user (Gibson, 1979). Gibson’s theory centers upon the relationship organisms can potentially have with their surroundings. This user-environment relationship describes all the possible uses, supports, or resources that can be afforded to the user

through interaction (Gibson, 1979). Gibson's theory thus forms the foundational backbone of functionalism. Functionalists seek to control environmental affordances through careful design with the goal of shaping the resulting individual and societal behaviors available in the built environment.

Affordances are important in conveying information to individuals about their surrounding environment as well as its use-value to them. Affordances enable individuals to articulate their built environment and make use of it to suit their individual needs and purpose (Habraken, 1998). Without the information conveyed via affordances, the environment is much too large and complex to perceive and comprehend on an individual basis (Habraken, 1998). According to Jiajie Zhang and Vimla L. Patel in their article "Distributed cognition, representation, and affordance," cognition, or "complex information processing," requires the taking in and understanding of a wide variety of information between individuals and external objects (Zhang & Patel, 2006). In relation to Gibson's theory, the external that Zhang and Patel refer to is the individual's surrounding environment and by extension the affordances thus available to the user. Cognition is an important aspect of affordance theory as it requires a complex processing of the information, or affordances, available in the environment and the resulting employment of that information to suit individual needs. According to Zhang and Patel, cognition is learned through socialization and repeated interaction with the environment. Thus, through the careful manipulation of environmental affordances, functionalist interventions directly impact both the internal cognition process as well as the way in which individuals interact with their surroundings.

### **Meaning and the Built Environment**

Some affordances point to specific actions, uses, or behaviors available in the environment while others shape the way individuals find meaning and purpose in their surroundings. Gibson asserts that meaning itself is a distinctive type of environmental affordance that specifically relies upon the socialization process. Affordances not only shape and direct human behavior through functional artifacts but also take an active role in establishing cultural norms and expectations by conveying meaning onto the built environment. While the functionalist approach proves important in directing human behavior specifically, a potent control mechanism for those in power, it is less effective in conveying meaning and shaping cultural identity for society at large. Although Gibson

posits that meaning is an affordance, symbols, analyzed through the lens of semiotics, more effectively convey meaning to those who interact with and articulate their physical surroundings.

According to Lang and Moleski, architects, planners, and urban designers “structure the world to communicate meanings...[and] to give identity to themselves, their clients, and the general public” (Lang & Moleski, 2010). The communication of meaning is another way in which individuals can obtain knowledge from their environmental surroundings as well as their own place within it. As suggested by Gibson and other scholars who have built upon his work,<sup>1</sup> meaning is in fact a culturally-embedded phenomenon that is communicated through the deliberate shaping of the built environment (Gibson, 1979). According to Gibson, meaning is a “value-rich ecological object” that is equally effective in influencing interaction with the environment (Gibson, 1979). As Lang and Moleski suggest, “our activities and our emotions are affected by the meanings of the various elements that constitute our environments” and these “[m]eanings are [thus] obtainable directly from the information available from the environment” (Lang & Moleski, 2010). Architectural and urban forms by themselves are meaningless, but together they can transmit *meaningful* information via carefully chosen imagery. This imagery can then influence the way in which individuals understand and interact with their surroundings and society at large. Whereas functionalists sought to actively direct human behavior through the careful design of environmental affordances and functional relationships, planners, urban designers, and those in power, also channel information and shape meaning via symbols and the functional operation of semiotics.

## **Semiotic Theory**

Semiotics is a theoretical lens for understanding the process of creating and communicating meaning through the prolific use of signs and symbols. Initially, semiotic theory was associated with the literary, artistic, and linguistic fields, not architecture and urban design. However, for many scholars, the jump from literature and art to architecture and the built form was not unreasonable, but rather logical. In much the same way that people read a book, the built

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan R.A. Maier and Georges M. Fadel, in their article, *An affordance-based approach to architectural theory, design, and practice*, suggest that meaning is another affordance made available to individuals in the built environment. By extension, designers, planners, and architects who actively shape the built environment to convey meaning to the general public, have a direct impact on the ways in which individuals perceive and comprehend meaning in the built environment. For Maier and Fadel, meaning is considered a culturally-embedded phenomenon.

environment can be read and, through the symbols present, can impart meaning, purpose, and direction to its viewers and users. Early semiologists assert that physical and material objects are required as vehicles for signification since “the symbolic act involves some physical object as well as social discourse on it” (Gottdiener & Lagopoulos, 1986). Thus, symbols, like affordances, are both physically composed and socially constituted and are thus inevitably present in the built environment, whether intentional or otherwise.

For semiologists, such as French literary critic Roland Barthes, the built form is a discourse that “speaks to its inhabitants” and like affordances, directs human behavior (Barthes, 1986). According to Barthes, “we speak to our city, the city where we are, simply by inhabiting it, by traversing it, by looking at it” (Barthes, 1986). Barthes views equates city inhabitants with readers who interpret the signs and symbols made available in the built environment in order to articulate and thus navigate their way through it (Barthes, 1986). The way the city is designed—the way it speaks to its viewers—has an immense impact on how individuals articulate the built environment and thus find meaning and connection with their social and cultural surroundings. In general, Barthes suggests that individuals gather meaning and direction from repeated interaction with symbolically-charged physical objects in the built environment (Gottdiener & Lagopoulos, 1986). These thus symbols form the backbone of a city’s cultural identity.

### **Symbols and the Built Environment**

Umberto Eco, a prominent figure in architectural semiotics, more directly links the field to the urban form in his essay “Function and sign: semiotics in architecture.” Eco specifically explores the idea of sign vehicles, or physical objects, such as architectural features and other urban fixtures, that accord culturally codified signification to its viewers (Eco, 1986). For Eco, architectural form is both symbolic of its function—function follows form—and its cultural meaning and signification (Eco, 1986). In this case, Eco’s viewpoint is similar to Gibson’s understanding of affordances and the functional approach to design. However, Eco furthers this understanding by differentiating between what he terms ‘architectural denotation’ and ‘architectural connotation’. ‘Architectural denotation’ is similar to an environmental object’s behavioral affordance, or its primary function and use (Eco, 1986). In contrast, Eco describes the symbolic meaning of architectural objects as their ‘connotations’, or secondary function (Eco, 1986). Eco’s

‘architectural denotation and ‘architectural connotation’ suggests a double-layered relationship individuals have with the physical artifacts made available in their environment. While the former speaks to the way in which individuals perceive and physically interact with their environment through behavioral norms, the latter speaks to the way in which individuals make sense of their surroundings through associated meaning and cognition.

Eco concludes his essay with a warning:

...architecture has the power, through the operation of its system of a stimulative sign-vehicle, to determine what those functions and values are going to be—restricting men to a particular way of life dictating laws to events (Eco, 1986).

Here, Eco suggests that this capacity for channeling power and control can be employed via the proliferation of connotative codes instilled into the built environment by planners, architects, urban designers, and other powerful groups and individuals. This potency of symbols has been notably employed in heavy symbolic landscapes where monuments and other architectural features are exploited as physical embodiments of cultural and collective identity. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, symbols were employed in support of the nation-building activities of both nation-states and totalitarian regimes.<sup>2</sup>

Like affordances, symbols are ubiquitous in the built environment and are important in conveying and communicating information about both the use and meaning of one’s physical surroundings. They can be used both to call attention to important features of the built environment and to channel cultural norms and values that reinforce collective identity. Symbols are culturally-specific and are indicative of the surrounding society’s history, values, and belief systems. While affordances and functionalism are important methods by which practitioners and powerful individuals can directly impact human activity in the environment, symbols are a separately potent tool in the shaping of human socialization and, by extension, cultural and collective identity. Invariably, the propagation of a chosen collective identity through the proliferation of symbols is divisive and marginalizing. Symbolic artifacts communicate and project particular values to the public, often at the expense of other minority narratives in a larger effort of consolidating cultural

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<sup>2</sup> See Deyan Sudjic’s book *The Edifice Complex: How the Rich and Powerful Shape the World* (2005) for more information regarding symbolically-charged architecture and 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarian regimes.

authority (Bakshi, 2014). In the case of facilitating the cohesion of large disparate groups, symbols are necessary tools in the creation of a collective cultural identity that distinguishes between an ‘us’ and a ‘them.’

### **Symbols and Collective Memory**

Symbolically-charged artifacts in the built environment both concretize chosen societal narratives and help operationalize identity in public space. As such, symbols in the built environment are rarely value neutral and are often culturally-constructed and intentionally provocative. Christine Boyer, in her book *The City of Collective Memory*, discusses the importance of symbolic artifacts in the construction and preservation of national identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, particularly in the context of a rapidly expanding urban environment. According to Boyer, symbolic artifacts are incorporated into public space to give form to collective memory, an essential component in the creation of a cohesive cultural identity. Physical artifacts thus serve as “mnemonic codes that awaken recall” and by extension cement national and civic identity into public space (Boyer, 1994).

French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs first explores collective memory in his seminal work, *La mémoire collective*. According to Halbwachs, “it is in society that people normally acquire their memory” and “recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (Halbwachs, 1992). Collective memory binds together disparate individuals into a cohesive group “by linking an individual to family traditions, customs of class, religious beliefs, or specific places” (Boyer, 1994). While Halbwachs is concerned with the social aspects of memory and the importance of group-identity in its dissemination, Pierre Nora concentrates on collective memory’s reliance upon the “spaces, gestures, images, and objects” that root collective identity (Nora, 1989). In the built environment, physical artifacts imbue meaning and serve as repositories of collective memory reminding individuals of the collective need for recollection of the past. For Nora, memory is inherently attached to sites, or *lieux de mémoire*, that are capable of being both manipulated by groups in power or forgotten entirely in service to the cultural majority. Halbwachs and Nora saw collective memory as a way for society to identify with their present by looking towards the past (Bakshi, 2014; Halbwachs, 1992; Nora, 1989).

Collective memory is thus important in the establishment and development of a chosen history, a particularly important phenomenon in the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The determination and preservation of collective memory is in the built form and the resulting social space constitutes a critical foundation for cultural and social identity. Heavy symbolic artifacts decidedly play a major role in perpetuating these ideals through repetition and persuasion and inherently incite an emotional response from its viewer. As Christine Boyer suggests, the invention of collective memory and cultural tradition serves “three distinct purposes: (1) to establish social cohesion within a group; or (2) for the purpose of socialization—instilling a series of values, beliefs, and behaviors within different members of a society; or (3) finally, to legitimize or to establish the authority of a sovereign or a nation” (Boyer, 1994). Physical artifacts can form the roots of collective memory. Through repetition and reinforcement in the built environment, these cues of collective memory invariably play a major role in solidifying a cohesive cultural identity and the cultural landscapes of a region.

### **Memory Crisis**

Boyer writes that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, society entered a “memory crisis” in which the rapid changes associated with the political revolutions of the previous century and the industrial revolution of the present century wholly disrupted one’s sense of and identification with the past, as well as one’s situation in the present. Boyer’s analysis focuses on Europe with comparisons to the American experience; however, Boyer contends that because America was a young, New World nation, cultural identity was less rooted in its historical achievements than it was in Europe (Boyer, 1994). In general, however, this crisis led to two major developments: (1) the construction of an official, national narrative and cultural tradition rooted in collective memory, and (2) the desire to preserve historical architecture that alluded to a national golden age and supported cultural pride (Boyer, 1994). During this tumultuous time, there was a marked focus upon the preservation of spaces that conveyed “meaning and knowledge across generations” and that generated a sense of collective memory and desired civic conduct (Boyer, 1994). With the rise of nationalism came the rise in importance of “public spaces and monumental architecture in which the spirit of the city or the grandeur of a nation” was expressed (Boyer, 1994). These symbolic displays, housing the collective memory of a designated culture, were intended to bind together the nation, unify the

city, counteract the memory crisis of the era, and erase undesirable historical references by displacing the other and their memories and traditions.

As both Halbwachs and Nora allude, collective memory is innately social, experiential, and tied to place; experiencing a built environment in which one chosen historical narrative is represented supports group cohesion and the standardization of traditions at the expense of the others whose histories, culture, and memories are then erased. This is the systematic repression of difference under the guise of nation-building, cultural establishment, and moral civic rectitude. Considering the memory crises occurring in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the rapidly changing world, these ideas formed the heart of nationalist movements and the urban design traditions of the era, particularly the rise of symbolically-heavy and meaningful public monuments specifically designed to delineate a chosen heritage and a selected collective memory. While Boyer focuses on the rise of this tradition in the context of European nation states in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, other scholars maintain that this tradition is equally apparent in the contemporary world and is very much rooted in the modern field of heritage conservation.

With a similar goal of buttressing national identity and culture, heritage conservation too sought to address the memory crises of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the protection of physical artifacts and traces within which “city memories lie buried” to serve both national and cultural values (Boyer, 1994). The German philosopher Walter Benjamin suggested that it was important for historical objects from the past to coexist in the present, “so that the present may achieve insight and critical awareness into what once had been” (Boyer, 1994). These past historical objects harken back to and symbolize the emerging nation’s chosen heritage and bound the nation to its cultural achievements in the past. Out of the ashes of the collective memory crises of the 19<sup>th</sup> century arose the desire by those in power to erect monumental displays that evoke an official, decisive, collective memory for society at large, while at the same time, there was an innate desire to revive lost artifacts that harken back to previous eras in validation of present circumstances. At a time when social and industrial unrest was common, this proved particularly useful as the rising nation states of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries relied upon the “creation of imaginary communities and invented traditions” through the proliferation of symbolic monuments and the protection of a nationally-defined heritage to perpetuate their control (Boyer, 1994). Collective memory plays a



role both in the rising importance of new monumental displays in public space as well as the nationalist desire to preserve a chosen heritage in the built environment.

### **The Origins of Heritage Conservation**

The early heritage conservation movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century helped citizens come to terms with the present and find their rightful place in the modern world. It also enabled citizens to connect with one's past through an officially-sanctioned collective memory narrative. Heritage conservation sought a return to history and an emphasis on nationally-significant artifacts that "were related symbolically to the spiritual strength and collective identity new nations garnered from romantic and picturesque images drawn from their 'golden age'" (Boyer, 1994). In effect:

...the nineteenth century represented a world of ruins and fragments, emptied of meaningful traditions and authentic memories that once connected the present to the past. In such a world, everything seemed to be a collectible: treasures transferred to the museums of culture, reprints and copies relocated as souvenirs in domestic interiors, city views and architectural monuments reconstructed and preserved as the landscapes of heritage (Boyer, 1994).

However, this engenders questions of what should be preserved for the present, whose narratives should be emphasized, and what the appropriate balance should be between old and new. All of these preoccupations center the contemporary debates within the realm of heritage conservation, an ever-evolving field.

In its infancy, heritage conservation was not only interested in celebrating a nation's chosen history, but also in creating a context around which modern cities were intended to develop. The monuments chosen for conservation were aspects of the past that would forever be experienced in the present, enabling individuals to "read the city in a contiguous manner" and give direction towards future development (Boyer, 1994). The deliberate conservation of historically-significant artifacts enables individuals to view the city in all its totality as it progresses through time, with careful reminders of "past domestic life and the built context in which that daily life took place" (Boyer, 1994). During the Industrial Revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the advent of modernism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the need to preserve the past became that much more important. Not only were heritage preservationists seeking to safeguard nationally-significant artifacts for future

generations to learn from, but there was also a sense that modern development was eroding the legibility of the city and, by extension, resulting in built environments that lacked meaning and a well-defined connection with the past.

### **Preoccupations of Heritage Conservation**

John Pendlebury, professor of urban conservation at Newcastle University, suggests that heritage conservation can trace its origins to “the older field of architectural conservation” which is steeped in the conservative tradition of opposition to change in the built environment (Pendlebury, 2013). In the early stages of the field, there was a major debate between the idea of “conservative repair” and “stylistic repair” (Choay, 2001; Pendlebury, 2013). John Ruskin, a 19<sup>th</sup> century English architectural critic, opposed the restoration of buildings “through radical interventions in the building fabric” seeing that this process directly opposed the building’s original intention (Choay, 2001; Pendlebury, 2013). Ruskin felt that radical interventions detracted from the historic character of the building and thus were antithetical to heritage conservation efforts. In contrast, Eugene Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, a 19<sup>th</sup> century French architect and theorist, preferred a more stylistic approach to conservation that modified the original architectural features to both value the past and bring the structure into its contemporary context (Choay, 2001; Pendlebury, 2013). While Ruskin preferred minimal interventions, Viollet-le-Duc saw heritage as an opportunity to inject contemporary artistic touches to build a more apparent bridge between the past and the present and ensure proper contextualization of heritage artifacts. At the time, given the rapid change of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ruskin’s approach was preferred over those of Viollet-le-Duc since Ruskin’s conservation efforts sought to permanently preserve the integrity of the past in the present (Choay, 2001; Pendlebury, 2013). However, in the context of today’s prolific heritage industry, both approaches have proven successful. Today there is an increase in tolerance of more stylistic interventions, particularly if they are reversible, as is evidenced by the increasing popularity of adaptive reuse in architecture, planning, and design across the globe (Choay, 2001; Pendlebury, 2013).

According to Françoise Choay in her book *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, heritage conservation centers upon the constant balance of public and private interests (Choay, 2001). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, artifacts were protected under heritage conservation because of their public role

in cementing and promoting heritage, cultural identity, and collective memory. While this is still a central focus of the field, the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a significant shift as the concern became more about the monetary value of preserving historic artifacts in the promotion of tourism over their cultural value (Choay, 2001). In short, heritage became less about celebrating national heritage and more about its ability as a physical artifact that attracts investment and additional development by proximity. As such, the growth of tourism and the culture industry “has significantly degraded the meaning of heritage and how best to communicate history to the public” in the modern context (Choay, 2001).

The massive proliferation of artifacts chosen for preservation in modern time has thus had a significant impact on the industry. Today, there are ongoing debates over what objects are worthy of preservation and concerns that the emphasis on conservation efforts worldwide has detracted from the meaning and value of individual objects themselves. This is a particularly pertinent discussion in the context of contested landscapes in which multiple heritages are present, such as those described in Anita Bakshi’s article “Urban Form and Memory Discourses: Spatial Practice in Contested Cities” as well as those that will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. Although UNESCO—the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization—has attempted to streamline and restructure the preservation process to better reflect today’s diversity, there is a lack of consensus over what should be protected as heritage (Bakshi, 2014; Choay, 2001; Pendlebury, 2013). Of course, money is a driving factor in the heritage conservation field today, but there is still a sense that what should be protected is purely context-specific and dependent upon cultural traditions rather than global ideals and the promotion of tourism (Pendlebury, 2013). In the context of contested spaces, this is a pertinent issue that remains unresolved. Today, the questions over who defines and thus controls heritage is central to understanding the contemporary field whose roots trace back to the industrial and political revolutions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the incipient rise of the nation state.

## **Conclusion**

This section serves as the theoretical backdrop and foundation for analyzing the rise of Confederate monuments in the American South as well as the contemporary debate over interpretation. The functionalist approach, of which Gibson’s affordance theory forms the backbone, provides a basis

for understanding the way in which practitioners and other powerful individuals effectively channel power and control into the built environment by influencing the functional relationships individuals have with their surroundings. Functionalism seeks to understand and influence human behavior through the careful study of user-environment relationships. From this foundation, practitioners select the preferred behaviors of the built environment by shaping environmental affordances through design. For Gibson, these user-environment relationships are naturally-occurring. However, humans control the affordances made available, and can thus limit or expand the resulting uses, interactions, or behaviors. In the political context that precipitated the rise of Confederate monuments in the South, there is a deliberate attempt by the powerful groups involved in their erection to harness the functional relationships individuals have with their environmental surroundings to systematically direct the commemorative behavior of individuals in public space.

Semiotic theory, on the other hand, highlights the significance symbols have in encouraging individuals to articulate, to interpret, and to understand their built environment and cultural surroundings. Through the prolific use of symbols, or meaningful physical artifacts in the built environment, powerful individuals and groups shape cultural and collective identity through the reinforcement of a chosen narrative rooted in collective memory. For many scholars, symbols are culturally- and socially-codified; by inserting symbolically-charged artifacts into the built landscape, practitioners affect the socialization process of individuals and their association with society at large. Symbols are important in consolidating cultural identity and the collective values of large, disparate groups, particularly as it relates to the marginalization of undesirable groups. In the context of Confederate commemoration and the consolidation of a Confederate identity, semiotics is a useful lens for analyzing the symbolic potency of divisive monuments. Specifically, it affords us the understanding that the significant shift that led to the proliferation of these monuments and symbols was a crucial component in reconstructing meaning and value from the past.

For many scholars, the prolific use of symbols is associated with the rise of the nation-state and totalitarian regimes; however, it can also account for the rise of white supremacist ideals in the South following the highly disruptive period known as Reconstruction. The rapid political, social, and economic changes following the Civil War inevitably led to a regional memory crisis in which

there was a growing need to channel collective memory into symbolic monuments and to validate present circumstances through the invocation of the past. Both heritage conservational and monumental displays served to consolidate national and cultural power at the expense of the other by harnessing symbols in the built environment that reinforce selected cultural ideals and values. Both also served to provide society with physical reminders of a collective memory whether through the erection of new monuments or the conservation of historically-significant artifacts.

Today's debate over the continued existence of these monuments is best framed within the field of heritage conservation and the divide between John Ruskin's "conservative repair" and Viollette-le-Duc's "stylistic repair." On one side of the Confederate monument debate, there are those who insist on the preservation of the monuments as they exist in public space as essential reminders of the region's cultural heritage and as lessons for future generations. On the other, there are those who would prefer the swift removal of these monuments into spaces wherein their histories can be appropriately recontextualized. Without proper contextualization, many fail to understand what these symbols represented to those who erected to them at the time and, more importantly, what they say about the society in which they currently exist today. In the context of Choay's argument about the careful balance of public and private interests, there is a concern that these monuments will have a negative effect on the region's identity and competitive ability so long as they continue to stand. Whether intentional or not, Confederate monuments serve to divide public space and divide the region along cultural, social, and racial lines. For these monuments, questions remain over who gets to decide what constitutes public heritage, what artifacts deserve to be saved, whose narratives should be represented in the built environment, and why particular groups or individuals have the power to make these decisions.

**Chapter II**  
**The Social, Political, and Economic  
Origins of the Confederate Legacy**

The following chapter introduces the social, political, and economic foundations that governed the Confederate commemoration movement across the region. This overview considers the immediate aftermath of the Civil War in 1865 through the 1920s, when the Confederate tradition began to wane in importance as the First World War took center stage and the ranks of living veterans dwindled, effectively ending the rapid creation of new Confederate monuments. During this period, the Confederate tradition began to take shape leveraging Lost Cause ideology that operationalized an alternative version of the war's history and ingrained white supremacist beliefs in the region. Those who adhered to the Lost Cause believed in an alternative version of the Civil War that overlooked the role slavery played in its outbreak and unabashedly downplayed the cruel nature of the region's slave system in favor of a more benevolent narrative (SPLC, 2016). This narrative centered upon the idea that African Americans were faithful to their white owners because they had brought them civilization and Christianity (SPLC, 2016). Additionally, there was a belief that the racial hierarchy that had existed under the plantation system was vastly superior to the one they inherited following reconstruction. These foundational beliefs of the Lost Cause glorified a false version of the region's history and culture and actively promoted white supremacist ideas throughout the region. Shortly after the war, many white southerners, particularly those who were once considered the elite before the war, felt lost and disillusioned both by the recent military defeat and by the new political situation that gave former slaves the right to vote. But for them, the Confederate commemoration process, grounded in the beliefs of the Lost Cause, was an opportunity for regional reconciliation, the reestablishment of a preferred racial hierarchy in the post-slavery South, and an avenue by which lost former Confederates could seek solace in a rapidly changing world.

Immediately following the war, Confederate commemoration focused on the necessary process of bereavement and acceptance, driven largely by the women who had lost loved ones during the conflict. By the end of Reconstruction, however, that process was overshadowed by a new form of Confederate story. Largely dictated by proponents of the Lost Cause, this sought to establish a narrative for the region based on an explicit social hierarchy seen as desirable for governing all aspects of southern society. This sudden shift spurred the commemorative movement in the region and left behind the legacy of a region home to nearly 1,500 symbols dedicated to the Confederacy (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015). Today, as the region develops, and the country begins to

grapple with its divisive history, questions remains whether these monuments should continue standing and, more importantly, what they reflect about the contemporary societies in which they inhabit.

### **Southern Defeat and a Changing Society**

Following the Civil War, the South was economically, socially, and politically decimated. Southern elites were disillusioned about their future and their roles in the reunification of the United States. During this period, the Federal government initiated a litany of legislative acts designed to restructure southern society and help reorient its politics and economy following the end of slavery and the destruction of its pre-war society (Foster, 1987). This period is known as Reconstruction. Catherine Bishir, Curator in Architectural Special Collections at North Carolina State University, characterizes the sentiments felt by many white southern elites during Reconstruction as follows:

...they had seen their world turned upside down and their political power and wealth shrivel, as ‘democracy’ replaced ‘aristocracy,’ and power passed into the hands of black and ordinary white citizens who were ‘not so able or cultured’ (Bishir, 1993).

Under Reconstruction, white southerners entered a period of despair brought on not only by military defeat but by the distress of having their entire way of life changed and their political and economic power eviscerated (Foster, 1987). The fact that African Americans were given political rights as equal citizens under the Constitution only further alienated southern whites. Acceptance of defeat did eventually occur, but in no way did that mean that white southerners accepted or tolerated African American social, political, or economic progress—especially at their own expense. While many African Americans relished their new political power, propped up by Federal occupying troops and aligning themselves with poor whites who had not prospered under slavery, a majority of white southerners withdrew from public life; some turned to the comfort of alcohol and drugs while others sought solace in religion and family (Foster, 1987). The pre-Civil War South no longer existed and while some prospered others suffered out of sight.

The war had of course decimated the region’s economic potential; Reconstruction also did little to help the south rebuild its agricultural sectors, especially once the region lost its low-cost supply of slave labor. While the political situation remained precarious, the economic ups-and-downs of the



period provided little solace and ultimately pushed many white southerners towards Confederate celebration as an outlet by which they could relive the past and hope for a better future. Severe depression and poverty marked both former white elites and the newly empowered African Americans despite stark improvements in the quality of life for former slaves (Savage, 1999). While major economic and political changes alienated southern white elites, some viewed the empowerment of former slaves and poor white men as an affront to their way of life and advocated for a return to the pre-Civil War society under which they had once prospered (Savage, 1999). Although the leaders during Reconstruction pushed a truthful war narrative, the reality of defeat did little to bring together a deeply divided society. If anything, the push for Reconstruction further drove a deep wedge in southern society that prevented racial reconciliation for nearly a century. However, towards the end of the Reconstruction period, the newly reunited country, both North and South, desired both reconciliation and memorialization. While the latter precipitated the rise of monuments across the country, the former reunited white Americans, brought an official end to Reconstruction and its policies governing racial equality, and hastened the return of white political power to the south.

In general, the South and the former southern elites who once governed the region on the backs of slaves, were largely left disillusioned, ignored, and alienated following the Civil War. These sentiments were further entrenched by the social, political, and economic developments associated with Reconstruction and enabled the rise of Lost Cause ideology that guided Confederate commemoration from the 1880s through 1920. The following section analyzes the tradition of Confederate commemoration as it develops during this time period. Tracing the movement from its early manifestation as an opportunity for southerners to reinter fallen soldiers in Confederate cemeteries to the rise of veteran organizations who saw it their duty to propagate Lost Cause ideology and offer a revisionist version of southern history that imbued a desired racial hierarchy that favored white southerners over African Americans.

### **From Cemeteries to Civic Spaces**

This section recounts the origins of the memorial movements in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the major organizations involved, and the drive that ultimately saw Confederate monuments move from cemeteries to civic spaces. The early process of commemoration in the South was not that different

from the push to construct monuments and disseminate national narratives associated with the rise of nation states in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Butler, 2013). However, in most nation states, particularly in Europe, the role of erecting monuments, sanctioning commemorative arts, and imposing “an ‘official’ version of national memory” primarily fell into the hands of a central state authority whose goal it was to instill a cohesive collective identity among a disparate group of people (Butler, 2013). This process was most readily associated with the “rise of nationalism and the nationalist demand for tangible symbols and traditions” to support their burgeoning societies and ensure unity among their people (Butler, 2013; Savage, 1999). In contrast, the process in the South was largely orchestrated by grassroots organizations, such as the early Ladies’ Memorial Associations and their successor, the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Both groups were instrumental in the preservation of Confederate memory and celebrating the Confederate legacy through the establishment of cemetery memorials and civic space monuments from Reconstruction through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Butler, 2013).

Immediately following the war, the Federal government refused to re-inter Confederate soldiers who had fallen during the conflict. Thus, in cities and towns across region, Ladies’ Memorial Associations (LMAs) emerged in an effort to step in where the Federal government refused to act (Butler, 2013). The LMAs saw bereavement for those who lost their lives during the war effort as the first act for the region to reconcile with defeat (Butler, 2013). As early custodians of the Confederate memorial movement, LMAs led the development of Confederates cemeteries and monuments in the late 1860s and 1870s (Bishir, 2000). In contrast to the later monument movement, the LMA’s early commemorative acts were not political statements, nor were they attempts to establish a preferred narrative for the war, the region, and its people. Rather the early memorialization was regarded as mechanism by which the region could “gather their fallen, rebury their dead, and provide comfort and closure to grieving relatives”—a process of ensuring that the memory of their fallen loved ones would never be forgotten (Butler, 2013). Public addresses and the chosen private locations of many of these cemeteries further reinforced the theme of Confederate bereavement (Foster, 1987). By the end of Reconstruction, however, the LMAs had largely achieved their initial goal; fallen soldiers had been re-interred in cemeteries across the region. Today, these memorial spaces feature prominently in cities across the South (Figure 1) but are less apparent than the civic space monuments erected later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



*Figure 1 Oakwood Confederate Cemetery Monument, Raleigh, North Carolina. Image Source: Rufus Morgan Photographic Collection, circa 1869-1880. Digital North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives at UNC-Chapel Hill, Wilson Library.*

By the 1880s the Confederate memorialization movement shifted its focus from the “cities of the dead into ‘spaces of the living’” (Butler, 2013; Winberry, 1983). Although the LMAs had once been instrumental in coalescing broad support for the immediate memorialization of the Confederate dead and had played “a crucial role in easing white Southerners’ adjustment to loss and helping them regain hope for the future,” their importance wavered (Foster, 1987). By the 1880s, “the bereavement of the early memorial movement [eventually] gave way to greater celebration of the Confederacy” and the Lost Cause that it was purported to support, protect, and

propagate (Foster, 1987). With Reconstruction at an end, this commemoration movement “united the participants in a bond that transcended not only time but the usual social division of society” by contributing to the restoration of southern pride and white supremacy (Foster, 1987). With the LMAs in decline, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and other veteran organizations assumed the responsibility for propagating the Confederate legacy by bringing monuments into public spaces. Galvanized by the return of the formerly disillusioned white elites to political power across the South, the monument movement felt equally emboldened to bring the Confederate monument into public spaces. To them, these monuments (Figure 2) would serve not only to reflect upon their Confederate heritage, but also propagate the Lost Cause ideology and further imbue a racial hierarchy based upon white supremacy into the region’s built landscape.



*Figure 2 Confederate Monument and State Capitol, Raleigh, NC. Image Source: North Carolina Postcard Collection (P077), North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill*

### **‘White Redemption’**

When the Federal government withdrew its troops from the region in the late 1870s, Reconstruction came to a crashing end. Those who had previously been disillusioned and lost in the wake of a rapidly changing region, felt emboldened once more. To reassert their narrative and ensure the destruction of a society that had largely prospered during Reconstruction, white elites promoted an Anglo-Saxon mythology coupled with an interpretation of southern history to drive

a wedge between poor whites and African Americans (Bishir, 1993). Many recognize this narrative today as the foundations for white supremacy in the region (Bishir, 1993). To further entrench and codify their Anglo-Saxon interpretation of history, southern elites turned to symbolic sculpture and architecture to “shape public memory in ways that supported their own authority” and propagated the ideals of the Lost Cause (Bishir, 1993). Through the erection of monuments, white elites were able to consolidate their claims of ownership over a heavily-divided southern landscape and ensure the permanence of their Anglo-Saxon narrative in the region (Bishir, 1993).

On the surface, these monuments were dedicated to fallen Confederate soldiers, in much the same vain as those previously erected by LMAs during Reconstruction. However, their association with the Anglo-Saxon narrative and Lost Cause ideology set the region’s race relations in stone and transformed “the cult of defeat into the dominant culture of power regained”—largely at the expense of African Americans (Bishir, 1993). The very public locations of these domineering monuments were specifically chosen as a means to reorient public space in the south along racial lines and center civic life on an Anglo-Saxon heritage and the permanent “othering” of African Americans. To further cement this new interpretation of history, or the mythology of the Lost Cause of the Confederacy, many monument dedication speeches during this period actively “featured the retelling of history” that centers on “a story of systematic cultural repression, carried out in the guise of reconciliation and harmony” between the North and South (Bishir, 1993; Savage, 1999). While these monuments served to reunite white southerners regardless of socioeconomic status, the monuments were also served to reunite white Americans regardless of regional association. Under the leadership and organizational direction of the UDC and other veteran organizations, the unveiling ceremonies as well as the monuments themselves served to further ingrain the racial divide in cities across the country—a destructive history that some southern states continue to protect.

### **United Daughters of the Confederacy**

The UDC served a prominent role in leading the Confederate monument movement once Reconstruction ended, white elites returned to power, and the LMAs declined in influence. Founded in Nashville, Tennessee in 1894, the UDC “assumed guardianship of the Confederate tradition” and helped perpetuate and dramatize “the troubles and tyranny of Reconstruction” that

fed into the supreme Anglo-Saxon narrative then sweeping the region (Bishir, 2000). The UDC was a potent organizational force during this time period and actively promoted Lost Cause ideology through the erection of public monuments, education campaigns, and Confederate Memorial Day celebrations. Their organizational capacity and breadth of power enabled them to effectively tailor “events of the 1860s to fit the political climate of the 1890s” (Bishir, 2000). Thus, for white political elites, the UDC proved an effective partner in the propagation of the Lost Cause and the region’s preferred racial hierarchy.

Shortly after their formation, the UDC took it upon themselves, with support from the less-influential Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), to compile a preferred history of the Civil War and to condemn those narratives they considered to be unfair to the South (Bishir, 2000; Foster, 1987). All three organizations helped propagate this version of southern history, particularly through the promotion of the narrative in schools across the region. The UDC’s educational campaigns were especially important to the members given their role as wives, mothers and caretakers of the region’s future leaders (Bishir, 2000; Foster, 1987). According to Gaines M. Foster in his book *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, the influence of southern women in the Confederate tradition was not abnormal given that women served as purveyors of cultural values (Foster, 1987). Women who were involved in the UDC channeled this preferred historic narrative into the erection of monuments across the southern landscape intended to service as mnemonic cues for all passersby of the Confederate legacy.

## **Conclusion**

Confederate monuments erected during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century served three major purposes: (1) to commemorate and memorialize the soldiers who lost their lives during the war, (2) to shape public memory in such a way that entrenches an inaccurate interpretation of history that served white elite political interests, and (3) to facilitate reconciliation between southern white elites and poor whites, as well as between whites in the North and in the South, through the “othering” of African Americans and the binding of all white Americans together under the banner of an Anglo-Saxon shared heritage. While the incipient rise of many of these monuments in the region make sense in their historical contexts, the debate over their contemporary existence centers upon their purpose in today’s modern democratic society, one that

has since removed itself from the shackles of state-sanctioned segregation. These monuments are materially part of the region's history and cultural landscapes, but is the history one worth remembering? How should divided societies reconcile when the collective memory of one group infringes upon the rights and freedoms of another? Does the continued existence of these monuments in spaces deemed public do more harm than good?

**Chapter III**  
**Heritage Conservation in North  
Carolina & Louisiana**



The following chapter outlines the existing legislative context surrounding Confederate monuments in both North Carolina and Louisiana and traces the narrative of the state-wide debates surrounding each of the proposed laws. The first section describes the origins and main components of state heritage protection laws across the South, followed by a scrutiny of North Carolina's law, tracing its progression from bill to law; this is complemented in the next section with an examination of the legislative context in Louisiana—one which ultimately failed to produce a similar heritage protection law for the state. The overall purpose of this chapter is to define the necessary political and legislative foundation from which planners, municipal officials, and community organizers can better understand what role they have within the contemporary monument debate, particularly as it relates to states where the laws prohibit removal.

### **Heritage Protection Laws in the South**

Virginia was the first state to pass heritage protection laws that specifically targeted the removal of Confederate monuments located on public property.<sup>3</sup> For nearly a century, other southern states chose not to follow Virginia's precedent. However, over the last two decades, Georgia, South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, and North Carolina have followed in Virginia's wake seeking to circumvent the hasty removal of Confederate monuments before the issue even arises. Although the intention is clear, some states have attempted to avoid controversy by broadly applying their respective heritage laws to all publicly-owned monuments rather than calling out Confederate monuments specifically. Some states have been more successful in that regard than others; however, the intention is quite clear. Mississippi, for example, banned the removal of all monuments that are dedicated to the military, whether Confederate or not (Bliss & Meyer, 2017).

In each state, the heritage protection laws have only further complicated the situation. Specifically, the laws introduced overly convoluted procedures for requesting the removal of monuments on public property. The laws even raised the necessary vote threshold from a simple majority to a two-thirds majority for votes pertaining to historic monuments. This legislative maneuvering has

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<sup>3</sup> Virginia's statute regarding monument removal has been on the books since 1904 and is central to understanding the ongoing debate surrounding the Charlottesville monuments. For more information, see Antonio Olivo's article in The Washington Post, "After Charlottesville, Va. Democrats see opening to change 114-year-old monuments law: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/after-charlottesville-va-democrats-see-opening-to-change-114-year-old-monuments-law/2017/08/25/5e97e766-880e-11e7-a94f-3139abce39f5\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.8a51414f7107](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/after-charlottesville-va-democrats-see-opening-to-change-114-year-old-monuments-law/2017/08/25/5e97e766-880e-11e7-a94f-3139abce39f5_story.html?utm_term=.8a51414f7107)

effectively usurped the jurisdictional power of individual municipalities in the process and diminished the importance of city officials in answering the needs of their constituents.

However, not all southern states have introduced such binding statutes; notably, Louisiana never passed such a law and the monuments in New Orleans were eventually removed. Louisiana and other states have managed to avoid the introduction of rigid heritage protection laws; this demonstrates that there is hope for planners, activists, and local officials to constructively engage their constituencies in a process of reconciling with divisive monuments and addressing the potential for removing where warranted. For now, however, the case is settled in the southern states that have passed such heritage protection laws. Until a legislative fix is put into place or a state-sanctioned procedure is enacted, the best many southern communities can do is engage in discussion without the hopes for action or change.

### **North Carolina's Heritage Protection Act of 2015**

In February 2015, a few months before the Dylann Roof massacre in South Carolina sparked a nationwide debate over Confederate symbols, the North Carolina General Assembly introduced a bill prohibiting removal of any “object of remembrance” located on public property in the state without prior approval from the North Carolina Historical Commission, a legislative body whose powers remain unclear (North Carolina General Assembly, 2015; Wahlers, 2016). Capitalizing on an opportunity to protect all of the state’s historic sites, legislators purposely broadened its definition of “objects of remembrance” to include any “display of a permanent character...that is part of North Carolina’s history” in order to avoid a situation wherein Confederate symbols would not be considered “objects of remembrance” (North Carolina General Assembly, 2015; Wahlers, 2016). The General Assembly’s careful calculation in defining “objects of remembrance” so subjectively has since led to a confusing legal environment regarding the future of all monuments and other divisive symbols across the state (Wahlers, 2016). By design, the General Assembly’s new statute has effectively usurped the powers of local municipalities, leaving local officials unable to control their own built environment or ensure the public safety of their own citizens. The law has left many to question whether it was hastily passed in July 2015 without proper debate or full consideration of the will of the people.

The debate leading up to the July 2015 passage was notably contentious and expectedly divided along partisan lines: on the right, Republicans were in full support of this sweeping legislation seeing heritage protection and the preservation of North Carolina's history as one of their duties as state legislators; on the left, Democratic legislators hoped for a more open dialogue to address the state's contentious, and oftentimes painful, history through a more public debate over Confederate monuments and a careful consideration of what constituents actually desired for their communities (Wahlers, 2016). Republicans saw this an opportunity to close the debate before it could happen, while Democrats hoped to open the discussion and allow for a more open process to occur as the state grapples with its Confederate legacy. The passage of this legislation has only furthered this divide within the state and put many local municipalities on edge as they hoped to address the divisive symbols of the Confederacy that still exist in their communities.

Marvin Lucas, a Democratic state representative, voiced his concerns over the legislative maneuvering of his Republican colleagues, suggesting that the legislature should look to creating, "one North Carolina, and if what one does offends a large segment of the population, a distinct group of the population, [the legislature] ought to look at that with a jaundiced eye" (Leslie, 2015). Although outnumbered in the General Assembly, Democrats believed that Republicans were ignoring the majority opinion in closing the debate, particularly at a time when it was needed most. Republican legislators, on the other hand, maintained that the bill actually had little to do with the ongoing debate over Confederate symbols and was only designed to protect the state's history in general (Leslie, 2015). Michael Speciale, a Republican state representative, reiterated this claim by suggesting that the Charleston massacre is exactly why North Carolina needed "something like this to stave off the flames of passion" (Leslie, 2015). For many Republicans at the time, there was a concern that in the passion of the moment, drastic measures could potentially rid the state's landscape of its treasured objects of remembrance, particularly Confederate monuments and other divisive symbols of the state's history. Thus, for the General Assembly, the only answer was a "complete prohibition of monument removal" at all costs in order to avoid the quick destruction of the state's heritage (Wahlers, 2016).

At the heart of this debate in North Carolina is a lack of understanding regarding the origins of these historic monuments. While the legislators claim that the preservation of the state's history is

the primary concern they have in addressing the monument debate outright, this view tends to overlook the relationship these monuments have with Lost Cause ideology and white supremacy. At the same time, very little is done to contextualize them in time and space, particularly in a state that is home to the fourth largest count of Confederate symbols and monuments in the country (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015). Regardless, North Carolina's heritage protection law remains notable because of its effectiveness in denying community members a voice in the debate and in preventing local officials from addressing public safety concerns within their own communities. North Carolina, and other states like it, are prime examples of how hot button an issue the Confederate monument debate has become in recent years and the drastic measures that state-elected officials have taken to silence their constituents and retain heritage monuments that deserve open debate. Without the legal process to do so and the right to free speech effectively reigned in, it is unlikely that states like North Carolina will find a compromise that properly balances state history with the will of the people in determining the nature of the public spaces in their local communities.

### **Heritage Protection in Louisiana**

North Carolina's legislative situation directly contrasts Louisiana's—a state in which there is no statute circumventing the removal of conflicted monuments by local jurisdictions. In the case of New Orleans, Mayor Mitch Landrieu was successfully able to remove four highly controversial monuments from city property in May 2017. However, between 2015, when Landrieu first announced his intentions to remove four monuments, and 2017, when he was finally able to do so, the Louisiana State Legislature attempted to pass a bill that would have introduced a new state constitutional amendment addressing the proposed destruction of heritage monuments on state property. Legislators were concerned that the experience in New Orleans was an indicator of what could eventually spread to cities across the state. Like North Carolina's elected officials, Louisiana's legislators feared the hasty destruction of the state's treasured heritage monuments.

By early 2017, the Louisiana Legislature saw the future of the state's historic monuments quickly fading. Taking a similar approach as Mississippi did in prohibiting “state and local government entities from taking actions that would be detrimental...[to] military memorials on public property,” the Louisiana State House swiftly voted on a provision that would have introduced

popular referendums as a necessary provision for monument removal (Louisiana State House, 2017). In the State Senate, a similar bill was passed that would have required prior legislative approval for the removal of any monument of historic significance (Louisiana State Senate, 2017). Like the North Carolina vote, the Louisiana Legislature divided along party line with most Republicans voting in favor of the measures and all Democrats voting down the proposals. In both cases, state newspapers described the emotionally-charged debate as “disgusting,” overtly negative, and unconstructive (Ballard, 2017a).

While State Representative Thomas Carmody Jr., a Republican, believed that the legislation was “only about allowing the public to decide,” state representative Patricia Smith, a Democrat, believed that the law was merely about bolstering “white supremacy and divisiveness” in the state (Ballard, 2017a). In contrast to North Carolina where Republicans sought to prevent local citizens from becoming the deciding force over the state’s history, Louisiana Republicans purposely designed their law to bring the Confederate monument debate down closest to the people. However, the City of New Orleans contended that it had followed a set procedure that both enabled and encouraged the public to voice their opinion prior to the City Council vote that eventually led to the monuments’ demise (Ballard, 2017a). In the end, however, the Republican rallying cry of bringing the power back to the people fell flat as the law entered the floor of the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee at the end of May 2017.

The Committee meeting centered around two major questions: (1) “whether state governments should overrule decisions local government make about the monuments it owns sitting on property it owns” and (2) whether local governments should “decide who to celebrate with those memorials” (Ballard, 2017b). Democratic Senator Karen Carter Peterson opened the floor of the hearing to witnesses who on one end contended that the monuments were “protecting the memories of their Confederate soldier ancestors” and on the other “wanted to remember the experiences of opponents whose ancestors were enslaved” by advocating for their removal (Ballard, 2017b). For over six hours, the hearing continued until Peterson called a vote that predictably broke along both racial and party lines (Ballard, 2017b). Four Democrats, all African American, voted against both bills, while the two Republicans on the committee, both white, voted to approve of the bills. For the time being, the Louisiana experience remains vastly different from that which exists in North

Carolina and other southern states. Louisiana municipalities still have the right to determine the values and beliefs that best represent their constituents in public space. More importantly, Louisiana citizens still have the right to engage in constructive dialogues with fellow citizens and local officials regarding the other divisive monuments that remain in place across the state.

## **Summary**

Debates over heritage protection in both North Carolina and Louisiana highlight just how divided American society is on the subject. These laws bear questions that are equally central to understanding the field of heritage conservation as it exists today: Who gets to decide what constitutes heritage and collective history? Why do some historically-significant monuments and narratives deserve more protection than others? These are questions that North Carolina—and South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Alabama—have answered on behalf of their citizens. While Louisiana attempted to do the same in their state, the legislative movement largely failed. These laws, in the states where they are currently enacted, are destructive to the democratic political process and shut down the necessary conversations many communities should have regarding race relations, contentious history, and the future vision of their cities more generally (Kovvali, 2017). Some might even suggest that they are in direct violation of the right to free speech because the statutes compel “the city to engage in speech it finds offensive” (Kovvali, 2017). Certainly, at the heart of the contemporary debate are the various moral issues surrounding the continued maintenance of monuments associated with white supremacy and slavery, but there are several legal issues that could eventually prove challengeable in court to undermine these laws.

Overall, the south’s heritage laws showcase that when public space and the will of the people are at play, there needs to be a clear process in place by which citizens and municipal leaders can come together and engage in a democratic and open dialogue regarding contentious monuments of all types, whether Confederate or otherwise. The swift passage of these laws that have taken the power away from local jurisdictions are a detriment to an open, pluralistic democracy such as the United States. The majority of states in the South do not allow for such a process and have instead taken the power away from the people under the guise of preserving state history at the expense of public safety and popular opinion. In general, these laws have left behind numerous unanswered questions

regarding the potentiality of a removal process as well as a question over the very nature of the monuments themselves.

**Chapter IV**  
**The Case of Silent Sam**  
**In Chapel Hill (NC)**



The Confederate soldier monument that anchors the University of North Carolina (UNC) campus at Chapel Hill's historic upper quad—McCorkle Place—is a physical manifestation of the historical, political, and social developments that occurred in the state around the time of erection in 1913. Silent Sam, as the monument is colloquially known, is a monument dedicated to the unnamed soldiers who dedicated their lives to the war and who answered the call of duty to their country, their state, and their university. However, underneath this façade lays a more interesting and intricate layer of meaning that is far more nefarious than commemoration alone and has much to do with the political context of the region. As part of the larger movement to promote Lost Cause ideology and a southern racial hierarchy based upon the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race, this additional layer of meaning served as additional motivation for the monument's construction nearly five decades after the Civil War. This contextual understanding of Silent Sam is necessary and an important aspect for delving into the central meaning of the monument as it stands on the university campus.

Amid the political and social turmoil ravaging the state at the turn of the century, the UNC Board of Trustees met in 1908 to agree upon a request from the UDC. In it, the organization asked permission “to erect a handsome and suitable monument on the grounds of our State University in memory of the Chapel Hill boys, who left college, 1861-65 and primed our Southern army in defense of our State” (Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina, 1908). The Board of Trustees and then President of the University, Francis Preston Venable, approved the proposal hoping to construct a memorial arch to serve as a gateway to the campus from the west in time for the Class of 1911 commencement—and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war (Venable, 1908, 1909). Between 1908 and 1913, documentation between Venable and the leaders of the UDC indicates that while both sides agreed that the “monument will stand as a lesson in stone and bronze to all succeeding generations of students,” neither side could agree on the type of monument that was most deserving, the appropriate funding structure, or the eventual location of the monument on campus (Venable, 1911).

By 1911, both sides agreed that instead of a victory arch at the western entrance to UNC, a sculpted Confederate soldier in bronze, atop a granite pedestal, brandishing an unloaded musket pointed

north was the most appropriate design.<sup>4</sup> However this indecision on part of the UDC and the university delayed the dedication ceremony by two years and opted for the Class of 1913 commencement instead. Once both sides were satisfied in late 1911<sup>5</sup>, a dedication date of June 2, 1913 was settled, and McCorkle Place was chosen as the most illustrious location for the monument since the university had recently constructed new dormitories to frame the upper quad with the monument designed to serve as a centerpiece for the new construction (Venable, 1913b). McCorkle Place (Figure 3) is also notable as a publicly-accessible, and highly visible part of campus, just off the main commercial thoroughfare in Chapel Hill: Franklin Street. This ensured that anyone who entered the university campus would immediately be in the presence of Silent Sam's looming stature.

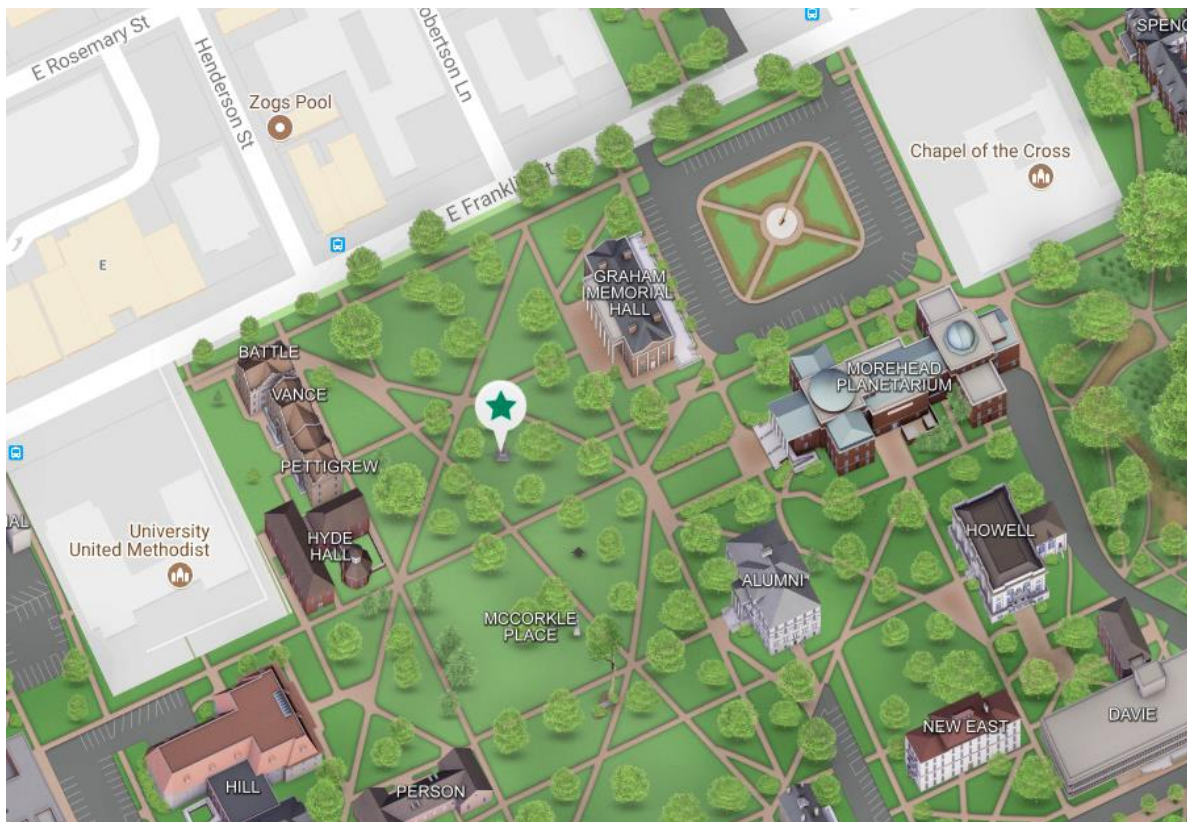


Figure 3 Map of McCorkle Place on UNC's campus. Silent Sam monument is represented by the star at the center of the upper quad facing towards East Franklin Street. Image Source: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <https://maps.unc.edu/>

<sup>4</sup> John Wilson, a Canadian sculptor notably endowed this soldier with a gun, at-ready, but without ammunition. This deliberate design decision eventually led to the statue's colloquial moniker, Silent Sam, since without ammunition, Sam was silenced and actually unable to fulfill his duty as protector of UNC from northern invaders. The Daily Tar Heel, the university's student paper, did not refer to the statue as Silent Sam until February 23, 1954. For more information, see <https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/silent-sam/about>.

<sup>5</sup> The total monument cost was \$7,500; the UDC was charged with raising \$2,500 from their members while the UNC Board of Trustees would solicit the remaining \$5,000 from their alumni network.

Once design details were solidified, attention shifted towards the dedication ceremony (Figure 4) to unveil the monument at graduation later that year. Throughout the ensuing correspondence, Venable holds strong to the conviction that the monument is only intended to commemorate and symbolize the ideal of “service and the noble answer to the call of duty” as “a lesson for the living” and that the dedication ceremonies should convey such sentiments to those in attendance (Venable, 1913b). *The Tar Heel*, the precursor to the *Daily Tar Heel*, UNC’s student newspaper, reiterates Venable’s claims suggesting that monument would stand the test of time and “will ever be to all future generations an object lesson of service rendered and duty performed, and it will impress upon them their obligation to be faithful to the record of the past” (Staff Writer, 1911). While the lesson of service is made pointedly clear by the President, UNC’s principal newspaper, and the bronze plate inscription on the side of the monument’s pedestal<sup>6</sup>, there is an additional layer of meaning that is undeniably imbued within this monument.

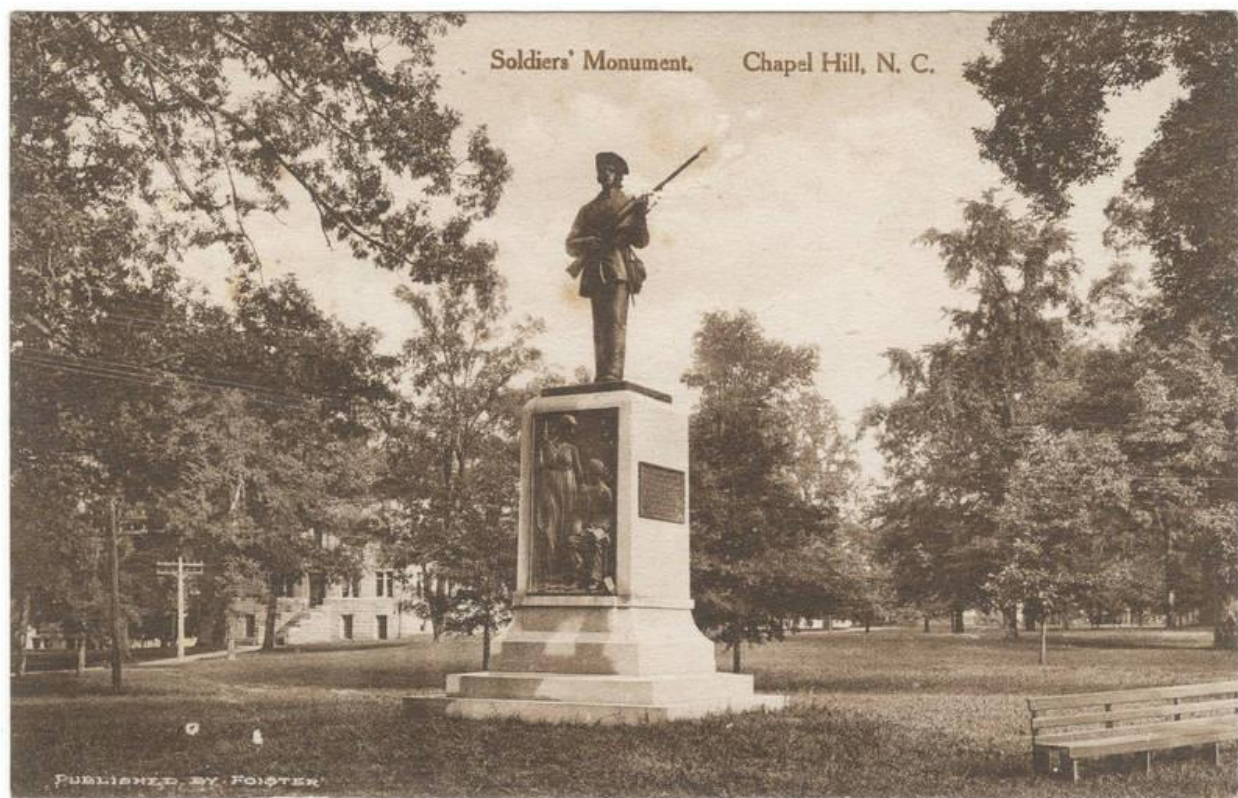


Figure 4 Undated postcard showing UNC's Confederate monument. Image Source: Durwood Barbour Collection of North Carolina Postcards (P077), North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

<sup>6</sup> Silent Sam Inscription (Right Panel): “To the sons of the University who entered the War of 1861-65 in answer to the call of their country and whose lives taught the lesson of their great commander that duty is the sublimest word in the English language.” - <https://www.ncpedia.org/monument/memorial-civil-war>

Although Venable alludes to an object “lesson for the living”, Silent Sam’s more nefarious message is most pointedly conveyed by those present at the dedication ceremonies on June 2, 1913. Silent Sam was introduced as a conduit to symbolize both the importance of honoring the dead and vindicating and perpetuating the rightness of the Confederate cause for all future generations of UNC students. Among the dedication speakers in attendance that day, no one did more to solidify this Lost Cause interpretation of southern history or galvanized the idealized Anglo-Saxon mythology vis-à-vis Silent Sam than “General” Julian Shakespeare Carr, a Confederate veteran, tobacco mogul, and alumnus of the Class of 1866.<sup>7</sup>

### **Silent Sam’s Dedication Ceremony**

On June 2, 1913, nearly one thousand people gathered around the newly erected monument (Figure 5) that symbolizes “the response of the University...to the call of home and duty” (The Alumni Association of the University of North Carolina, 1913). Those in attendance that day heard a procession of dedication speeches from then Governor of North Carolina, Locke Craig, Mary Lyde Williams and Bettie Jackson London of the UDC, UNC President Venable, and lastly, “General” Julian S. Carr (The Alumni Association of the University of North Carolina, 1913). During the ceremony, Venable reiterated the words he spoke previously in correspondence suggesting that this “is no mere monument to the dead but a worthy memorial to that heroic era in the history of the University when men’s hearts were stirred mightily and the clear call of duty was answered even at the sacrifice of life itself” (Venable, 1913a). Other dedication speakers echoed these same sentiments put forward by the President, even Carr. These speeches largely maintained the pretense that Silent Sam was erected as a testament to the service and dedication of UNC’s student soldiers who fought during the Civil War.

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<sup>7</sup> Julian S. Carr was referred to as “General” because of his active service in honor of fellow Confederate Veterans through both the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) and United Daughters of the Confederacy; in fact, Carr never rose to the rank in his military career. He left UNC to answer his call of duty, and returned shortly after the war to complete his degree.





Figure 5 Silent Sam Unveiling Ceremony, June 1913. Image Source: "[Unveiling of the Confederate Monument, June 2, 1913]" in Orange County, North Carolina Postcard Collection (P052), North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill

The UDC<sup>8</sup> and Governor Craig<sup>9</sup> spoke to the southern cause as a love for one's country, a duty to one's people, and the expected devotion to that country, both the South as a culturally-independent region and the reunified United States. Carr, however, struck a notably different chord in his now infamous dedication speech. Carr, speaking to a dark, revisionist version of southern Civil War history, echoed sentiments most notably associated with the Lost Cause and white supremacy:

The present generation, I am persuaded, scarcely takes note of what the Confederate soldier meant to the welfare of the Anglo-Saxon race during the four years immediately succeeding the war, when the facts are, that their courage and steadfastness saved the very life of the Anglo-Saxon race in the South (Carr, 1913).

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<sup>8</sup> To read the transcripts of Mary Lyde Williams' and Bettie Jackson London's speeches on behalf of the UDC, see the following: Wilmington Morning Star, "Mary Lyde Williams' Speech," June 15, 1913: <https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/silent-sam/archives>; Speeches by Bettie Jackson London and H.A. London at the Unveiling of the Monument, in the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: <http://archive.org/stream/aschairmanofmonu00lond#page/n1/mode/2up>.

<sup>9</sup> To read the transcript of Governor Craig's speech on behalf of the State of North Carolina, see the following: Raleigh News & Observer, "Governor Craig's Address," June 3, 1913: <https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/silent-sam/archives>

Carr directly connected the cause of the Confederacy, with the preservation of the “Anglo-Saxon race”, giving voice to this interpretation as if to suggest that today’s generation—the generation present at the 1913 unveiling—and by extension all future generations—did not understand why the war was fought in the first place. Carr implied that the primary purpose for both the war and the violence that occurred during Reconstruction across the region was the preservation and presumed “purity” of the Anglo-Saxon “race.”

Carr’s speech highlights the emphasis placed upon the reshaping of public memory and public history at that moment in the South—a period marked by a shifting political situation that saw white elites return to power for the first time since the end of the war. Carr leveraged an alternative interpretation of history to propagate the present circumstances of society as he saw it—one in which African Americans were no longer considered a politically potent force in North Carolina—and the continuation of this preferred racial hierarchy into the future. Carr reiterated the importance of shaping public memory in harkening back to the “four years immediately succeeding the war,” a period that overlaps with Reconstruction and the Federal military occupation of North Carolina (Carr, 1913). According to Carr, the current generation should remember that it was the Confederate veterans who risked their lives in the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon way of life, while the Federal occupiers helped bring African Americans to power at their expense. For him, it was during Reconstruction that the “‘bottom rail was on top’ all over the Southern states,” but by 1913, “the purest strain of the Anglo-Saxon [was] to be found in the thirteen Southern states” thanks to the bravery and duty of the Confederate soldiers, both during and immediately after the war (Carr, 1913). Though the remarks shared by Carr are notably blunt and difficult to come to terms with in the present, they are undeniably a product of the time in which Silent Sam was dedicated and symbolic of a shift in political power away from African Americans.

Towards the end of his speech, Carr more explicitly voiced his racist beliefs, forever imbuing the Silent Sam monument with the racial undertones that are now at the center of the debates over the monument’s existence. In recounting his own act of “duty” following the war, Carr stated:

One hundred yards from where we stand, less than ninety days perhaps after my return from Appomattox, I horse-whipped a negro wench until her skirts hung in shreds, because

upon the streets of this quiet village she had publicly insulted and maligned a Southern lady then rushed for protection to these University buildings where was stationed a garrison of one hundred Federal soldiers. I performed the pleasing duty in the immediate presence of the entire garrison, and for thirty nights afterwards slept with a double-barrel shot gun under my arm (Carr, 1913).

Here, Carr recounts a moment in which continued service to his race was tested so shortly after the war, and only steps away from the very university where all had gathered that day. Driving home his purpose in dedicating this monument to future generations and adherents of the Lost Cause, and by association the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon race, Carr concluded his speech with the following:

That for which they battled in memory of whom this monument is reared, as well as for the survivors of that bloody drama, was not achieved. But the cause for which they fought is not lost. It never can be, never will be lost while it is enshrined in the hearts of the people of the South (Carr, 1913).

And this cause, “lest it be forgotten,” has since been codified and set in stone upon the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, embodied symbolically by the solid bronze sculpture of a young soldier with eyes towards the north, known around campus today as Silent Sam.

### **Silent Sam: 1913 – 2018**

Unsurprisingly, the white public at the helm of many of the state’s major newspapers and publications lauded the unveiling of Silent Sam; it was a grand moment for the state, the surviving Confederates, and by association, white supremacists who agreed wholeheartedly with what Carr recounted that day. According to the *Wilmington Morning Star*, the “handsome bronze monument on [UNC’s] campus” was honorably unveiled at an “event which attracted the interested and sympathetic attention of the whole State” (Staff Writer, 1913). The Silent Sam monument was widely reported upon across the state and, as such, seen in a favorable light, despite the inherent racial overtones imbued into the monument by Carr. Although Carr was one of the few actual veterans invited to participate in the ceremonies, his speech was omitted from most publications and few even mentioned his attendance at the ceremony. From 1913 through World War II and the 1950s, Silent Sam stood wantonly on UNC’s campus; few students paid attention to him and

fewer still took note of what was said at the dedication ceremonies. Questions surrounding the origins of the monument did not come to light until the Civil Rights era and the Vietnam War in the 1960s.

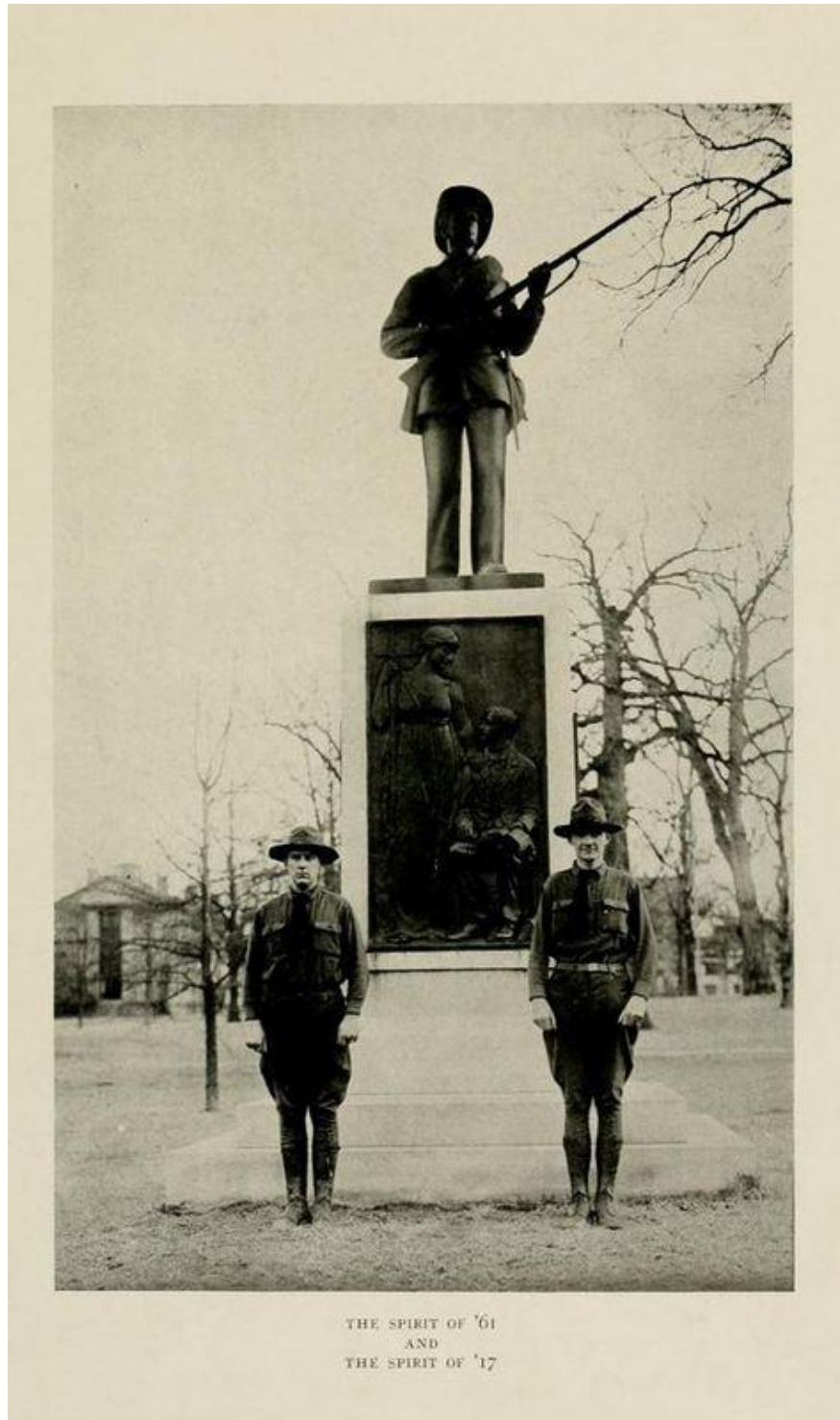
Silent Sam has remained on UNC's campus for over a century. Public reactions to his continued presence have largely gravitated toward conflicting poles: one which believes that the monument is only intended to commemorate duty and service and another which interprets Silent Sam as a physical manifestation of white supremacy. While the former is apt to broaden its association from just the Civil War to incorporate other wars in which UNC students have fought, the latter draws upon Carr's speech to substantiate their interpretation and views regarding the monument's place on campus. As the university has grown exponentially since the Civil Rights era and become racially integrated<sup>10</sup>, the two opposing interpretations have been thrust into the spotlight and sparked a five decade-long debate over the future of Silent Sam.

Silent Sam's symbolic association with war and duty is largely uncontested. Although there are those who accept the racialized interpretation of Silent Sam, the monument is still an important gathering space for students to show support and reverence to their fallen classmates in times of war. For many students, Silent Sam is an enduring symbol of duty and service to the nation (Figure 6). During and shortly after World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War, numerous student-led demonstrations occurred around Silent Sam, some in support of the war, others against it (University Archives at UNC Chapel Hill, 2016). Given the monument's location on the upper quad of campus, the university's historic center, it is no surprise that the space surrounding Silent Sam has been exploited as a platform for war demonstrations. However, the very presence of the monument as one so associated with the university's conflicted history in war has given further credence to student-led war demonstrations on both sides.

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<sup>10</sup> UNC became integrated in the mid-1950s when 4 African American students were allowed to attend.





*Figure 6 Soldiers Posing in Front of Silent Sam, 1918. Image Source: Yackety Yack, 1918 from the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Accessed via DigitalNC.org.*

By the mid-1960s, at the peak of the Civil Rights movement, students began to question the monument's less illustrious, overlooked history. Although UNC was forced to integrate under court order in 1955, the African American student population remained small throughout the late-

1950s and early-1960s as UNC. For African Americans in the state, UNC was deemed only open to “the best and brightest” effectively depriving access to public education to a large portion of the state’s population (Powledge, 1955). By 1965, the African American population began to more closely mirror the state’s. With the rise in visibility of minorities on campus and an increased focus on racial inequalities, the debate around Silent Sam gathered steam on campus, hastened provocatively by an editorial featured in the March 17, 1965 edition of the *Daily Tar Heel*. Al Ribak, in a letter to the editor, acknowledged that while Silent Sam had long been a tradition on UNC’s campus, he did not believe that “traditions should be maintained for tradition’s sake” (Ribak, 1965). Ribak did not want UNC’s students and staff to forget that:

Silent Sam is a confederate soldier. The primary purpose of the ‘memorial’ was to associate a fictitious ‘honor’ with the darkest blot on American history—the fight for southern racists to keep the Negro peoples in a position of debased subservience. For this they were willing to destroy the Union (Ribak, 1965).

For the first time since 1913, students, teachers, and citizens of Chapel Hill began to openly question Silent Sam’s purpose on a public university campus. Ribak’s letter to the editor set off a nearly five-decade long debate that emerges time and time again. Ribak and his supporters ensured that Silent Sam could no longer be ignored by those on both sides of the debate. On one side, there were—and continue to be—those who believed that “the existence on the UNC campus of a monument to men who were militant white supremacists and extremists of the worst kind is no less an affront to the Negro people” and other minority UNC students (Ribak, 1965). On the other, there were—and continue to be—those who believed that “Ribak [and his supporters] were trying to shame [their] ancestors for fighting for what they believed in” and that Silent Sam should not be torn down because it is part of their heritage (Catlette, 1965). Although these sentiments were uttered in the mid-1960s, they continue to frame the contemporary debate as well. After nearly five decades of discussion, the university is no closer to resolving the question of Silent Sam.

Although Ribak’s letter set off a debate in the *Daily Tar Heel* that lasted only a few issues in 1965, the monument was never in real jeopardy of being removed at that time. More importantly though, his letter is credited with two major contributions that changed the way many viewed Silent Sam. Ribak’s argument brought to light the monument’s less understood history and its association with

white supremacy and the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow on campus. Ribak's argument also gave voice to minority groups who had long been silenced on campus. By equating Silent Sam with white supremacy, activists exploited the monument as a platform and gathering space for Civil Rights activists, Black Live Matters protestors and, subsequently, white supremacist rallies. This created an open environment wherein opposing marginalized groups could lay claim to public space on UNC's campus and give voice to their opinions.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Silent Sam's symbolic power is leveraged for the first time by black student movements in protest of acts of violence and aggression against the African American community. For instance, in April 1968, Silent Sam was splashed with graffiti in protest of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr (Jennings, 1968). In a similar protest, UNC's Black Student Movement held a rally at the foot of Silent Sam to protest the unwarranted death of James Cates, a young black man who was murdered by a white motorcycle gang on campus in the early 1970s (Figure 7) (Jeffries, 1971). From that point on, Silent Sam became the most visible and poignant platform to voice collective concerns over the sanctity of African American lives and the equality of African Americans in general. In 1992, Silent Sam was the chosen site for a protest against the Rodney King verdict that acquitted four white police officers charged with the beating of a black motorist in Los Angeles (Griffin & Rochman, 1992). While Los Angeles burned in the riots that followed the verdict, UNC students and faculty came together to reflect upon the state of race relations in the country in front of the monument that to many stood as a symbol of black oppression and white supremacy (Griffin & Rochman, 1992).



*Figure 7 James Cates memorial demonstration - November 19, 1971. Image Source: Yackety Yack, 1972, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library.*

Since the 1990s, the number of racially-motivated protests, particularly acts of vandalism, that have occurred at the Silent Sam monument has increased substantially. In 2015 alone, Silent Sam was vandalized multiple times by activists brandishing the words “KKK,” “Black Lives Matter,” “murderer,” and “Who is Sandra Bland?” (Figure 8) in reference to an African American woman who died while in police custody in Texas (Goins, 2015; Staff Writer, 2015). The monument has even been blindfolded by a Confederate flag as an alternative to permanently defacing the monument with spray paint (Smoot, 2015). While the university and local community can continue to clean the monument following these acts, many agree that it will continue “to keep happening until they take it down” (Goins, 2015). The 2015 Student Body President, Houston Summers, put Silent Sam’s problem most succinctly:



I'm not saying that students should go around spray-painting things as an expression of their concerns, but at the same time, it's a manifestation of a failure on our part to provide enough substantial areas for conversation (Goins, 2015).

Echoing Summers' stance, the university officially responded with the following statement, one of many that have continually been rehashed and re-released between 2015 and 2018:

This is what Carolina is all about, and this includes our commitment to free speech and open dialogue on all issues, not matter how emotional and at times painful. Vandalism like this is unfortunate because it is the antithesis of open discussion and the traditions and principles for which the University stands (Goins, 2015).



Figure 8 Workers clean Silent Sam following vandalism, 2015. Image Source: *The Daily Tar Heel*, July 8, 2015.

Silent Sam still stands today. And while activism around the monument has increased since the events in Charlottesville in 2017, the monument's fate has been decided by North Carolina's legislature. Because Silent Sam is located on public property, the university can do little to assuage

the concerns of faculty, students, or the surrounding community. However, the movement against Silent Sam is likely to continue until a more conducive legislative environment allows for a constructive, community-oriented dialogue to occur or protestors take matters into their own hands and pull down the monument on their own. Over the years, the university has made various attempts to address the issue without removing or destroying the monument, but few have found solace in the university's actions.

### **Contemporary Movement Against Silent Sam**

For many, the university is simply not doing enough to address the concerns of the students, faculty, or community. Others claim that African Americans have too few representations on campus to effectively offset Silent Sam's racial undertones and the effect that its presence has had on the community. In a December 1990 issue of *Blank Ink Magazine*, the official magazine of the Black Student Movement at UNC, Joel Winful recognized Carolina as "a center of southern culture," but conceded that there was a noticeable lack of African American representations on the campus—officially giving voice to this movement to introduce African American representations to counteract Silent Sam (Winful, 1990). In the presence of Silent Sam and other questionable monuments on campus, Winful suggested that African Americans have as much of a right "to have [their] heritage officially recognized" on UNC's campus as any other group (Winful, 1990). For many students and faculty, African Americans do not have ample representation on campus which ultimately makes it difficult for many to feel that the community has truly "gained [their] footing or equal ground" while icons such as Silent Sam still stand (Winful, 1990). According to Winful, African Americans "cannot pretend, nor should [they] be made to pretend that [they] are not bothered by the statues" so long as they remain standing (Winful, 1990).

UNC is first and foremost a public university; it is a public campus that receives most of its funding from the state to educate the state's students, not an open-air art gallery. However, many of the artistic representations that have been introduced on campus to beautify or commemorate are not abstract or neutral in subject matter or in the message they are designed to convey. Since the early 2000s, there have been two notable attempts at recontextualizing Silent Sam to incorporate the African American experience into the university's heritage. One has taken a more direct approach to Silent Sam through community action, the other approach attributed to the university's actions

alone. Both, however, have contributed to the ongoing discussion over the future of Silent Sam and whether recontextualization is an effective tool in confronting the university's divisive history.

### **The Unsung Founders Monument**

Do-Ho Suh's monument to the Unsung Founders of the University was never intended as a direct response or attempt at recontextualizing Silent Sam. However, its subject matter and prime location on McCorkle Place, with Silent Sam looming in the background, suggests otherwise. The Class of 2002, seeking a proper memorial to honor the "men and women of color who helped raise some of the first buildings on campus," commissioned Do-Ho Suh for the generous gift on behalf of their class (Knighton, 2002). Suh's monument takes the form of a black granite table surrounded by five stone seats. The piece itself does not stand out, especially with Silent Sam looming above the ground-hugging table only a couple yards away. However, closer inspection of the monument reveals a large number of bronze figures "straining to hold up the marble slab" representing the faceless men and women of African American descent who contributed to and helped build the university (Figures 9 & 10) (Fox & May, 2013). The monument's evocative power and symbolic nature may be unclear from afar, but Suh's decision to create a functional memorial that invites viewers to sit, relax, and contemplate helps reveal its message.





Figure 9 Unsung Founders, Bound and Free. Image Source: *The Carolina Story: A virtual Museum of University History*.



Figure 10 Unsung Founders Memorial and Silent Sam. Image Source: *Dan McCullough Flickr Creative Commons*.



Silent Sam and the Unsung Founders monument work in tandem with one another given their proximity as well as their contrasting messages. However, some questioned Suh's decision to create a functional monument, especially one that dwarfs the African American figures in such close proximity to Silent Sam's more imposing figure. Often Suh's monument is overlooked or bypassed altogether because the subject of slavery still causes many discomfort (Fox & May, 2013). Even for contemporary audiences, it is hard to explain why the memorial depicts slaves upholding a heavy table and what the intention of the monument is in such close proximity to the Confederate monument (Fox & May, 2013). Like Silent Sam, the Unsung Founders monument brings to bear questions of the meaningful relationships passersby have with their surroundings on McCorkle Place as well as the intention of the designers.

Intentional or not in its conversation with Silent Sam, Chancellor James Moeser acknowledged its purpose in his acceptance speech at the dedication ceremony on November 5, 2005:

What we do today will not rectify what our ancestors did in the past. But this memorial, I believe, attests to our commitment to shed light on the darker corners of our history. Yes, the University's first leaders were slaveholders. It is also true that the contributions of African American servants and slaves were crucial to its success. One of the troublesome legacies of slavery is the pall that it casts over the family histories of those who were bought and sold. This monument finally recognizes the many unnamed whose toil and talent made the nation's first public university possible (Staff Writer, 2005).

The Unsung Founders monument does not right the wrong of Silent Sam and all that he stands for, but at the very least, the university has acknowledged and given credence to some of the claims that Winful gave voice to in his editorial back in 1990. However, Suh's monument was not and has not been widely acclaimed. While the monument is successful in shedding light on the heritage of slavery, an undeniably painful subject to give voice to in the form of a monument in a public space, the functionality and its interactivity is seen as unintentionally racist.

While Moeser applauded that Suh's monument "provides a functional space that passersby have already embraced," others suggested that its design in fact "makes it too easy for people to be disrespectful to the statue and thus the people it memorializes" (Turner, 2008). The fact that the monument is a functional table and "if you sit at it as you are intended to, you put your feet on

people” which is seen by some as a disservice to the subject its intended to depict and reflect (Turner, 2008). However, Archie Ervin, then associate provost for diversity and multicultural affairs and who was on the committee to select the monument, claimed that it was always intended as an interactive piece of art (Turner, 2008). Because of the subject matter, Suh “wanted to create a piece of art that was not standoffish, that was inviting to people to come up to it, to look at it, to inspect it, [and] to make it friendly” (Turner, 2008). Suh’s design is thus deliberate, not intended to simply add another monument on McCorkle Place, but rather to create a monument that invites the viewer to learn from it. For Ervin and others involved in the project, there is an explicit awareness that art is in itself subjective and the interpretations of art installations, such as the Unsung Founders monument, evoke strong reactions when the subject matter is problematic, but there is value in using “the campus as a tool to learn” (Turner, 2008).

The backlash against the Unsung Founders monument highlights how difficult it is to make visible something as painful as the heritage of slavery in the contemporary landscape, particularly on a public university campus. It is equally difficult to do such a painful subject any justice when in the presence of a monument nearby that is blatantly associated with racial oppression, white supremacy, and the university’s less than glorious past. Although the process by which the Unsung Founders monument came to exist on campus has democratic underpinnings, Silent Sam’s origins are conflictively undemocratic and detract from the other monuments in its vicinity. Suh’s monument is seen as many as a shared communicative icon while Silent Sam’s commanding and intimidating presence diminishes Suh’s intent. Thus, for nearly a decade, the Unsung Founders monument has stood as the university’s partial attempt at recontextualizing Silent Sam. Though the university attempted to give visual expression to African American heritage on campus, Silent Sam’s overly racist undertones worked to overshadow the progress that had been made.

### **Silence Sam Movement**

Both the Unsung Founders monument and Silent Sam remain standing today. However, few in the community give credit to the university for introducing Suh’s monument and few agree that what the university has done since is enough to address the issues associated with Silent Sam. In response to the wavering response from the university regarding Silent Sam’s future, a community organization composed of students, faculty and local community members formed in August 2011

hoping to take the matter into their own hands. The new organization, The Real Silent Sam Coalition, formed with the goal of creating “an honest public dialogue and [provoking] critical thought surrounding the monuments and buildings in Chapel Hill and Carrboro” (The Real Silent Sam, 2015). Seeking to bring “historical accuracy to the physical and mental landscapes” of the university and the surrounding community, The Real Silent Sam Coalition hoped to help the university community acknowledge its past” (The Real Silent Sam, 2015). Its members believed it to be their duty to shed light on the untold histories of the university through protest and open dialogue with the community. According to a *Daily Tar Heel* interview given during a September 2011 protest, a student member of the Coalition, decried that, “[t]he naming of buildings and erection of monuments with complex and potentially racist undertones is an issue that warrants discussion and creative solutions” through community discussion and action (Hartley, 2011). Rather than wait for the university to act on their own, the Coalition decided to take matters into their own hands. Instead of calling for the immediate removal of Silent Sam, the Coalition opted to erect “a plaque that calls attention to its white supremacist history” particularly by drawing the viewer’s attention to Julian S. Carr’s dedication speech in 1913 and contextualizing the social and political motivations behind the monument (Figure 11) (Hartley, 2011).



*Figure 11 The Real Silent Sam Plaque Unveiling, September 2011. Image Source: The Real Silent Sam Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/realsilentsam/>*

The Coalition's plaque was temporary and unsanctioned, and it was thus swiftly removed by university officials. However, its short presence helped raise awareness of ways in which the university could actively recontextualize Silent Sam without removal. There were those who would prefer to remove the monument altogether, but others felt that the plaque would serve a dual purpose that has the potential to appease both sides. The introduction of the plaque would not erase history, but rather force those who are in its presence to acknowledge and learn from the university's divisive past. However, some still felt the plaque "would minimize the sacrifice of the sons of the Confederacy who went to war for their homes, families, and property" by drawing more attention to Carr and his speech and overshadowing the Confederate student's sacrifice during the war (Mann, 2011). Some even suggested that "a plaque would only serve to remind passerby of what they already know: that racism was once accepted." But for the Coalition, that does not get to the heart of the matter. According to The Real Silent Sam Coalition:

We have a responsibility to a campus, a town, a history, our peers, and ourselves not only to unveil, but confront the past we inherited. We must complicate our memorials. We must ask what these monuments represent, and we must ask why these monuments do not represent our university community. We cannot pick and choose which histories we explore, the history of our campus is the history of students, it is the history of workers, it is the history of this town. It is only through this action that we can decide who and what we memorialize (The Real Silent Sam, 2012).

The Coalition had no intention of diminishing the veterans of the Confederacy by installing the plaque, nor did they intend to only “remind passersby of what they already know,” for their continued purpose is rather to help the community and the university reconcile with its past and generate a better understanding of the history it has inherited (The Real Silent Sam, 2012). For them, their goal was and continues to be to help facilitate a constructive dialogue focusing on expanding the scope of history and a better understanding of all historic monuments in their appropriate contexts. Ultimately the Coalition values the open questioning of the ideals inscribed into the built landscape and a better understanding as to why certain values and narratives are overlooked. Today, the Coalition hopes that through engagement and discussions with the university and surrounding community more people will critically engage with their built surroundings rather than take it all for granted. The built environment has room to grow and it has room to be changed, but ultimately it is up to the people to decide what values and narratives best represent the ideals of their community.

The Real Silent Sam Movement is still active in the community even though their temporary plaque was removed so soon after the protest in September 2011. Seeing a larger goal of maintaining a constructive dialogue regarding the contemporary landscape, the Coalition released a manifesto in March 2015 which more directly called upon the university to install “a plaque on Silent Sam to contextualize its history and [institute] a mandatory training program for incoming students about the racial history of both the University and Chapel Hill and an anti-racism training for faculty, staff, and administrators” (Reeder, 2015). Since 2011, the Coalition has expanded its focus to other contentious buildings, monuments, and other structures around Chapel Hill and Carrboro that are often misunderstood in their contemporary contexts. While the university

grapples with increased student protests in response to the Charlottesville rallies in August 2017, the community continues to fight and openly discuss the future of Silent Sam. For now, Silent Sam's presence looms on as students, faculty, and community members continue about their business.

## **Conclusion**

Silent Sam is an interesting case study because it is featured so prominently on a public university campus and has thus served as an important site for student and community activism throughout its long history. For over five decades, Silent Sam has been exploited as a platform of numerous public demonstrations; from protests against racial oppression to those actively supporting the preservation of the state's Confederate heritage, the increased attention and activism surrounding Silent Sam has brought up concerns of public safety for the university and surrounding community. Although many now understand Silent Sam's questionable origins and associations with Lost Cause ideology and white supremacy, the university has no jurisdiction to move the monument or even recontextualize it given the existing legal environment in North Carolina. In this case, the university's power to protect their students and faculty and ultimately decide what symbols best represent their community has been usurped by the state's legislative body.

However, with no legal procedure to remove Silent Sam, there have been a few notable attempts at recontextualizing the monument without removal hoping to assuage both sides of the debate. In one case, the university dedicated a commemorative monument on McCorkle Place that was intended to give voice to the African American community; however, that voice was largely overshadowed by Silent Sam's looming presence nearby. In another, a local grassroots organization took matters into their own hands and installed a plaque intended to contextualize the monument's history at the time of erection, specifically by drawing attention to Carr's controversial dedication speech. Arguably, neither attempt has been successful in helping the community come to terms with the university's past. Today, a new student movement called 'Silent Sam's Last Semester' trudges on with the hopes of finally seeing the monument removed from the campus' historic upper quad.

While the university continues to mull over Silent Sam's future, the community continues to voice their opposition, loudly and provocatively. Activism and protest are rampant, but without a legal procedure to openly and constructively discuss Silent Sam's future very little action is expected in the short term. Silent Sam's tenure as a central figure on UNC's campus is now over a century, but the question remains whether the monument will continue to stand for another century especially as the university and its surrounding communities continue to grow and evolve. Should local communities not be granted the power to determine what values, beliefs, and ideals best represent their community?

**Chapter V:**  
**The Case of the Confederate Soldiers**  
**Monument in Durham (NC)**



The Durham Confederate Soldiers Monument, erected on the County Courthouse grounds in 1924, is separated by eleven miles from the Silent Sam monument on the campus of UNC Chapel Hill. Despite the proximity, entirely different social and racial contexts separate the two. Like Silent Sam, the central impetus for Durham's monument was the memorialization of Confederate soldiers and "heroes who wore the gray" from Durham County (Staff Writer, 1924b). By 1924, nearly six decades after the war, this was a pertinent message to convey since many Confederate veterans had already passed. However, just as UNC's monument was envisioned as a lesson for all future North Carolina students, Durham's too harkened back to an idealized past with eyes towards shaping a narrative for the city's future. However, since the end of the Civil War, the United States had involved itself in two major wars—the Spanish-American War and World War I—during which Confederate veterans and their sons proved their dedication to a reconciled United States. Given this context, questions arise as to why the citizens of Durham felt the need to dedicate a monument to a period in history during which American soldiers fought against one another rather than side-by-side. Delving into Durham's social context around the time of erection provides the key to understanding the origins of the monument as well as the context in which it was brought down two days after the August 2017 rallies in Charlottesville.

### **Durham: A Bright Star in the New South**

The City of Durham (Figure 12), nestled between the academic center of the state, Chapel Hill, and its legislative heart, Raleigh, was nothing more than a railway depot surrounded by tobacco fields in the period preceding the war. The city was hardly even on the map when Confederate General Johnson surrendered his troops to Union General Sherman at nearby Bennett Place in 1865 (Staff Writer, 1924b). The city did not rise to prominence until after the Civil War, a period in which it came to personify the "economic vision of the New South" (Brown, 2008). Durham eventually became the commercial center for the state where it was believed that "modern industry might take root and spread on southern ground to mark the region's independence from and its incursion into the commercial North" (Brown, 2008). Although Durham was commercially prosperous, its Reconstruction experience was no different from elsewhere in the South. Recently freed African Americans wielded political and economic power and planted the foundation for future generations of freedmen in the region. Durham became a center for recently freed African

Americans to congregate together, cultivate commercial enterprises, and seek further education, under the watchful guise of white industrialists who controlled the city's economy.

Figure 12 Map of Central North Carolina - Raleigh, Durham & Chapel Hill. Image Source: Google Maps

<sup>11</sup> Washington P. Duke, founder of what became Duke University and tobacco industry magnate, and Julian S. Carr, local textile industry magnate of Silent Sam fame, were both notable Confederate veterans in Durham. They worked alongside, and at times supported, the burgeoning businesses of local African Americans, such as Richard Fitzgerald, a brick manufacturer and cotton mill president, and John Merrick, founder of North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company. For further information, see Brown's work, *Upbuilding Black Durham*.

however, the old plantation power dynamics translated easily into the new industrial power dynamics.

Jim Crow infiltrated every aspect of Durham's society creating pockets of African American-only communities in all corners of the city. This racial divide ensured separation in public health, education and other public arenas. However, the sheer political and organizational power of African Americans was felt in Durham. Although African Americans lacked the numbers to fully control the political direction of the city<sup>12</sup>, many understood that "whites would do anything they could to sustain segregation, including supporting black institutions" (Brown, 2008). Working within the system of Jim Crow and segregation, Durham's African Americans seized every opportunity they could to advance their community. The city's commercial success did not go unnoticed among the numerous African American leaders of the time (Brown, 2008). In 1912, W.E.B. Du Bois took notice in writing about the city's African American community:

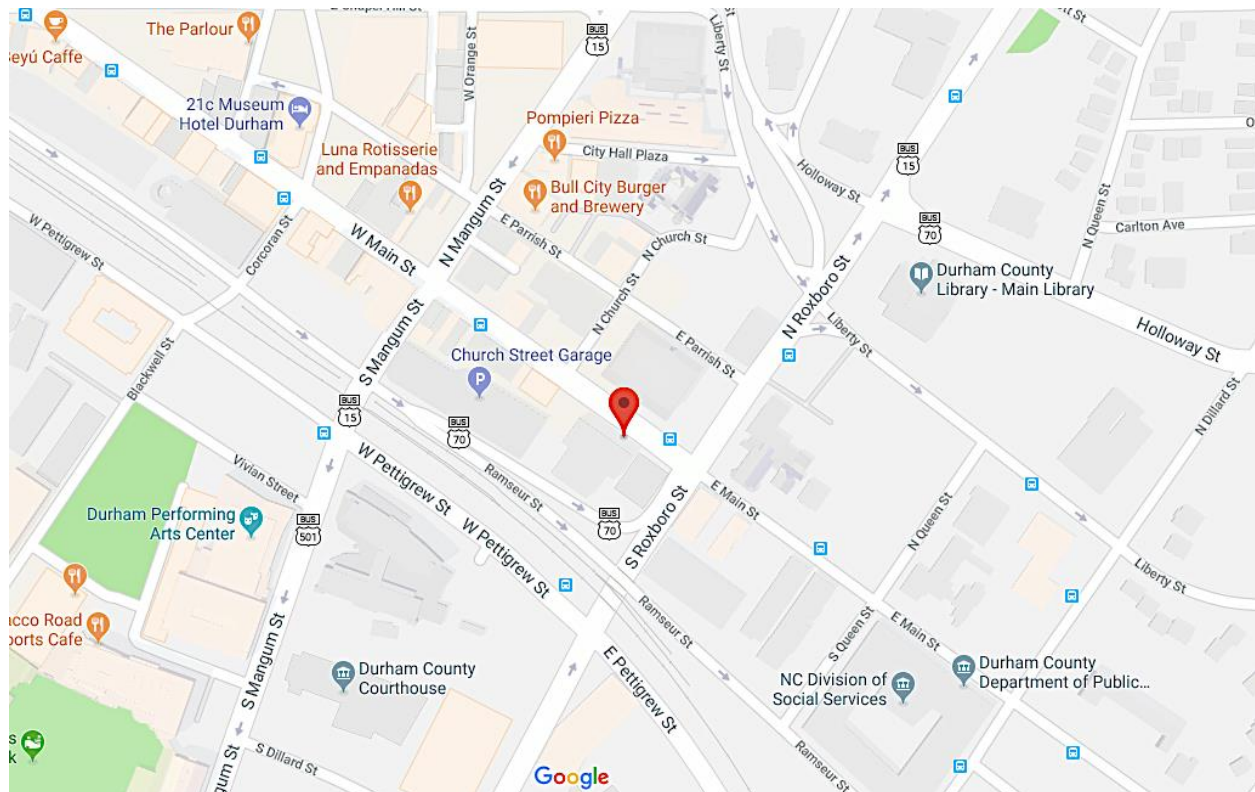
Today, there is a singular group in Durham where a black man may get up in the morning from a mattress made by a black man, in a house which a black man built out of lumber, which black men cut and planed; he may put on a suit which he bought at a colored haberdashery and socks knit at a colored mill; he may cook victuals from a colored grocery store on a stove which black men fashioned; he may earn his living working for colored men, be sick in a colored hospital, and buried from a colored church; and the Negro insurance company will pay his widow enough to keep his children in the colored school. This is surely progress (Du Bois, 1912).

Despite structural and societal obstacles attributed to Jim Crow segregation, Durham was a sign of progress, "a model for the rest of the South" (Brown, 2008). Durham showed that African Americans could create a successful, largely-independent insular world. All that African Americans could achieve at the time went into the foundation of what became known as Durham's Black Wall Street (Figure 13), a stretch of Parrish Street in downtown populated by African American-owned businesses and anchored by the North Carolina Mutual and Life Insurance

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<sup>12</sup> Note: According to Brown, Durham's African American population only represented one third of the city's total population; despite this lack of sheer numbers, African Americans were able to achieve a lot within the city earning its reputation as the commercial alternative to New York's Harlem.

Company, the largest African American business in the world by 1925 (Brown, 2008). Parrish Street prospered throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century carefully avoiding direct conflict and competition with the white-owned businesses on nearby Main Street. The success of Parrish Street did not go unnoticed by the city's white population, however; Durham's Confederate monument, incidentally, was placed one block away on nearby Main Street directly facing Parrish Street—the heart of the city's active and powerful African American community.



*Figure 13 Map of Downtown Durham - Confederate Soldiers Monument Indicated by Red Flag on West Main Street. Image Source: Google Maps*

In a region plagued by racial violence, Durham's stability stood out. Out of the ashes of the Civil War, a small train depot in the heart of North Carolina welcomed freedmen and former Confederates alike to take part in a "rags-to-riches narrative where the focus on hard work, initiative, ingenuity, and ambition generated a prosperity with potential to subordinate racial animosities to business and industrial interests" (Brown, 2008). Although Jim Crow and segregation dictated every aspect of Durham's society, prosperity occurred on both sides of the line. White-owned tobacco manufacturers, textile mills, and related businesses flourished in West Durham and along downtown's Main Street while black-owned cotton mills, cinemas, and

insurance companies thrived in East Durham and along nearby Parrish Street. During this period, the city became home to two influential corporations, one white-owned, the other black-owned: American Tobacco Company and the North Carolina Mutual and Life Insurance Company. Durham also became host to two major universities, one white, the other black: Duke University (formerly Trinity College) and North Carolina Central University (NCCU), a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Durham was united in prosperity, but divided in color, the epitome of a thriving city in the New South.

### **Durham County's Confederate Soldier Memorial**

Although Durham was a highly divided city in the South, it took nearly 60 years after the end of the Civil War for the city to erect its monument to the Confederacy. With Black Wall Street thriving, racial tensions on the rise following World War I, and the roll of living Confederate veterans rapidly dwindling, the UCV, local-industrialist Julian S. Carr, and the local chapter of the UDC officially circulated a petition in 1922 to erect their monument (Staff Writer, 1922a). Notably, Durham County Commissioners had already set aside ground for the monument on the lawn of the County Courthouse—one block away from Black Wall Street. However, the city needed the General Assembly to “enact special legislation permitting the county commissioners to give one half of one per cent of the taxes derived in Durham county to a committee for the erection of a fitting monument to the soldiers of the Lost Cause” (Staff Writer, 1922a). The Durham County monument is unique in that it was funded using tax payer rather than funds from the UDC. In a city with a prominent African American middle socioeconomic class it is undeniable that their tax contributions likely helped fund a monument that idealizes a war fought to propagate the continued subjugation of their race.

In December 1922 the General Assembly officially authorized the county to set aside \$5,000 in taxes for the monument. The legislation also established a monument commission composed of Julian S. Carr and four other prominent members of the UCV and UDC to design, plan, and allocate funds for the monument (Staff Writer, 1922b). Carr, concerned that the funds were far too low for the city, refused to support the commission or help erect the monument. According to Carr, anything less than \$15,000 would amount to a low-quality monument undeserved to the city of Durham and his fellow Confederate veterans (Staff Writer, 1923). This final act of defiance from

Carr was his last, as he died nearly five days before the monument's dedication ceremony in 1924. Although the UDC chapter in charge of the Durham monument bore his name, they ignored Carr and accepted the \$5,000 leaving Carr unsatisfied with the city's only act of commemoration for his fellow Confederate veterans (Staff Writer, 1924a).

### **Dedication & Unveiling - May 10, 1924**

Without Carr's input, the committee moved forward with the dedication ceremonies (DocSouth, 2017). On May 10, 1924, the *Durham Morning Herald*—the city's local newspaper—invited all to the unveiling of the monument to show “their appreciation for [the veteran's] unselfish devotion to the South” (Staff Writer, 1924b). Notably, the paper notes, “most of those who will pay homage to [the veterans] were yet unborn at the end of the war” (Staff Writer, 1924b). This unveiling was as much a testament to the devotion that Confederate veterans gave to their state as it was a symbolic passing of the torch for future generations to uphold their memories, legacies, beliefs and “unselfish devotion to the South” (Staff Writer, 1924b). As the *Durham Morning Herald* reported the following day,

...the monument will stand out with its lifesize figure of a Confederate veteran on it, calling to the people to remember these old men whose years are now but few and to be ever remindful of the service they rendered the southland. It will ever stand a silent guard over the hopes, the ambitions, and the work of the men who in 1861-65 bore the brunt of war (Staff Writer, 1924c).

With approximately fifty “heroes of the gray” in attendance, the unveiling ceremony proceeded accordingly (Staff Writer, 1924c). General Albert L. Cox—a veteran of World War I and the son of a Confederate officer—presented the monument to the city in a dedication speech that largely echoed the value of service to the nation and the dignity of those who gave their lives to their country:

We are living witnesses today to those deeds of the men in gray... They carry with them today the same courage and ideals of service that instilled in them years ago and in building up this country of ours. Whenever they can they take part in carrying on the work of our nation (Staff Writer, 1924c).

Although Cox's speech does not explicitly equate Durham's monument with white supremacy or the Lost Cause as explicitly as Carr had in Chapel Hill, there are components of his speech that are problematic in the context of Durham's racial diversity:

Centuries of history have shown us that disaster does not destroy... The fame of these men in gray and those who have gone on before us will rise supreme and prove an ever-living heritage to the men and women of the truth (Staff Writer, 1924c).

In the context of the Lost Cause, statements about the truth and the reality of the Civil War are not uncommon. Here, Cox is likely referring to the alternative interpretation of the Civil War that downplays the importance of slavery as a source of the conflict. This interpretation severely diminishes the African American experience of the war by overemphasizing the importance of secession. This "truth" is a part of a southern heritage that Cox credits the UDC with maintaining, even in the face of reality. Later in his speech, he even thanks the UDC for teaching "the youth of our land their heritage which is theirs," further grounding the importance white southerners placed in propagating a false narrative about the war for all southerners, even children (Staff Writer, 1924c). For Cox, and many of those present, this monument not only commemorated the Confederate soldiers who gave their lives—many of whom had already past—but also "the foundation [the Confederate soldiers] laid" during the Civil War for "the cause [that] they knew was right" as Mayor John Manning echoes in his acceptance speech (Staff Writer, 1924c).

Cast in bronze atop a granite slab, Durham County's Confederate Soldiers Monument was unveiled that day on May 10, 1924, just outside the County Courthouse—glaring down upon all those who entered hoping to seek justice. Like many Confederate monuments, the Durham monument (Figure 14) is oriented north, guarding the city from the Union. The orientation is also striking because it faces Parrish Street, the center of Black Wall Street in East Durham. While the dedication speeches paint a familiar picture of truth and rightful cause, the racial sentiments are further imbued into the monument via its strategic location and northern orientation. Additionally, courthouse monuments were notable because they were placed by those in power to propagate a desired racial hierarchy expected in all arenas of southern society, including the judicial system (Savage, 1999). For some, the presence of the Confederate monument just outside the county



courthouse, a place where one hoped to find equal justice under the law, meant that only a certain kind of justice would be found there—especially if you were African American (Savage, 1999).



*Figure 14 Durham Confederate Soldiers Monument. Image Source: IndyWeek, <https://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/hillsborough-could-remove-words-confederate-memorial-from-museum/Content?oid=4523007>*

However, what truly sets Durham's monument apart is its presence so close to the heart of the black community, in a city many referred to as the commercial alternative to Harlem's artistic community (Brown, 2008). Not only that, the monument faces Parrish Street as if the Confederate soldier had been tasked by the white community that had erected it with keeping an eye on the developments of the thriving black community only a block away. Durham was, and continues to



be, a divided city; actions that openly deterred black progress and designated black space in the realms of education, politics, and economics were apparent in the city. These segregationist ideals were only further ingrained by the presence of Confederate monument towering above all those in its presence. It is with this mindset and interpretation of the monument that protestors and social justice activists brought down Durham's monument ninety-three years later.

### **August 14, 2017**

The Unite the Right rally held in protest of the removal of a Robert E. Lee monument in nearby Charlottesville, Virginia ignited a firestorm of responses across the country. With the death of one protestor and each side blaming the other for the violence, attention shifted towards the presence of Confederate monuments dotting the built landscape of towns and cities across the country. While Mayor Mitch Landrieu had already successfully removed the Lee monument in New Orleans a few months before Charlottesville, both Silent Sam and the Durham County monument remained standing at the time. For many, Charlottesville was but one instance in what could eventually be a flood of similar rallies held to prevent the removal of Confederate monuments across the country. Durham and Chapel Hill were no different from Charlottesville. North Carolina officials put local law enforcement on high alert in the hopes of preserving the integrity of the state's numerous monuments and to maintain public safety during a period of heightened unrest (McDonald & Stancill, 2017).

In Durham, the anti-monument protest following Charlottesville underscored the failure of the local government to act on behalf of its citizens who demanded the monument's removal. The actions of August 14, 2017 showcase the flaws inherent in North Carolina's heritage law. Specifically, the law fails to find the right balance between protecting the state's historic monuments and ensuring the safety of its citizens. In an environment where citizens are unable to engage in the necessary constructive dialogues with their elected officials and members of the community over divisive symbols, the destruction of the Durham monument is unsurprising. The heritage law also fails municipal jurisdictions in the state; specifically, it usurps local power to protect citizens from harm by circumventing their decision-making role in the context of monuments located on their public property. Although Durham County Commissioner Chairwoman Wendy Jacobs had previously tasked her staff to do their due diligence regarding the

monument shortly after Charlottesville, the reality was that the city had no legal mechanism by which to do anything but research (Horton & Ross, 2017).

In North Carolina, civil disobedience remains the only option available to citizens in addressing the future of the state's monumental landscape. At present, the state's heritage law presents a highly-convoluted procedure, perhaps intentionally so, by which municipalities can request the removal of divisive monuments. However, in the case of violent unrest or protest, the current law does not allow municipalities to swiftly or temporarily remove monuments out of concerns for the safety of both the monument and its citizens. Unless the General Assembly paves the way for local jurisdictions to determine what is best for its constituents, local citizens have very few options. Thus, in light of the slow movement from the county in addressing the monument, and the rigid procedure put in place by the General Assembly, "a group of more than one hundred that included anti-fascists, and members of organizations like the Democratic Socialists of America, the Workers World Party and the Industrial Workers of the World" gathered outside the former County Courthouse on August 14, 2017 to address the future of the monument themselves.

Shortly before sunset that evening, protestors and police officers watched as the Durham Confederate monument toppled to the street, ninety-three years after it was originally dedicated. The bronze-coated statue could not withstand the power of the people, nor could it withstand the test of time and the changing social and political landscape of today's Durham. According to accounts given to the *New York Times*, as the figure "fell headfirst, still attached to a piece of its pedestal... the crowd—men and women, black and white, mostly young—erupted in whoops in cheers"—a vision of Durham's contemporary society (Figures 15 & 16) (Astor, 2017).



Figure 15 Protestors Topple Durham's Confederate Monument – August 14, 2017. Image Source: The Associated Press, <https://www.apnews.com/1cfd654518824aa9ae74e95a5924102c>



Figure 16 Destroyed Confederate Monument - Durham. Image Source: The Atlantic, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/09/durham-confederate-monument-judicial-system-civil-disobedience/539004/>

## Repercussions

Reactions to the Durham monument toppling varied across the political spectrum. While nearly everyone agreed in condemning the violence in Charlottesville and agreed that a public conversation was necessary to properly reconcile with contentious monuments, their storied pasts, and the effects that they have in the contemporary landscape, some disagreed when individuals took government inaction into their own hands. Notably, Governor Roy Cooper, a Democrat, attributed his initial disagreement with the removal to his concerns over public safety. Specifically, Cooper was concerned that “those same white supremacist elements we saw in Charlottesville [could] swarm the site, weapons in hand, in retaliation” (Cooper, 2017). Others questioned whether tearing down Civil War statues was “any different than ISIS destroying historic relics and museums” (Astor, 2017). While still others voiced their support in saying that “[t]aking down Confederate monuments is not erasing history—it’s declaring that some parts of history belong in a museum, not on a pedestal” (Astor, 2017).

By early morning the following day, the Durham County Commissioners released their own statement that neither admonished the protestors for destroying public property nor mentioned the monument itself:

We share the sentiments of many communities around the nation that admonish hate and acts of violence as we believe civility is necessary in our every action and response. Governmental agencies dedicated to public safety will continue to work collectively to ensure Durham remains a community of excellence where all of our residents can live peacefully, grow and thrive (Durham County, 2017).

For the official response, there was no clear indication as to what should be done with other monuments still standing, how local law enforcement should address the crime of tearing it down, and whether it should be considered a crime in the first place. The lack of clarity is a further indication of the legislative limbo that currently exists in North Carolina.

If the Civil Rights era is any indication, civil disobedience precipitates law enforcement reaction. The Durham monument removal was no exception. Takiyah Thompson, a student at nearby NCCU, whose contributions were pivotal in toppling the monument, inevitably became the face of the incident and a target of the official response from the Durham County Sheriff’s and District

Attorney's Offices.<sup>13</sup> According to Thompson, the monument was a product of an era in which racial oppression reigned rampant in the city and thus the monument was inextricably connected to this oppression. Linking the monument to contemporary police oppression and the Ku Klux Klan, as well as the larger Black Lives Matter movement, Thompson brazenly stated just before being officially arrested by the Durham County Sheriff's office:

The statue in Durham, North Carolina, said 'to the boys who wore the gray.' If we understand history we know that these boys who wore the gray, today wear the blue, and they wear sheets over their heads (Graham, 2017a).

Shortly after the August events, Durham officials swiftly removed the monument's crumbled remains from the courthouse lawn to a county warehouse. In tandem, the District Attorney moved forward with deciding the legal fate of the protestors, Takiyah Thompson. By early September, twelve protestors were charged with a felony which, under state law, required a riot and resulting property damage of more than \$1,500 (Graham, 2017b). Through the fall and winter of 2017-2018, the District Attorney's office mulled over the evidence presented against the protestors. Notably, at opening trials in early January 2018, the defendants' defense attorney, Scott Holmes, argued that statue:

...was in violation of (1) the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which bans slavery; (2) the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which guarantees equal protection under the law; (3) the North Carolina Constitution, which prohibits secession and requires allegiance to the U.S. government; and (4) state law, which bars the teaching of the overthrow of the government (Graham, 2018).

Following that defense and a lack of probable evidence, the judge dismissed charges against three defendants in early January. By February 2018, the District Attorney decided to dismiss the remaining charges against Thompson and the remaining protestors on February 20, 2018. In a press conference shortly after the decision, Durham District Attorney Roger Echols stated, "Acts

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<sup>13</sup> Sheriff Mike Andrews of Durham County early on August 15<sup>th</sup> promised to bring felony charges to those involved in the monuments removal. During a press conference that day, he stated "Let me be clear, no one is getting away with what happened." Later that day, Takiyah Thompson and eleven others were arrested by the County. For more information, see David Graham's article in *The Atlantic*, "Arrests Begin Following Durham Confederate Statue Toppling."

of vandalism, regardless of noble intent, are still a violation of law” (Graham, 2018). However, his office had determined that the amount of evidence at hand was not enough to convict the remaining defendants and that continuing to do so “would be a misuse of state resources” (Graham, 2018). For the tight-knit activist community in Durham, the destruction of the Confederate monument and the eventual dismissal of their charges was a direct blow to white supremacy and the continued grip it has on the city and the region at large. The dismissal was also seen as a sign of encouragement for other communities that they too can take matters into their own hands where the government refuses to act on behalf of their beliefs.

## **Conclusion**

In the end, the Durham protestors refused to deny that they were involved in removing the monument as doing so would have gone against all that was reported in the news. Rather, the protestors believed that they had acted upon their own belief that what they were doing was for the greater good of society, particularly in the context of Durham and its racial history. From 1924 until 2017, Durham’s Confederate monument remained in place, keeping an eye on the developments of the city surrounding it. While Black Wall Street on Parrish Street thrived only one block away from the Confederate monument, the city’s African American middle socioeconomic class remained strong in its shadow. However, by the 1960s and 1970s, urban renewal and decay led to the city’s eventual decline, including among the African American communities. The city of Durham, once a shining star for the New South, hollowed out after World War II—a situation that left a downtown core ripe for redevelopment and gentrification at the turn of the century.

Beginning in the 1990s, a renaissance has captivated the downtown core as renewed interest in its historic built heritage has piqued. However, the rapid redevelopment that the city has experienced over the last few decades has brought with it all the issues cities tend to face as gentrification disparately effects minority and low-income communities. While population change, and cultural evolution have shown new lights on the growing city’s built heritage, the removal of the Durham’s Confederate Soldiers monument was only the first step in addressing the ever-existing racial inequalities that continue to plague the city and the region. As Takiyah Thompson put it, “the people will continue to keep making the right choices until every Confederate statue is gone, until

white supremacy is gone” (Graham, 2018). Only then will American society begin to truly reconcile with a past steeped in racism and inequality and move forward together as a cohesive community.

The experience of the Durham monument underscores the failure of both the state and local government in addressing the concerns of its citizens. The lack of procedure for addressing divisive symbols in North Carolina, even in the case of a monument that was overtly offensive to African Americans in a predominantly African American city, is problematic. Only with public and open dialogue can a community move forward and reconcile its contentious past. When public officials are unwilling or unable to facilitate such dialogues, the Durham experience shows that civil disobedience is the only recourse available to citizens who want to see change and want to mold their city’s landscape in a way that better reflects their ideals and beliefs.

**Chapter VI:**  
**The Case of the Robert E. Lee**  
**Monument in New Orleans (LA)**



Prior to the Civil War, New Orleans was the largest and most diverse city in the South. The city's metropolitan status derived from its strategic location at the southern end of the Mississippi River and its importance as a major trading hub for the region's cotton industry. This status ensured New Orleans its economic success under the plantation system. Thus, for the Confederate States of America, the loss of New Orleans was a major complication in their fight to maintain their slave-based economy (Hogue, 2006). In 1862, New Orleans became the first major city that Union troops captured and occupied, guaranteeing that careful attention would be paid to the city, and the state of Louisiana at large, during the Reconstruction period. For the city, Reconstruction lasted longer than anywhere else in the South, resulting in a unique experience that shaped the city socially and politically in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. From 1862 to 1877, Reconstruction-era New Orleans experienced an intensity of violence experienced nowhere else in the South (Hogue, 2006).

Scholars point to the length of the Reconstruction as one of the primary causes of Louisiana's intense violence during this period. However, there are two additional contributing factors that invariably contributed to the state's Reconstruction experience and heightened scrutiny from the Federal government: (1) New Orleans' status as a highly-populated hub and (2) the diversity of its population. The city's unique characteristics led New Orleans to become what Confederate cavalry general, and nephew of General Robert E. Lee, referred to as the "headquarters of Confederate sentiment, feeling, and action" in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Foster, 1987). The intensity of Reconstruction in New Orleans left the city's white population embittered and in need of an outlet for reconciliation and healing; a reawakening of the Confederate legacy that leveraged the Lost Cause was the most logical opportunity to revive the city's fervor. This, along with the death of Confederate General Lee in 1870, led to New Orleans becoming the first city to erect a major Confederate monument in honor of their General in 1884—a mere seven years after the end of Federal Reconstruction.

### **Origins of Reconstruction Violence**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, New Orleans was the most cosmopolitan city in the South. Unlike Durham, whose economic rise is associated with the New South of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, New Orleans thrived economically, socially, and culturally well before the Civil War. Because the city

was so valuable to both the Confederates and the Federal government, it was guaranteed that the “struggle over its control would be particularly intense” and violent (Nystrom, 2010). For the Federal government Louisiana became a “tantalizing object of attention in the quest for a plan to restore or reconstruct the seceded states” and reorient the region away from the plantation-based society that existed prior to the Civil War. Each of President Lincoln’s successors attached great importance to the success of the Louisiana state government, as a beacon for Reconstruction opportunities all across the South (Hogue, 2006). Because of the complexities that existed previously in New Orleans and its status as the region’s most populous city, the Federal government believed that if Reconstruction could succeed there that it would inevitably succeed elsewhere in states where the social and economic situation was less convoluted.

New Orleans was also unique because of its racial diversity. Unlike elsewhere in the South, “antebellum Louisiana possessed a large and vibrant community of free blacks, who called themselves *gens de couleur libre*” (Hogue, 2006). Under French colonial rule, the free black population prospered and, once annexed to the United States, “formed a distinctive caste between black slaves and free whites within Louisiana society” (Hogue, 2006). In pre-Civil War Louisiana, *gens de couleur libre* were able to straddle the fine line between both black and white, holding to the identity that best suited their needs politically, economically, and socially. Thus, when President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery in 1863, Louisiana became one of only three states where African Americans—including the large population of *gens de couleur libre*—outnumbered white Americans.

The state’s racial ambiguity only underscored the innate complexities of Louisiana’s established social and racial hierarchy, tipping the balance in favor of Louisiana’s black population (Hogue, 2006). Under the protection of Federal troops who occupied the state and propped up numerous puppet governments, Louisiana’s African Americans helped shape the political landscape in favor of Federal goals. New Orleans’ racial diversity inevitably contributed to the rise in violence during this period paving a path for white supremacist movements to reassert their power and gain ground in an era known for instability. Like elsewhere in the South, this racial tension pitted former white elites against poor whites who saw an opportunity for political power through alignment with the newly-empowered African American majority.

Unsurprisingly, Reconstruction in New Orleans was anything but a stable and uncomplicated period in the city's history. The state elected five different governors during this period each facing assassination, death threats or both during their tenure (Hogue, 2006). Additionally, each of the five governors faced rival state governments that proclaimed legitimacy under the ideals of white supremacy, a return to the stability experienced under the previous plantation system, and widespread racial violence to suppress black voting power. Like elsewhere in the South, when Confederate soldiers returned to their city, "they found not only themselves penniless but also many of their enemies ensconced in their former places of wealth, influence, power, and prestige" (Hogue, 2006). With their entire world gone and the balance of power shifted out of their favor, the large and restless population of Confederate veterans "sought to restore the world they had known before the war" (Hogue, 2006). The only way they knew how to do so was through the use of violence directed at Federal occupiers, Republican governments installed in New Orleans, and the coalition of newly freed slaves and *gens de couleur*.

The African-American population nearly doubled between 1860 and 1870 prompted by economic opportunities brought about by Reconstruction and the promise of Federal protection (Hogue, 2006). Thus, demographics and politics together played major roles in the rise in violence experienced in the streets of New Orleans that eventually dealt the final blow to Reconstruction. In April 1877, an armed militia of nearly 4,000 white supremacists besieged the capital and ended Republican rule and African American political power (Hogue, 2006). Many white residents of New Orleans lauded the overthrow of the Republican government in 1877 as the Anglo-Saxon race's saving grace (Nystrom, 2010). Soon after, a white male paramilitary organization asserted its power in the state and laid groundwork for a rise in Confederate ideological celebration and the commemoration of the leaders who had actively fought to maintain the southern way of life. Overall, the Reconstruction era in New Orleans left behind a demoralized population that lacked clear direction. Factions of white leaders proclaimed victory in the name of white supremacy. A large population of African Americans continued to outnumber white elites who asserted power through violence. And, most importantly, the city's economy had yet to find its way in the post-Civil War era.

By the end of Reconstruction, defeated Confederates and white elites desired a return to the social, political, and economic stability of the pre-Civil War era. However, in resorting to racial violence to restore order, they did little to mitigate the chaos of the era or to establish a clear political future for their white supremacist ideology. In contrast, the rebirth of the Confederate celebration under the guise of the Lost Cause presented itself as a crucial outlet for those still disillusioned by the lack of progress made in reestablishing the social and political stability of the pre-Civil War era. The city's white population, who felt left behind during Reconstruction, ended up finding solace and reaffirmation in the commemoration of their most venerated hero and one of the major figures endorsed by the Lost Cause, Confederate General Robert E. Lee, whose death in 1870 was a blow to the region.

### **General Robert E. Lee's Controversial Narrative**

In contrast to the monuments previously discussed in North Carolina, New Orleans erected a monument in honor of Confederate General Robert E. Lee at a far earlier period than elsewhere in the South. This is notable because the dedicators chose to erect a monument in memory of a prominent and illustrious figure in southern culture rather than depict a generic soldier symbolic of all who gave their lives to the Confederacy, as was the case in Chapel Hill and Durham. This monument also preceded the rise of the UDC whose leadership proved key in the proliferation of monuments to come. New Orleans' Lee monument is an early manifestation of the deliberate reaffirmation of white power in public spaces in the American South.

General Robert E. Lee remains a controversial figure in American and Confederate history. For many in the South, Lee remained a universally respected hero often "offered as a role model" for all southern white men, women, and children (Foster, 1987). Although praise for Lee's military prowess is well deserved, he remained conflicted regarding the Confederate push for secession. In the dedication address given by Honorable Charles E. Fenner, a Louisiana Supreme Court Justice, at the Lee monument unveiling ceremony in February 1884, Fenner notes that Lee had such strong ties to the Founding Fathers and indeed desired to preserve the American union at the early onset of the war; he even married the great granddaughter of George Washington's wife (by previous marriage) further cementing his ties to the United States (R.E. Lee Monument Association (New Orleans), 1884). In the end, Lee answered the call of duty to his state rather than to his nation

becoming the most illustrious military leaders in the Confederacy. Following the war, Lee became a leading figure in “encouraging all but diehard Confederates to lay down arms” and accept defeat (Larino, 2015). While presiding over the rebuilding of Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Virginia after the war, Lee avoided “public controversy and preached political moderation, reunion, and rebuilding” above all else (Foster, 1987). Although Lee’s military skill and determination were instrumental in causing the death of thousands of American soldiers on both sides of the war, Lee still harbored a strong connection to the United States and desired reconciliation for the country now that the war had officially ended.

This overly positive narrative of Lee’s life, as recounted at length by Fenner, shines a bright light on the moral rectitude of Lee’s character after the war, but fails to mention the reprehensible aspects of his previous life and power under the system of slavery. Although the country had since reunited, there is little discussion over Lee’s choice to betray “his sacred oath to support and defend the Constitution” (Marsalis, 2015). Nor does anyone allude to the fact that he owned slaves on his plantation in Arlington, Virginia and that he was “intent on [the] violent overthrow” of the government that sought to end the institution of slavery and the continued subjugation of African Americans (Marsalis, 2015). For those who sought the dedication of a monument in honor of Lee, there was a purity in his character that deserved and necessitated memorialization. In their mind, Lee was to stand for all future generations of New Orleanians to learn from and revere. However, for the city of New Orleans, sharply divided by race, it is unclear what lessons would be learned by those men, women, and children whose ancestors had suffered under the plantation system that Lee and other Confederates fought to preserve.

### **From Fundraising to Dedication**

Lee’s death in 1870 was an abrupt and unexpected loss for the region. It was particularly hard for Confederate veterans and southern whites at a time when Reconstruction posed such a threat to the region’s existence and identity. Shortly after his death, a group of white men met at the City Hotel in downtown New Orleans to discuss and approve the erection of a monument in Lee’s memory on city-owned property (Staff Writer, 1884a). The Robert E. Lee Monumental Association of New Orleans, as it became known, was incorporated shortly thereafter. Although the movement gained momentum early in the 1870s, spurred largely by the sudden loss,

Reconstruction and economic turmoil severely impacted the association's organizational capacity. From its founding in 1870 to 1876, the Monumental Association failed to garner the necessary funds to erect a monument during Reconstruction. The end of Reconstruction in 1877, however, reignited the movement as the organization quickly secured \$10,000 in donations from patrons in the city and across the region (Staff Writer, 1884a). While funds were secured and designs settled upon, the New Orleans city council passed an ordinance designating Tivoli Circle (Figure 17), a relic of the city's colonial street grid, as the proposed site for the Lee monument (Staff Writer, 1884a). In honor of the General, the city rebranded the space as Lee Circle. From 1877 to 1884, the Association moved slowly to ensure that the Lee monument in New Orleans would be one most deserving of the General's character and achievements.<sup>14</sup>

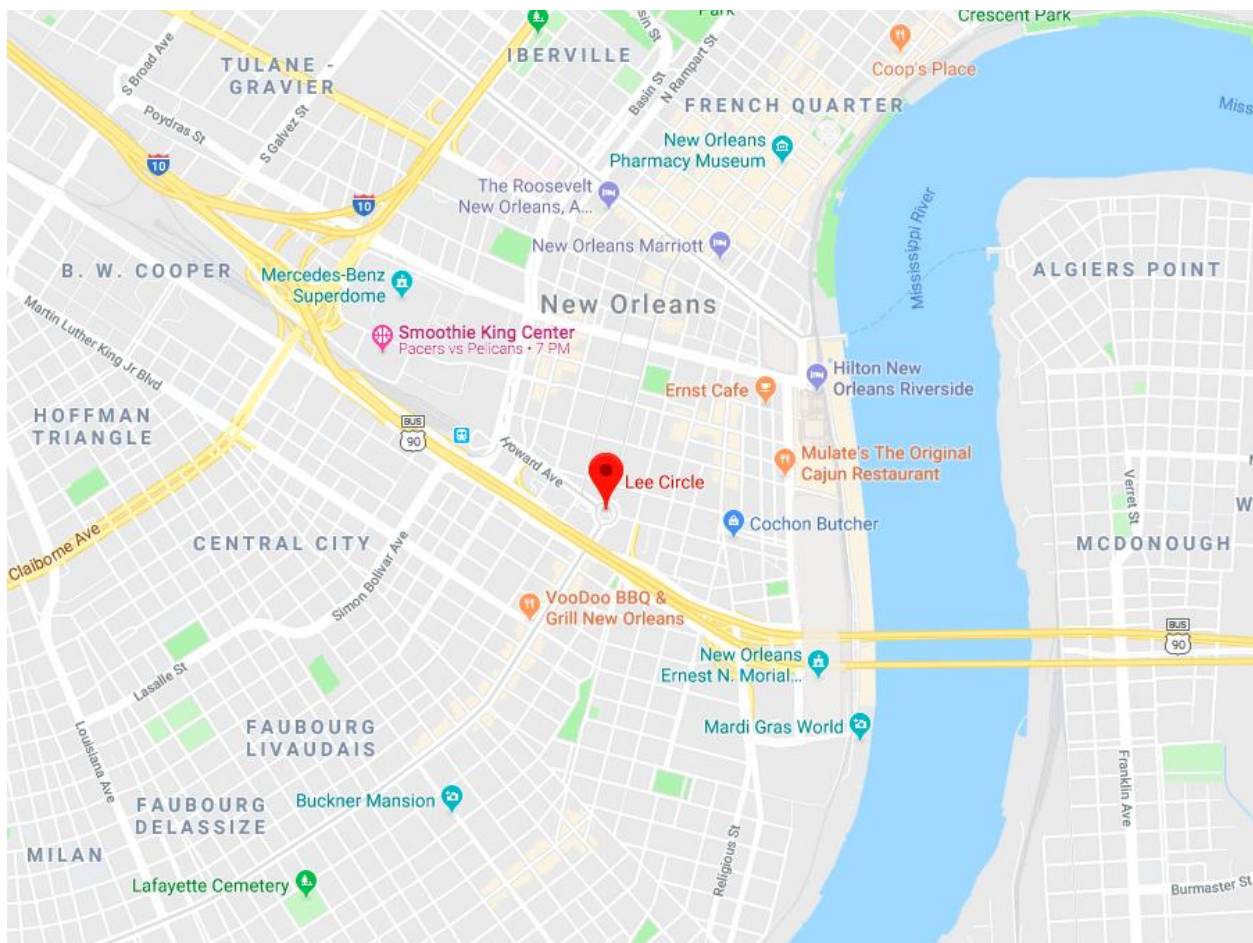


Figure 17 Map of Downtown New Orleans - Lee Circle Indicated by Red Flag. Image Source: Google Maps

<sup>14</sup> From 1877 to 1884, the Association raised \$25,000 for the marble column and pedestal and \$10,000 for the bronze statue of Lee, an astounding figure for the time period and a testament to the monument's grandeur in the region.

The Monumental Association settled upon February 22, 1884 as the date for the unveiling ceremonies—a carefully chosen day that coincided with President Washington’s birthday, a national holiday. A massive crowd of 15,000 men, women, and children turned out that day (Figure 18)—including General Lee’s daughters and Union soldiers (Staff Writer, 1884b). Although Reconstruction had just ended, the Association saw the ceremony as an opportunity to fuel reconciliation between both sides—along racial lines of course—in honor of Lee’s desire for reconciliation shortly before he died. Lee may have fought for the Confederacy in his final days, but for the country he was considered a hero due to both his military prowess and his family’s contributions to the country. Lee’s decision to fight against the Union in support of slavery was purposefully overlooked during the dedication ceremony.



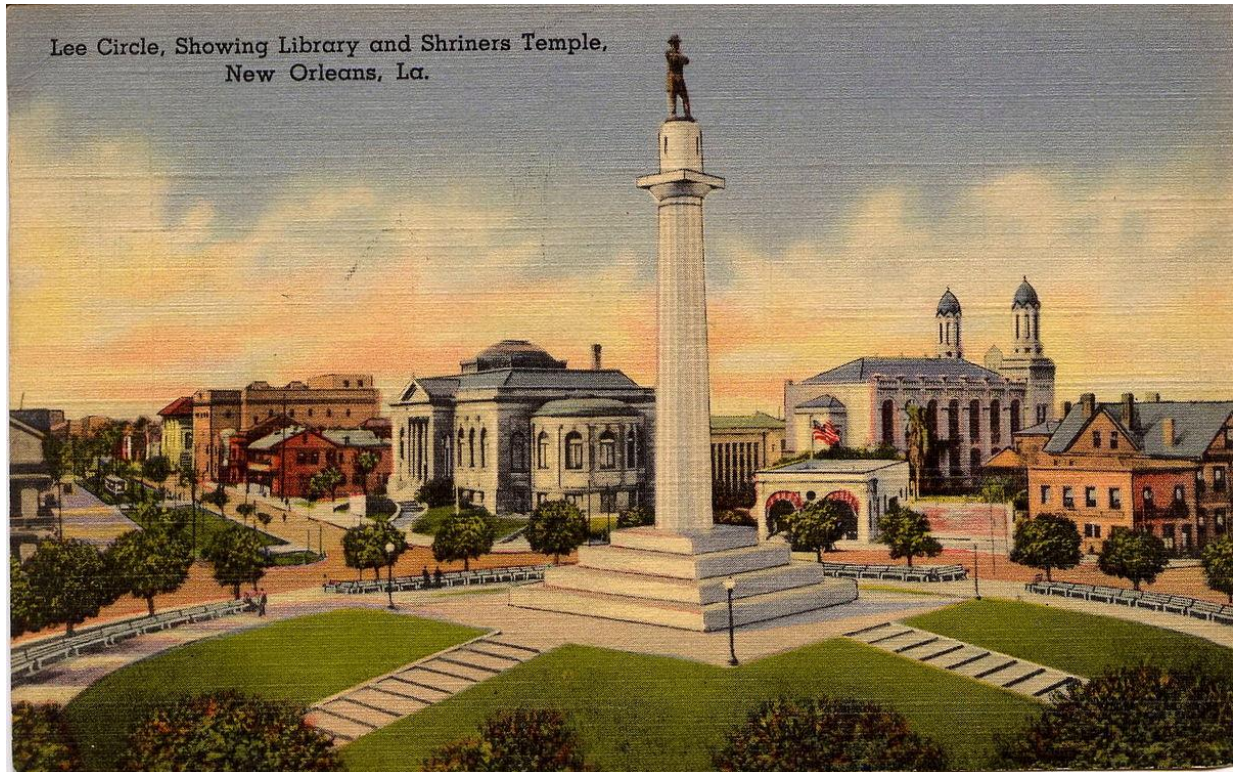
*Figure 18 Lee Monument Dedication Ceremony, 1884 Image Source: Louisiana State Historic Archives*

Those in attendance that day recounted the acclaimed life that Lee had led and the example that he provided for all future generations of both New Orleanians and Americans. It was Lee’s military genius that stood out above all else—he was a model southern man who only answered the call of duty. While Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Charles E. Fenner’s lengthy speech repeated these

positive sentiments regarding Lee's life, he notably makes mention of Lee's "purity" as another reason for which this monument was erected. Fenner of course speaks to the "purity of his life, the moral grandeur of his character, and the splendor of his achievements," but also points to Lee "as one of the princes of his race" (R.E. Lee Monument Association (New Orleans), 1884). Although Lee's military achievements were enough to warrant commemoration, Fenner also points to his Anglo-Saxon heritage and his "blood which coursed in his veins descended in purest strain" as another prominent reason that Lee is "worthy of the veneration of the world" (R.E. Lee Monument Association (New Orleans), 1884). Although the Lee monument was erected on the surface to glorify his legacy and deify his achievements for all future generations, the sentiments of racial purity echoed by Fenner were hard to ignore while questions of racial equality were left unanswered.

In a diverse city still recovering from the violence of Reconstruction and the white supremacist takeover of the state, the message imbued in Lee's monument was more than apparent. The monument was placed, like others, oriented towards the north to defend the city from northern aggression. Notably, it was also placed at the junction between New Orleans' predominantly white neighborhoods of Uptown and the Garden District and the predominantly-black neighborhoods of the Central Business District and the French Quarter. The newly unveiled Lee monument (Figure 19) towered over this stark, racial dividing line between two New Orleans. While for the white population he stood as a symbol of southern heritage and duty to one's nation, the African American population, in contrast, viewed him as an oppressive figure who dutifully guarded the dividing line between racial spaces (Figure 20) (Marsalis, 2015). As is the case with many monuments, the dedicators chose to make a statement in erecting this statue in honor of Lee. Lee was a model southerner, and forever a Confederate, but Lee also fought against his own country in defense of a system that subjugated African Americans. So much of Lee's life was overlooked to erect a monument that solidified the racial divide in New Orleans and ultimately celebrated the end of Reconstruction. The Lee monument was a manifestation of white perseverance and power and the glorification of his "racial purity" at a time when African Americans were first getting a sense of freedom.





Lee Circle, Showing Library and Shriners Temple,  
New Orleans, La.

Figure 19 Lee Circle, Showing Library and Shriners Temple, New Orleans, La. Image Source: The Lens Nola,  
<https://thelensnola.org/2015/07/21/monumental-decision-who-should-be-honored-in-place-of-the-confederates/>



Figure 20 Lee Monument Towering Over Contemporary New Orleans Image Source: The Advocate,  
[http://www.theadvocate.com/new\\_orleans/news/article\\_3e093dc4-3f16-11e7-9ea6-1715518f6900.html](http://www.theadvocate.com/new_orleans/news/article_3e093dc4-3f16-11e7-9ea6-1715518f6900.html)

## **The Lee Monument: 1884 to 2015**

From 1884 until 2015, the Lee monument towered over the landscape of a racially diverse, and yet divided, New Orleans. The presence of this monument remained uncontested throughout this period as many continued to pay their respects to Lee every year on his birthday (Larino, 2015). Dedication to the preservation of this monument rarely wavered. Although the City maintained ownership over the monument—a point that will become more important during the debate over its removal—private donors and other public entities contributed to the monument’s maintenance costs (Larino, 2015). The Lee monument was very much a part of the city’s landscape and an asset for the protection and preservation of New Orleans’ white population. So much so that in the early 1920s, the local newspaper, *The Times-Picayune*, published the following poem in honor of the Lee monument that again points to Lee’s association with white supremacy:

He stands calm and firm... / watching with prophetic eyes / His beloved Southland: seeing  
in her / Cleaner American stock the saving strain / Which yet will right the balance / ‘Twixt  
conflicting alien hordes / And hold straight the course / Of America’s Ship of State /  
Toward the ultimate goal / Of a homogenous people... (SPLC, 2016).

The Lee monument was also a prominent gathering place for more nefarious groups in the city. Less than two decades after the dedication ceremony, the local mob rallied at the Lee monument shortly after the “lynching of eleven Italian men in 1891” (Nicholson, 2015). In 1900, following a race riot precipitated by the wounding of a New Orleans policeman, an armed white mob congregated at Lee Circle and assaulted innocent African Americans nearby (Danver, 2011). It is also a well-documented site for Ku Klux Klan (KKK) rallies and gatherings of other white supremacist groups. Most notably, in 1972, Addison Roswell Thompson, a segregationist, white supremacist, and Imperial Wizard of the KKK, was struck by bricks “allegedly throw by one of two Negro men” while observing Lee’s birthday (Staff Writer, 1972). He was accompanied by two men: Rene La Coste, who identified himself as the “Imperial Kludd of the Klan,” and David Duke, another prominent member (Staff Writer, 1972). The audacity of these men celebrating Lee’s birthday in 1972 underscores how successful the Lee monument had been in keeping alive the traditions of white supremacy and racial oppression. For over a century, the monument has provided a highly-visible gathering space for white supremacist groups (Figure 21) to assert their power over public space and publicly honor racism and violent oppression.





Figure 21 White Supremacist Rally and Counter-protest at Lee Monument Image Source: Best of New Orleans, <https://www.bestofneworleans.com/thelatest/archives/2017/05/07/lee-circle-march-faces-white-supremacist-groups-as-new-orleans-prepares-to-take-down-confederate-era-statues>

### **New Orleans Moves to Remove Lee**

One week after the Dylann Roof massacre in Charleston, South Carolina in June 2015, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu officially announced his decision to investigate the removal of four prominent monuments in the city—the Lee monument included. In a press release from his office, Landrieu “called on city officials to begin taking action to remove four prominent divisive statues and consider replacing them with symbols that reflect the culture, unity, hope, and future of New Orleans as the city looks to its [300<sup>th</sup>] anniversary in 2018” (City of New Orleans Mayor’s Office, 2015). For Landrieu, Confederate symbols have only served to perpetuate white supremacy in American society and played a major role in Dylann Roof’s upbringing. These symbols were no longer, nor should they ever have been, representative of the City of New Orleans. According to Landrieu:

Symbols matter and should reflect who we really are as a people, but times have changed. That is not to say we should forget our history, but there is a time and place to commemorate and learn from our past. Prominent locations in our city such as Lee Circle ought to reflect the unity, diversity, culture, and the wonderful things that bring us together rather than something in our history that has separated us (City of New Orleans Mayor's Office, 2015).

On July 9, 2015, Landrieu official called upon the city to “begin a sixty-day period of facilitated discussions and public meetings—in conjunction with the City’s Human Relations Commission, the Mayor’s Welcome Table Initiative<sup>15</sup> and the City Council” to give the citizens of New Orleans a real opportunity to voice their opinions in a constructive and deliberative manner (City of New Orleans Mayor’s Office, 2015). According to Landrieu, this decision had less to do with the men represented, but was intended to initiate a discussion over “whether the monuments, built to reinforce the false valor of a war fought over slavery, ever really belonged in a city as great as New Orleans” (City of New Orleans Mayor’s Office, 2015). Legally, Landrieu suggested that the City Council “begin the legal process outlined in City Code Section 146-611 which governs the procedure for removal of public property structures that are deemed to be a nuisance” (City of New Orleans Mayor’s Office, 2015). Since the City never transferred ownership of the Lee monument to a private entity, and the state of Louisiana had no heritage protection law in place, the city had the legal authority to thus remove unwanted monuments under nuisance law. According to the code, the City Council had to solicit comments from the public as well as recommendations from the Human Relations Commission, the Historic District Landmarks Commission, and other administrative officials prior to making their final decision (City of New Orleans Mayor’s Office, 2015). Once all requirements of the code were addressed, the Council could move forward with issuing a city ordinance that would remove the monuments.

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<sup>15</sup> Landrieu’s Welcome Table Initiative was a citywide initiative started in 2014 that focuses on race, reconciliation and community building. The Table brings together a diverse group of people from different races and cultural backgrounds to help build relationships across the divide and make improvements throughout the city. For more information, see <https://www.nola.gov/mayor/press-releases/2015/20150624-pr-statue-removal/?feed=8aebddb2-1189-4016-8192-75f1533b5229>

Landrieu took an active role in the monument debate, an opportunity unfortunately not available to many local officials in jurisdictions across the South. For Landrieu, this was an important matter for his city, not only because the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary was pending, but also because the monuments in question were first erected at a time when “many groups and individuals did not have a voice” (City of New Orleans Mayor’s Office, 2015). The Lee monument was erected *by* the white population of New Orleans *for* the white population of New Orleans; it did not reflect the values or morals of any group but those who believed in the Lost Cause and who asserted the supremacy of the white race. This moment in New Orleans history seemed like the opportune time to finally address these issues that have been left hanging over the city ever since. Ultimately, for Landrieu “the moral arc of history bends as it usually does, towards justice. But it does not bend on its own. That is left to us”(City of New Orleans Mayor’s Office, 2015).<sup>16</sup> Landrieu felt that it was his role as Mayor to guide this moral arc of history towards the removal of divisive symbols in the built landscape of his city.

### **Lee’s Fate Hangs in the Balance**

Throughout the latter half of 2015, the City Council took up Mayor Landrieu’s call and commenced the process outlined by the local nuisance ordinance to work towards the eventual removal of four of the city’s most contentious monuments. Not everyone agreed with Landrieu’s decision to pursue the removal of these monuments, particularly the Lee monument which to many did not meet the traditional criteria of a highly divisive and contentious monument. In August 2015, then-Governor of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, announced his decision to seek a mechanism by which his office could block the removal of the proposed monuments (Schachar, 2015). Governor Jindal hoped to block the removal through the state’s heritage law; however, he soon had to walk back his announcement when it became apparent that the state had no such law in question and that his administration was powerless in the matter at hand in a local jurisdiction. The announcement by Governor Jindal was precipitated by two City Commissions voting in favor of removing the monuments in question. Most notably, the Historic District Landmarks Commission stated that their “recommendation was based on [the fact that] the monuments fostered ideologies in conflict with the U.S. Constitution, created a recurring expense, and served as a site for violent

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<sup>16</sup> Quote is part of Landrieu’s speech, but also attributed to Martin Luther King Jr. and Barack Obama

demonstrations that threatened life or property” (Schachar, 2015). Other City commissions came to the same conclusion during the fall procedures.

Citizens continued to voice their opinion on both sides of the debate throughout the process. Some voiced their concern over the entire process because, to them, since each of the commissions tasked with making decisions were appointed by the mayor, the legitimacy of their final decisions could be called into question (Adelson, 2015). All the tension eventually came to a head on December 17, 2015 when the City Council came together to make their final decision on the subject. During this meeting, councilmembers and citizens alike laid out their cases both for and against the monuments. Landrieu was also present during this meeting “brushing off accusations of divisiveness and questions from critics about where the removals would end” (Adelson, 2015). The lone detractor in the final vote, Councilwoman Stacy Head, “felt that the process was being rushed and driven by Landrieu” even though the legal procedure for removing public property under nuisance law was followed as intended. After three hours of intense debate, the Council voted 6-1 in favor of moving forward with the removal. For Councilwoman Nadine Ramsey and others, this step was a moment of relief for the city because no longer would New Orleans have to live beneath the shadows of these monuments (Adelson, 2015).

Immediately following the City Council vote, however, four organizations filed a lawsuit seeking to prevent the city from removing all four monuments in question. The Monumental Task Committee (MTC),<sup>17</sup> the Louisiana Landmarks Society, the Foundation for Historical Louisiana, and the Beauregard Camp No. 30 of the United Sons of the Confederacy filed the suit in a Federal District Court (E.D. Louisiana, 2015). The court filing put a temporary hold on Landrieu’s plans to remove the monuments in early 2016. The plaintiffs in the suit made a number of claims centering upon their desire to “prevent needless damage to or destruction of four priceless works of art that have graced the New Orleans cityscape for more than a century” (E.D. Louisiana, 2015). Out of their concern for the monuments’ safety, the plaintiffs claimed that the City did not allow monument supporters due process in the discussion regarding removal, effectively arguing that

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<sup>17</sup> The Monumental Task Committee (MTC) is a volunteer organization based in New Orleans that has worked to restore, repair, and maintain all the city’s monuments since 1989. For more information on this organization, see <http://monumentaltask.org/>

monument supporters were discriminated against during the sixty-day hearing procedure (E.D. Louisiana, 2015). The plaintiffs also claimed that the removal violated their First Amendment right to free expression “which they exercised by maintaining and preserving the historic character and nature of the city of New Orleans” (E.D. Louisiana, 2015). The plaintiffs even argued that the removal violated the “Louisiana constitutional provision recognizing the right of the people to preserve, foster and promote their linguistic and cultural origins” (E.D. Louisiana, 2015). Lastly, the plaintiffs claimed that the removal violated the Department of Transportation Act because federal transportation money was used to preserve the historic properties near city streetcar lines; the Lee monument was located along one of New Orleans’ major streetcar tracks. This last claim calls into question the jurisdiction the city had over the monuments, particularly whether city money or federal money had been used in their preservation.

The District Court ruled in favor of the city in early January 2016, but a swift appeal delayed removal by another year. Nearly a year later, the Appellate Court upheld the District Court’s decision and ruled that the city could move forward with removal since the monuments were solely owned by the city and no other entity. Within days of this ruling in early 2017, the city elected to push forward with removal, this time without the threat of a pending lawsuit. Seeking to avoid controversy and to protect the workers whose lives had been threatened throughout the process, the City removed three of the four monuments at night, scuttling the opportunity for counter protestors to assemble and block workers from effectively carrying out their job (Adelson & Williams, 2017). For the Lee monument, however, the last of the four to come down, the city installed tight security and the monument was removed during the day on May 17, 2017 (Figure 22) (Adelson & Williams, 2017). Putting an end to nearly 133 years of Lee overlooking the city below, Landrieu took the stage nearby for a historic speech discussing the importance of historic context and the reasons and meaning behind the removal for the city as it looks towards its future. Echoing what he has said for the past two years as the monuments’ futures remained in question, Landrieu reiterated his purpose and goals in bringing down the Lee monument:

To literally put the Confederacy on a pedestal in our most prominent places of honor is an inaccurate recitation of our full past, it is an affront to our present, and it is a bad prescription for our future (Adelson & Williams, 2017).



*Figure 22 Lee Monument Removal, Image Source:National Public Radio, <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/20/529232823/with-lee-statues-removal-another-battle-of-new-orleans-comes-to-a-close>*

Closing this chapter on New Orleans' history, Landrieu claimed in May 2017 that the "Civil War is over; the Confederacy lost, and we are better for it" (Adelson & Williams, 2017). For now, New Orleans is left with empty pedestals upon which once stood monuments and symbols dedicated to the Confederacy and the Lost Cause. While the monuments have remained in an undisclosed warehouse, Landrieu's office announced plans on March 7, 2018 to address the empty pedestals left behind nearly a year ago. In collaboration with Colloqate Design, the Foundation for Louisiana, and the Ford Foundation, a public process will be initiated to give voice to the people of New Orleans to come together and create symbols that best represent their collective vision of the city. In particular, this process hopes to create symbols that "honor the erased histories of the people, events, movements, and places that have made up the past 300 years" of the city's history (Litten, 2018). What will be the ultimate outcome of this public process it is too soon to tell, but for Landrieu the nearly one year it took to announce the future of these monuments was necessary because "the city needed a moment to pause and reflect" before it was ready to answer the question, "What is the appropriate monument to our city today?" (Litten, 2018).



## **Conclusion**

The long, hard battle over the Lee monument in New Orleans underscores just how divided American society remains over the issues of race and the cause of a war that plagued the nation over 150 years ago. The experience of New Orleans also shows how important it is to have the opportunity to openly engage in divisive conversations in a safe and constructive manner. These discussions reopened wounds in New Orleans caused by centuries of racial oppression; however, they also proved pivotal in helping the city reconcile with its divisive past and forge forward as a more cohesive community. More work needs to be done but addressing the Lee monument and the shadow of racial inequality that it cast over the city for over a century was a necessary first step.

New Orleans' experience with the Lee monument is a testament to other communities also grappling with divisive monuments that process and communication are valuable and potent tools in addressing these issues elsewhere. More importantly, New Orleans shows that there is a way in which practitioners can facilitate conversations over contentious symbols and direct contemporary audiences to decide amongst themselves what symbols are important to them and what aspects of their built heritage they think the city should afford. New Orleans shows hope for more constructive discussions to address the remaining symbols of the Confederacy still standing in courthouse squares and public spaces across the region.

**Chapter VII:**  
**Discussion & Closing Remarks**

Few can deny the role that Confederate monuments have played in preserving and prolonging the legacy of the U.S. Civil War. These symbols have long held prominent places in cities and towns across the country, perpetuating a racialized rift that plagues American society at large. The preceding chapters detailed the theoretical, historical, and political foundations of Confederate monuments in general and further scrutinized three highly visible monuments in North Carolina and Louisiana. Together these two states account for nearly 130 of the 700 monuments that still exist across the country. The previous analysis demonstrates an analytical perspective that planners, municipal officials, and grassroots organizations can leverage in their approach to the divisive symbols and monuments that also exist in their communities. Understanding and critically analyzing the origins of symbolically-charged artifacts and monuments in the built landscape—Confederate or otherwise—is a highly valuable tool for examining the way in which individuals relate to and articulate their cultural surroundings. This perspective will enable practitioners and other community leaders to scrutinize contentious symbols on an individual level. Collectively, it allows communities to address the future of such symbols through conciliatory debate and open dialogue. Only then will communities begin to reconcile with the divisions that exist in their society—both past and present—and move forward together with a renewed sense of the values and morals that best represent their contemporary communities.

Confederate monuments are at once a manifestation of power and control in public space vis-à-vis certain ethnocultural groups and an attempt by well-connected individuals and groups to consolidate and propagate a chosen cultural identity grounded in revisionist ideology of the Lost Cause. The dissemination of this ideology is historically like instances of rabid nationalism and the rise of nation-states, particularly in Europe, but the Confederate legacy differs in one respect. While public monuments serve to propagate Lost Cause ideology through symbols, they express a cultural identity that is in direct conflict with the broader American values of tolerance and mutual respect that have dominated at least since the end of World War II. Moreover, they are a direct attempt to undermine African Americans and their right to public space. These monuments may have served their original purpose of reuniting those who believed in the Confederate cause following defeat, but they are problematic symbols today because they continue to propagate hate and serve to divide communities along racial bias. In the context of heritage conservation, the contemporary debates center around the larger issues of who gets to decide what is heritage,

specifically in a divided society, and whether recontextualization is appropriate in the conservation of divisive histories. With a strong foundational understanding of the historical narratives and design preoccupations associated with Confederate monuments, planners, urban designers, municipal officials, and other practitioners will have a better perspective from which to engage in contentious discussions over the rights citizens have to shape or reshape their own built environment in ways that accurately represent contemporary culture.

### **Confederate Monuments and Functionalism**

Functionalists sought to improve the legibility of the built environment through deliberate design interventions. These interventions were intended to direct or influence human behavior and thus impact the relationship individuals have with their physical surroundings. From a functionalist standpoint, by understanding the environmental determinants of human behavior, groups and individuals are capable of channeling power and control into the built environment. The theory of affordances, as first articulated by James Gibson, provides a backbone for understanding user-environment relationships that functionalists sought to shape. Affordances are all the possible behaviors, both human and animal, that can occur through interaction with the surrounding environment. Affordances also inform the way in which individuals perceive and articulate their environment and learn of its use-value to them.

The functionalist approach centers on the careful manipulation of the environmental determinants of behavior—or affordances—with the intention of both emancipating individuals and improving the utility of the built environment. However, scholars have noted that this approach to design is also capable of negatively impacting society, whether intentional or not. Specifically, through the meticulous selection of desired human behaviors and individuals, functionalist design interventions can target and marginalize social groups. In the political context that precipitated the rise of Confederate monuments in the South, there is a deliberate attempt to erect functional monuments that direct human behavior in public spaces across the region. In looking at the historic narratives of each of the preceding monuments, it is apparent that the groups involved in erecting these monuments sought to systematically direct the commemorative behavior of southerners in public space and to further concretize racial inequality through functional demarcations of formal civic spaces.

In the dedication speeches analyzed here, the theme of Confederate memorialization is evident. To preserve the Confederate legacy, the UDC and other veteran organizations intentionally designed functional monuments that served to elicit active recollection and Confederate sympathy. In all three cases, powerful groups such as the UDC, the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association, and other veteran organizations succeeded in shaping where, when, and how southerners remember their heritage and the region's Confederate legacy. These mnemonic cues were physically inscribed into the built landscape and designed to reorient and standardize the memorialization behaviors of all future generations of southerners. However, while these monuments are physical manifestations of power and the desire to control Confederate memorialization, the functionalist approach does not go so far to solidify the collective cultural identity of the region. Functionalism directs behavior but does not actively communicate meaning or cultural values. These monuments successfully delineated the where, when, and how of Confederate memory, but they functionally did not control what aspects of the Confederate legacy the South would remember and perpetuate. Meaning is both culturally-codified and socially-learned; symbols and the process of meaning-making play much larger roles in this active approach to systematizing the aspects of the Confederate legacy that would be immortalized.

In addition to serving as physical cues for Confederate remembrance, these monuments also symbolize a preferred social hierarchy for the region based on socially-constructed notions of race, and thus functionally served to demarcate separate racialized spaces in each of the three cities explored. In New Orleans, the Lee monument straddled the dividing line between the predominantly black downtown and the predominantly white uptown; Lee stood sentinel at this important border, protecting and promoting the continued separation of the races in the city. In Chapel Hill, Silent Sam was prominently located at the northern entrance to UNC from Franklin Street. Although UNC was a public university in North Carolina, it barred African American students from attending until the mid-1950s. For African Americans, Silent Sam stood guard over a university that for the first 150 years of its existence, barred their access to public higher education. In Durham, the Confederate Soldier monument was erected explicitly on the county courthouse lawn facing the central business district for the city's African American middle socioeconomic class—Parrish Street. Each of these monuments served as symbolic protectors of

white space in a racially divided South and, in turn, became important rallying spaces for white supremacist rallies and other white nationalist demonstrations over time.

The rise of Confederate monuments in cities and towns across the South can be viewed through the lens of functionalism. Through a functionalist approach to design, dominant individuals and groups can promote desired behaviors and limit those that are not. Confederate monuments are intended to commemorate and thus functionally serve to elicit recollection from viewers navigating public space. However, they are also potent mechanisms that limit the African American experience of public space through the careful demarcation of “white” and “black” space.<sup>18</sup> The direct attempt to mold and systematize commemoration of the Confederate legacy is not the most problematic component of these monuments. The fact that they were deliberately used to demarcate white and black spaces and further ingrain segregation into the region’s built environment is highly controversial and questionable. Monuments that serve to functionally demarcate racialized public space no longer legitimately represent the contemporary societies in which they exist—regardless of their historic status.

### **Confederate Monuments and Symbolism**

The study of semiotics can help us understand the process of meaning-making through the prolific use of sign-vehicles, or symbols. In the built environment, sign-vehicles are the culturally-codified artifacts that communicate and transmit meaning to the viewer. Symbols can instruct users as they navigate public space or convey potent messages into the built environment. Through the proliferation of carefully-chosen symbols that intentionally convey and communicate preferred messages into the built environment, individuals and groups can likewise channel their own power and control. While functionalists sought to direct human behavior by exploiting affordances, symbols are equally potent in communicating and influencing the way in which individuals articulate and make sense of their environmental and cultural surroundings. Thus, in the hands of dominant groups and individuals, symbols are invariably important tools in the process of consolidating cultural identity and establishing the collective values of large, disparate groups.

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<sup>18</sup> For further reading on this subject, please see Dell Upton’s article “White and Black landscapes in eighteenth-century Virginia.” (Upton, 1985).

This process is often employed to marginalize nonconforming or unwanted cultural, racial, or social groups whose values and morals directly conflict with the chosen group identity.

In the context of Confederate commemoration, the study of semiotics can facilitate analysis of the symbolic potency of these monuments. On the surface, as mentioned above, they outwardly project a societal aspiration for memorialization and remembrance. In the context of war and massive loss of life, this is not uncommon and arguably an important step in the process towards acceptance of defeat and eventual reconciliation. However, because of the political and social contexts during which many of these monuments were erected, they are undoubtedly physical symbols of the Lost Cause and the values espoused by its revisionist belief system. The diversity of interpretations surrounding these Confederate monuments has resulted in a conflict over meaning that has thus played a major role in the contemporary debates. Meanings evolve and adapt to contemporary contexts, but these debates have shown that there is little room for reconciliation or discussion when strikingly opposing interpretations are irreconcilable and conflicting.

The ideology of the Lost Cause served various purposes for southerners following the war. After the loss of so many lives during the conflict, alternative narratives enabled veterans to come to terms with defeat and reconcile with their present circumstances. Additionally, and more potently, the Lost Cause united white southerners behind a set of beliefs that is staunchly grounded in, if inseparable from, the basic tenets of white supremacy. The Lost Cause took a revisionist approach to the Civil War and slavery; specifically, it propagated the following beliefs: (1) the Civil War was fought over secession and not slavery; (2) African Americans were actually better off under the slave system because white owners were benevolent, rather than cruel; and (3) the racial and social hierarchy that had previously existed under the South's plantation system was vastly superior, and (4) was a potential solution to the growing racial tensions that arose following emancipation and Reconstruction.

Many Confederate veterans and white southerners could not adjust to the new social and political situation that brought electoral power to African Americans, sometimes at their own expense. These changes were seen as an affront to their identity and their beliefs in the superiority of their race. Once Reconstruction came to an official end, there was a strong push to promote this

alternative interpretation of the war, specifically the ideals of the Lost Cause. For powerful and highly-organized groups such as the UDC and other memorial associations, Confederate monuments became the most obvious and ubiquitous sign-vehicle spreading these fictitious beliefs and values regarding southern history and racial equality.

Confederate monuments are inextricably linked to the Lost Cause. The major tenets of this belief system were often given voice during monument dedication ceremonies which promoted racial hatred and ignorance and propagated bold lies about emancipation and the Civil War. Although the dedication ceremonies at both the Lee monument in New Orleans and the Confederate Soldier monument in Durham mention racial purity and white supremacy in passing, the Silent Sam monument in Chapel Hill most explicitly and directly endorses these sentiments. Julian S. Carr's overtly racist speech and discussion of the heroic duty he and other veterans paid to the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon race is hard to ignore. The racist message that Silent Sam thereby projects onto the campus and its surroundings is clear. The fact that Silent Sam has remained on UNC's campus, a public institution, for over a century despite its symbolic potency is striking. Carr did more to propagate Lost Cause ideology and white supremacy through Silent Sam than did those who were present at the New Orleans and Durham dedication. However, the other two monuments spare no effort to symbolize the Lost Cause themselves.

In the case of Confederate monuments, the UDC and other veteran organizations promoted both their revisionist interpretation of the Civil War and their beliefs in a desired racial hierarchy that elevated white southerners over African Americans, through the proliferation of monuments. These monuments that now dot the region's built landscape were, and continue to be, imbued with values and beliefs staunchly rooted in the Lost Cause. As is evidenced in the preceding case studies, the dedication speeches most directly tie these two together—the monument, a sign-vehicle or symbol, and the message, white supremacy. While these monuments are symbolic of Confederate dedication on the surface, they are equally testaments to the potency of white supremacist ideology—both past and present. Although symbols and messages evolve over time, the messages that these monuments convey remain unchanged. In the contemporary landscape, symbols that actively promote racial divisions and continue to leave deep wounds on the African American psyche should be removed and properly contextualized.



## **Confederate Monuments and Collective Memory**

Functionally, Confederate monuments demarcate white space and black space in cities and towns across the region. Symbolically, these monuments propagate a revisionist interpretation of the Civil War and the endurance of white supremacy in the region. The former had a profound effect on the way that African Americans and other marginalized groups physically navigated public space in the South. The latter, on the other hand, actively shaped the way in which African Americans read, understood, and related to their cultural surroundings, and society at large. In terms of memory and identity, these functional monuments thus served the dual purpose of actively influencing society's memorial behavior while also serving as physical repositories for the Confederate legacy. While instability ravaged the region in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these monuments helped shape the collective memory of the South to encourage a regional identity rooted in the Lost Cause and white supremacy.

Christine Boyer argued in *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* that the 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a memory crisis in which social stability was threatened by the rapid political and technological revolutions that occurred. These memory crises had a major effect on the way in which individuals held on to their past while articulating their present in an evolving world. These political revolutions were often associated with the rise of the European nation-state, which relied heavily upon the formation of a collective identity to propagate their regime and people. During this period, symbolic monuments undoubtedly played a major role in the dissemination of a collective identity that exploited both memory and a common history. Monuments were intended not only to address the memory crises of the era, but also to instill a unique collective identity for a chosen group of individuals. Undoubtedly, this unique identity was predicated upon a revisionist interpretation of the past. While these developments are most often associated with the rise of nation-states, they are also important tools in the creation of a minority group identity—even within the context of larger, all-encompassing national identity.

Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, the South entered its own memory crisis as white southerners came to terms with a new present. The experience of Reconstruction left behind a diminished population that largely lacked direction and felt disillusioned by the major changes that

had occurred since the Civil War. For many white elites, the Reconstruction period and the rise of African American empowerment so soon after defeat was an affront to their identity and way of life. Although Reconstruction hoped to stabilize the region and ensure that southern society rehabilitates to address its past as a slavery-based society, it largely failed. From 1865 to 1877, the instability of the region instigated the rise of white supremacists who asserted themselves both politically and violently. Louisiana is by far the best example of this as its Reconstruction experience centered around violence and political instability. From 1863 to 1877, Louisiana cycled through five successive governments, each either confronted with assassination attempts or counter governments installed by white supremacists. The political instability held back the region for much of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It came as no surprise that many former Confederates struggled during this period to make sense of defeat and to find a place in a post-slavery society.

For white southerners, celebration of a Confederate legacy steeped in the ideals of the Lost Cause was a necessary stabilizing mechanism to confront the memory crises of the era. The proliferation of Confederate monuments enabled the region to officially reconcile with its past, find stability in its present, and project a unique cultural identity into the region's built landscape. However, the Confederate identity instilled into the psyche of the American South through these monuments directly contrasts the values and beliefs held by the all-encompassing American identity. This Confederate identity served its purpose in helping the South, particularly its white population, come to terms with defeat and Reconstruction. Nonetheless, it is an identity that is largely steeped in the belief system of white supremacy. In the contemporary context, a regional culture that directly conflicts with a larger American identity in promoting racial inequality and violence is unacceptable. Ultimately, it is difficult for divided communities to truly reconcile with racial inequality while these monuments, invariably connected with a cultural identity steeped in the Lost Cause, continue to stand.

### **Confederate Monuments and Heritage Conservation**

Contemporary debates over the South's Confederate legacy parallels the questions that have plagued the field of heritage conservation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Heritage conservation, grounded in architecture and planning, still centers on the tension between John Ruskin's "conservative repair" and Viollet-le-Duc's "stylistic repair." Ruskin opposed the restoration of buildings that

radically changed original intent and detracted from their connection to history. Specifically, Ruskin preferred that restoration work focus on restoring buildings and historically-significant artifacts to their original form, leaving little room for the influence of modernity. Ruskin idealized the past. In contrast, Viollet-le-Duc advocated for a more stylistic approach to historic conservation that emphasized the insertion of modern touches over a strict adherence to historic integrity. Viollet-le-Duc's approach saw opportunity for building a more direct bridge between the past and present by incorporating aspects of modernity in his restoration work.

This division within the field of heritage conservation frames the contemporary debate over Confederate monuments. North Carolina's heritage protection laws largely follow Ruskin's "conservative repair" approach. The law prevents both the removal of any "object of remembrance," which includes all Confederate monuments on public property, and the relocation of any such object to a space of lesser significance—such as a museum. The law also stipulates that the incorporation of a plaque intended to provide historic context would also detract from the monument's primary intent—commemoration. Like Ruskin, the North Carolina General Assembly believed that these monuments were important symbols of the state's history and were best understood in their original context. Effectively, the North Carolina law ensures that public entities cannot engage in a more "stylistic repair" approach to recontextualize or move a Confederate monument without the express approval of the appropriate authority. Given the divisiveness and symbolic potency of Confederate monuments, however, this law—and others like it across the region—is highly problematic and detrimental to social cohesion.

In Chapel Hill, however, there have been major attempts to employ a more "stylistic repair" approach to Silent Sam. Seeking to address the general lack of African American representations on campus, university officials introduced the Unsung Founders monument near Silent Sam. The intention may not have been to actively recontextualize, but the Unsung Founder's monument conveyed a message that starkly contrasted with that associated with Silent Sam. While the Confederate monument is connected to the university's legacy of Civil War and white supremacy, the Unsung Founders monument is intended to celebrate and give voice to the African American slaves who helped build the university when it was founded over two centuries ago. Recontextualization has not been successful in North Carolina. In contrast, New Orleans presents

an approach that better addresses the overarching issue: these monuments are reflective of a culture and a past steeped in tenets of white supremacy and should be removed rather than simply recontextualized in space. Regardless of recontextualization, the messages conveyed via Confederate monuments dominate and overpower. Without removal from public space, these messages will continue to persist and serve as a detriment to the identity contemporary cities wish to project.

Confederate monuments are public facing and thus have a direct effect on the way in which cities are perceived in an increasingly globalized world. In the context of the field of heritage conservation, historically-significant artifacts are important tools in shaping a city's unique identity in the present while celebrating its historic narrative in the past. These artifacts are key components in the promotion of tourism and as arbiters of economic development. However, the field has yet to find the right approach to conserving divisive histories. While Confederate monuments are useful in instructing current generations of southerners to learn from the discretions of the past, that requires that there is an accurate understanding of these monuments. At present, there is no active approach to properly contextualize these monuments on a massive scale to facilitate the absorption of these lessons from the past. More importantly, these monuments reflect poorly on the cities which continue to maintain them. Inextricably linked with their symbolic origins, Confederate monuments undoubtedly project a negative message to the world around them. These negative messages could have a detrimental effect on a city's ability to attract both tourists and economic development initiatives to their respective communities.

In the case of Confederate monuments, it is crucial that communities have the opportunity to reconcile with divisive heritage artifacts present in their built landscape. More importantly, citizens must have the opportunity collectively advocate for symbols that better reflect their contemporary values and beliefs. In North Carolina and other southern states, no such opportunity is afforded to their communities. Instead, states have decided on behalf of their citizens which artifacts in the built environment deserve special protection for future generations and ultimately who gets to make these decisions. These are questions that the field of heritage conservation continues to struggle to answer for itself, much less in the case of Confederate monuments. In North Carolina, while the will of the people brought down the monument in Durham, the state's politicians

effectively answered those questions on behalf of their constituents. These laws usurp the power local municipalities once had to determine the identity, values, and beliefs that best represent their communities.

Where heritage symbols and physical artifacts arguably do more to divide rather than uniting diverse publics, contemporary American democracy can and should address these challenges. The heritage laws in place in North Carolina and elsewhere are an affront to American democracy. These monuments invariably demarcate racialized public space, project values steeped in white supremacy, and represent a cultural identity that directly conflicts with an American identity that believes in racial equality. The people who are forced to live among these artifacts of a bygone era—one that no longer exists to the fullest extent—should have the opportunity to decide the fate of the region's Confederate legacy.

### **Recommendations for Planners and Public Practitioners**

This study has sought to offer planners and other civic actors a critical lens through which the historic origins and design preoccupations associated with the rise of Confederate monuments can be better understood. More importantly, by understanding the origins of these monuments, practitioners will more effectively be able to engage in the contentious debates over the future of public space across the region and the country at large. Given that the issues surrounding Confederate monuments remain unresolved, this concluding section will leave planners, urban designers, and other practitioners with a set of recommendations as they work with their communities to address issues of representation in civic space and, more importantly, the creation of inclusive public spaces that unite rather than divide. Specifically, this section will answer the following questions as planners move forward: (1) In addressing contentious monuments, what type of public dialogue should occur and what role can planners play in making that happen? (2) What role should grassroots organizations and citizens play in the decision-making process? (3) In jurisdictions where monument protection laws exist, what options are there to challenge or overturn these binding laws that prevent practitioners from effectively addressing the everyday concerns of their citizens?

What is most apparent in researching this debate in the United States is the fact that there continues to be a general lack of understanding around the historic origins of these public monuments. In jurisdictions where Confederate monuments feature prominently in public space, it is important that, first and foremost, more is done to engage and help communities understand the historic events that first brought about these monuments. As arbiters of inclusive public space, planners must play a role in reorienting public spaces that house Confederate monuments through active dialogue with the public. Working with public historians, planners should engage with the public to impart a better understanding of these monuments and the symbolic potency of the message they were originally designed to convey in public space. Understanding the historic origins of these monuments and helping communities come to terms with what they mean to different groups of people is an important first step in the rebuilding of truly public space in the American South.

The case in New Orleans provides an excellent example of how planners and other practitioners can effectively leverage public forums to engage with the surrounding community and generate debate and a better understanding of the historic origins of these monuments. While Mayor Landrieu spearheaded the movement in New Orleans and directed City Council to conduct several public forums prior to the removal, the process itself generated extensive media coverage that helped the city come to terms with the nefarious origins of their monument. In states where civic monuments are not protected by law, the New Orleans process provides an excellent example of the efficacy of engaging with the public prior to removal while providing an avenue by which citizens could then help determine the future of the empty space left behind by former Confederate monuments.

As these monuments are housed on publicly-owned spaces, grassroots organizations and individual citizens, unfortunately, do not have the ability to unilaterally decide the future of Confederate monuments on their own. Although the experience in Durham, North Carolina seems to contradict this, the Durham case highlights the failure of the state in providing an effective avenue by which communities can come together to address contentious symbols in their own built environments. While the outcome in Durham may have been widely applauded, it was entirely illegal in North Carolina. However, it showcases the importance of having the opportunity to engage both grassroots organizations and everyday citizens in the debate to give them a voice to

decide the future of these public spaces. For instance, in the case of the Silent Sam monument in Chapel Hill, there are several grassroots organizations that have been actively campaigning for the last five years not to remove the divisive statue but rather to help recontextualize it for contemporary audiences. The Real Silent Sam group, for instance, has been campaigning to affix a plaque on Silent Sam that would provide the historic context for UNC's monument. Although the group may deny the heinous message invariably conveyed via Silent Sam, they too would mourn the loss of such a historically significant monument in Chapel Hill.

In a state such as North Carolina, grassroots organizations such as The Real Silent Sam should be more actively engaged in the ongoing debate over the future of Confederate monuments. It is possible that they could help step in where the state refuses, particularly as it relates to providing the historical context for monuments such as these. Since the state is unable to provide that context, groups such as The Real Silent Sam must continue to do so. More importantly, the constant grassroots protests ultimately prevents elected officials from becoming complacent in the status quo created by heritage protection laws. Additionally, grassroots organizations can hold their own community design forums that engage with local communities when local officials are unable to do so. Events such as these are equally effective in ensuring that these debates remain in the spotlight. By constantly drawing attention to these symbols, as The Real Silent Sam and other organizations have effectively done so in North Carolina, the issues surrounding these monuments will not fade away until politicians effectively address them through legislation. Grassroots organizations and other protest movements have a large stake in the process and should play a major role in states where monument protection laws need to be overturned and where public officials have few opportunities to engage due to the binding nature of the law.

Individual citizens have a role in this as well. In the end, these monuments are intended to reflect their values and beliefs as members of the surrounding community. If these monuments do not reflect their values—which invariably they do not in today's contemporary society—then their role as civic monuments in public space must be challenged. Public spaces are living spaces in which a diversity of individuals have the opportunity to interact with one another on a daily basis (Franck & Paxson, 2006). They are also flexible spaces and should not project ideals that divide society rather than bring it together (Franck & Paxson, 2006). Public spaces should enable

individuals to express their own feelings and opinions through community design interventions and public art, not prohibit free expression (Franck & Paxson, 2006).<sup>19</sup> Public space invariably requires involvement from everyday citizens to truly be successful and representative of the surrounding community.

The ongoing process in New Orleans provides an excellent example of the powerful role individual community members can play in reorienting public spaces previously inhabited by Confederate monuments. For Mayor Landrieu, the ultimate goal was to provide the City of New Orleans with monuments that more accurately reflect the values, narratives, and beliefs of the contemporary city through interactive design. In a partnership with local urban design firms, public visioning forums for the future of the Lee monument site will be held later this year (2018).<sup>21</sup> Landrieu's plan for the former site of the Lee monument encourages public participation and community design in such a way that directly contradicts the monument's historic origin—which is now seen as the result of a closed, white, male decision-making process. Community-oriented design forums will not solve all the problems associated with Confederate monuments, but at the very least it puts the power to reimagine the very 'public nature' of public space into the hands of the community that have long been forced to live among these divisive symbols. Planners, urban designers, and other practitioners should help direct and facilitate public design forums, such as those that will be held in New Orleans in 2018, as they are helpful in eventual societal reconciliation.

However, in states such as North Carolina, there is still the major barrier presented by the heritage protection laws that prohibit removal, recontextualization attempts such as plaques, and even public design forums that would enable the community to address the nature of public spaces themselves. As stated above, grassroots organizations and other protest movements undoubtedly

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<sup>19</sup> For more information, see Karen A. Franck and Lynn Paxson's chapter on the flexibility of public memorial sites in Israel, New York, Oklahoma and Colorado, "Transforming Public Space into Sites of Mourning and Free Expression" in *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life*.

<sup>20</sup> Public art and community design actively engages voices that would go unheard in an official decision-making process. In reorienting divisive public space, it is important to engage the community in an effort to help societies reconcile with the past and move forward together. Two great examples include, Dr. Janis Timm-Bottos Art Hives Network (<http://arthives.org/about>) and the Philadelphia-based *Monument Lab* (<http://monumentlab.com/about>) both of which encourage public participation in redesigning civic spaces.

<sup>21</sup> Colloqate Design (<https://colloqate.org/>) has created a forum by which New Orleanians can help decide the future of the former Lee monument site. This series of public art, community-oriented events is called Paper Monuments (<https://www.papermonuments.org/>).



play a role in ensuring that elected officials do not forget the existence of Confederate monuments. Protests draw attention to the ongoing issue and ensure that these concerns will not go away until the legislation is challenged or overturned. Again, grassroots organizations should continue to step in where the state refuses to do so to hold politicians accountable to the needs of the local community. In the case of the overarching legislation, the most obvious solution is to simply vote out the elected officials who continue to support these heritage protection laws. However, that is easier said than done.

Aneil Kovvali, in an essay for the *Stanford Law Review*, suggests that there are two legal routes that could be utilized to challenge these statutes. Under the principle of free speech, cities could contend that the heritage protection laws compel “the city to engage in speech it finds offensive” (Kovvali, 2017). Compelled speech is not protected by the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, because the statue is purely a local issue, cities could contend that the heritage protection laws violate equal protection because the laws “take the issue out of the hands of the local government, and place it in the hands of an entity operating at a higher level” (Kovvali, 2017). This ultimately takes the power to determine public space out of the hands of citizens who are forced to live among these monuments—whether they agree with their existence or not. Until these statues are overturned or simplified in states such as North Carolina, there is very little that planners, designers, and other public practitioners can do to address the needs of their local citizens in the case of Confederate monuments. This is a major issue that must be resolved.

As symbols of white supremacy, racial violence, and memory sites that point to America’s legacy of segregation, Confederate monuments no longer have a place in public space and should be removed. They are not civic monuments that represent the ideals of the people who live among them but rather provocative icons of a bygone era that should no longer be relevant in the present. So long as they remain, the ideals they represent will continue to persist in contemporary American society and the violence they promote will continue. Only once they are removed will American society truly move forward towards a more inclusive union that celebrates its diversity in narrative, culture, and identity. These monuments form the centerpieces of civic spaces across the region—spaces that planners must play a role in shaping. In the context of Confederate monuments, it is important for planners to effectively engage the community and help generate a better

understanding of these monument's origins in history and their role in shaping and articulating public space today. Planners should, where they can, engage in public forums that return public space to the people through community design interventions. Planners should promote the innate flexibility of public space by encouraging active community involvement whether through community design events or through individual creativity and action.

As the debate remains unresolved in the American South, additional research should be conducted into the way in which other divided societies have effectively addressed their own contentious symbols in public space. Focusing on the unexplored subject of colonial urbanism in Europe (post-war Germany, France, post-Soviet states), Australia, and South Africa, American planners could learn how other divided societies have addressed their own monuments of contention. In the end, public space—no matter in what society it exists—must embrace free expression rather than prohibit it. And, more importantly, it must represent the diversity of modern society rather than a subset of its conflicted past.

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