

Exploring the Public Library as a Space for Civil Conversation by Engaging with the Confederate Monument Debate

Overview

“Many libraries host public programs that facilitate the type of discourse that offers citizens a chance to frame issues of common concern, deliberate about choices for solving problems, create deeper understanding about others’ opinions, connect citizens across the spectrum of thought, and recommend appropriate action that reflects legitimate guidance from the whole community.” (Nancy Kranich) In this activity, students will begin to think about the public library as a space for civil discourse then engage in respectful dialogue surrounding a controversial issue themselves. Students will learn about a community conversation about Confederate monuments held at the Chapel Hill Public Library in August 2017 and using the Civil Conversations Model from the [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#), students will read about then discuss in small groups the controversy surrounding Confederate monuments. (This activity can be conducted as part of a visit to the public library, during which students explore the library as a space for civil discourse, or in the classroom.)

Grades

8-12 (teachers will modify the readings provided based on the level of students taught)

Materials

- Civil Conversations handout, attached
 - Originally created by the [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#)
- Anti-Confederate Monument Articles, attached
 - [“Americans should renounce Confederate leaders the same way Germans renounce Hitler”](#)
 - [“Why White Southern Conservatives Need to Defend Confederate Monuments”](#)
- Pro-Confederate Monument Articles, attached
 - [“Why We Should Keep the Confederate Monuments Right Where They Are”](#)
 - [Let’s start a new conversation on Confederate symbols](#)
- Optional Materials:
 - [“Chapel Hill talks Confederate monuments and free speech,”](#) online article and video
 - [“Chapel Hill Public Library hosted panel about confederate statues and free speech”](#) online article
 - [“Debate Over Silent Sam Reveals Differing Views of University’s History,”](#) article attached
 - Video of “Beyond the Headlines: Confederate Monuments, Historical Memory, & Free Speech” community conversation at the Chapel Hill Public Library:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYGZs2QOM_Q&t=70s
 - Video of UNC-Chapel Hill History Professor William Sturkey explaining why he supports the removal of “Silent Sam,” the Confederate Monument on UNC-Chapel Hill’s campus:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ov_yL6kKcdM
 - “Researching Confederate Monuments in North Carolina,” website from UNC Libraries:
<http://guides.lib.unc.edu/confederatemonumentsnc>
- **Optional Readings Dealing with the Toppling of Silent Sam at UNC-Chapel Hill**
 - “Who is Silent Same? Here’s the background on the recently toppled Civil War monument,” *News and Observer*: <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article217064990.html>
 - “Silent Sam’s Wake,” *The Daily Tar Heel*: <http://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2018/08/silent-sam-wake-0821>

This lesson plan was created by Carolina K-12 and the Chapel Hill Public Library as part of the “Doing Democracy: Civic Engagement & Education at the Public Library” project, made possible by funding from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) as administered by the State Library of North Carolina, a division of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (IMLS grant number LS-00-17-0034-17).

- “Scholars Explain the Racist History of UNC’s Silent Sam Statue,” *Forbes*: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kristinakillgrove/2018/08/22/scholars-explain-the-racist-history-of-uncs-silent-sam-statue/#1977c44b114f>
- “After more than a century in Chapel Hill, Silent Sam has many tales to tell,” *Carolina Journal*: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kristinakillgrove/2018/08/22/scholars-explain-the-racist-history-of-uncs-silent-sam-statue/#1977c44b114f>
- Tips for Teaching About the Silent Sam toppling by Christoph Stutts, former high school teacher and current UNC Education graduate student: <https://t.co/ThC0iilSPV>

Duration

25-60 minutes, depends on whether or not the students complete the reading for homework

Teacher Preparation

This activity can be completed at your local public library, school library, or in the classroom. If working with your public or school library, teachers can ask the librarian to pull additional background readings that provide more context of the controversy surrounding Confederate monuments.

Student Preparation (optional)

To save class time, teachers may assign the readings for homework the night before completing this lesson.

Procedure

Warm Up: What Purpose Does a Library Serve?

1. As a warmup, ask students: “What purpose does a library serve in a community?” and have them list some answers on a separate sheet of paper. After a few minutes, ask students to share their responses and note their answers on the board or piece of chart paper.
2. Once you have a list of responses, discuss:
 - Have you visited the public library and if so, for what reason(s)?
 - What services does the public library provide? What is the public library’s role in a community?
 - Who typically uses the library? Who should be allowed to use the library and why? (i.e., Everyone? Only people who live in a particular community? Only tax payers? etc.)
3. Push students to think beyond the practical services a library typically offers and layer in a consideration of a public library’s mission. Share with students that according to Nancy Kranich, libraries “uphold and strengthen some of the most fundamental democratic ideals of our society; they not only make information freely available to all, but also foster the development of a civil society.” Ask students to comment on this statement and further discuss:
 - What message is Kranich conveying? What do you think she means by “fundamental democratic ideals of our society?”
 - Do you agree with Kranich’s point? Why or why not? What examples can you identify of public libraries strengthening the “fundamental democratic ideals of our society?” What role does (or should) a library serve in a democratic society and in promoting engaged citizenship?
 - What are some specific ways a library can “foster the development of a civil society?”

The Library as a Public Space for Civil Discourse

4. Inform students that in many communities, libraries serve as a place for the community to gather for any number of reasons. For example, many libraries host computer classes to teach people how to build a website or use spreadsheets. Some libraries host information sessions that help people fill out their taxes

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or register for government services like Medicaid and Medicare. Additionally, “Many libraries host public programs that facilitate the type of discourse that offers citizens a chance to frame issues of common concern, deliberate about choices for solving problems, create deeper understanding about others’ opinions, connect citizens across the spectrum of thought, and recommend appropriate action that reflects legitimate guidance from the whole community.” (Nancy Kranich) Discuss:

- Do you think our society is doing a good job overall of talking to people we disagree with, and/or having respectful discussions regarding controversial issues? Explain.
 - Teachers should push students to consider the divisiveness that seems to plague American society and politics, from FaceBook arguments and “defriending” to media commentators and politicians screaming over each other.
- According to Nancy Kranich, “Americans are ‘bowling along.’ They simply have too few opportunities that expose them to people with different views and engage them in authentic dialogue about pressing problems, as documented by Diana Mutz (2006). And dialogue about possibilities declines as people flee the public square.” Do you agree or disagree and why? What does Kranich mean by “feeling the public square” and why does this lead to a weakened ability to have respectful dialogue?
- Why is it important that people have a safe space for discussing problems and issues, even when they may have strongly different opinions?
- In what specific ways can the public library help correct this issue?

5. As a specific example, share with students that in August 2017, the Chapel Hill Public Library hosted a community conversation about Confederate monuments in the wake of events in Charlottesville, Virginia (when on August 12, 2017 when a [white nationalist rally](#) ended in violence and the murder of a counter-protestor.) This conversation brought together community members, business owners, public safety officials, and professors and students from UNC-Chapel Hill to peacefully and respectfully discuss the events in Charlottesville as well as a “Silent Sam,” a controversial Confederate monument on UNC-Chapel Hill’s campus.

➤ **Optional:**

- The community conversation hosted by the Chapel Hill Public Library and Carolina Public Humanities is available on YouTube. Teachers may wish to show excerpts from this event as an example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYGZs2QOM_Q&t=37s
- Teachers can also review one or both of the following articles about the event:
 - [“Chapel Hill talks Confederate monuments and free speech,”](#) article and video, available online
 - [“Chapel Hill Public Library hosted panel about confederate statues and free speech”](#) article, available online
- More information about that event is here: <https://humanities.unc.edu/event/beyond-the-headlines-confederate-monuments-historical-memory-free-speech/>

Confederate Monuments in Public Spaces: A Civil Conversation

6. Inform students that they’re going to now engage in this same controversial issue of Confederate monuments in public spaces, using a technique from the Constitutional Rights Foundation called “Civil Conversations in the Classroom.” Before starting the activity, discuss the following questions. (Ask students not to share their personal views on this issue yet.)

- What are Confederate monuments?
- Do you think these monuments have always been controversial? Explain.
- Why do you think these monuments have attracted more news coverage in the last few years?

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7. Divide students into groups of 4 and provide each student with the attached Civil Conversation Guide. Review the guide as a class, making sure to spend ample time going over the “Rules for Civil Conversations” under Step 3. Inform students of how much time they have to read the articles (or review if read the evening before) and discuss their articles. Answer any questions. Finally, distribute the attached readings so that two members of each group read a pro-Confederate monument article and the remaining members read an anti-Confederate monument article.
 - **Teacher Note:** Teachers should determine which of the attached articles to use before starting the lesson based on the reading level of students. Teachers can also elect to have the entire class read the same pro-Confederate monument and anti-Confederate monument articles. Another option is to have some groups read one pro-/anti article, while other groups read a different set of articles. A third option is to have each student within a group read a different article. The only requirement is that two of the group members read a pro- article and two read an anti- article. (To save class time, teachers may assign the article for homework the night before the activity so that students can jump right into their civil conversations.)
7. Once students begin their discussions, circulate throughout the room to monitor student conversations and to remind students of the remaining time.
8. After the allotted time, bring the class together and debrief with the following questions:
 - What did you learn about the history of Confederate monuments from your article? What did you learn about the history of Confederate monuments from your groupmates who were assigned an opposing point of view?
 - What common ground did you find with other members of the group?
 - Why do you think this issue is so controversial?
 - Why is discussing controversial issues such as this, either at the library or otherwise, important? Why do you think many people (from legislators to Facebook “friends”) seem unable to engage in civil conversations about issues with which they disagree?
 - What should a library’s responsibility be in bringing people of differing opinions together to engage in this way? Why is this an important part of democracy?

Optional Activities

- Pair students who have opposing viewpoints on the issue of Confederate monuments or symbols in public spaces and have them write a letter to one another explaining their beliefs. Teachers can have students respond to general questions or specific prompts. Some examples of prompts include:
 - Do Confederate monuments represent democratic values? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think people are so passionate about this issue?
 - Should Confederate monuments in public spaces be protected by the First Amendment? Why or why not?
 - Many people who support keeping Confederate monuments in public spaces make the argument that they represent “heritage, not hate.” Do you agree with this sentiment? Why or why not?

This activity can be done once or as part of an ongoing conversation throughout the semester.

- With the help of your local or school librarian, have students research Confederate monuments in your community. Ask students to write a short paper about the history of the monument as well as any controversies relating to it.
- Play the following 10-minute video of UNC-Chapel Hill History professor, William Sturkey explaining why he supports the removal of “Silent Sam,” the Confederate Monument on UNC-Chapel Hill’s campus:

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ov_yL6kKcdM. Ask students to respond to his comments with a short reflection based on the following questions:

- Do you agree with Dr. Sturkey's comments? Why or why not?
- What do they think should be done about Silent Sam? Should it stay unchanged, kept in place but with more information that provides context for the monument, or taken down?
- Have students design their own community conversation event about a controversial issue at their local public library. Use the following questions to guide their event planning:
 - What issue do you want to discuss?
 - What format will you use for the community conversation to ensure diverse views are heard? (Have a panel of experts speak and allow the audience to ask questions, host a civil conversation like the one they just completed, etc.)
 - How will you encourage people to remain respectful, even if they disagree about an issue?
 - What rules will you implement for your event?

CIVIL CONVERSATION GUIDE



Name: _____

Class: _____

Title of Reading: _____

Step 1: Read.

A. Read through the entire selection without stopping to think about any particular section. Pay attention to your first impression as to what the reading is about.

B. Re-read the selection and annotate (“talk to”) the text:

- Underline the main/most important points. You can comment on these points in the margins.
- Circle words or phrases that are unknown or confusing to you.
- Write down any questions you have in the margin labeling them with a “?”.
- Draw an ➡ in the margin next to text that connects to something else you know outside the text. Note what the connection is, such as a news item or personal experience.

Step 2: Think about the reading to prepare for the discussion.

A. This reading is about...	B. The MAIN POINTS are:
C. In the reading, I agree with:	D. In the reading, I disagree with:

E. What are two questions about this reading that you think could be discussed? (The best questions for discussion are ones that have no simple answer and that can use the text as evidence.)

1.

2.

Step 3: Discuss and listen.

RULES FOR CIVIL CONVERSATION

1. Everyone in your group should participate in the conversation.
2. Listen carefully to what others are saying.
3. Ask clarifying questions if you do not understand a point raised.
4. Be respectful of what others are saying.
5. Refer to the text to support your ideas.

You will have _____ minutes to discuss. Your goal is to engage with each other and the text to gain insight about your own point of view while finding a shared understanding of issues.

At the end of the reading, you will likely find at least one discussion question. Use that question to get your discussion started. If time permits, you can also discuss questions you came up with in Step 2.

If the reading does not provide discussion questions, choose questions to discuss from Section E above.

Step 4: After your conversation...

A. Compared to others in my group, I spoke: ___ less than, ___ about the same as, ___ more than others

B. Some of the ways I added to the discussion:

C. What evidence did you use from the text to add to the discussion? Why was this evidence helpful?

D. What did you learn about the topic from the civil conversation? (Be sure to reference the text!)

Debate Over Silent Sam Reveals Differing Views Of University's History

By LISA PHILIP | NOV 16, 2017 | WUNC.org

Lisa Philip reports on a public hearing to gather opinions about Silent Sam, the Confederate monument sitting near the entrance to the UNC- Chapel Hill campus that has become the focal point of protests in recent months.

The University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill Board of Trustees held a public hearing Wednesday to gather opinions on Silent Sam. That's the Confederate monument sitting near the entrance to the UNC campus that has become the focal point of protests and denunciations by students, faculty, and even entire university departments.

While the majority of speakers who came before the board called for the removal of the statue, a handful asked that it be left in place, revealing a division in how the university community views its Confederate past.

It represents a part of history which is both good and bad. And it cannot be erased. -Eunice Brock
About halfway through the nearly two-hour hearing, Chairman Haywood Cochrane looked around the room for the next speaker. Eunice Brock walked slowly up to the podium. She had at least half a century on the students who had spoken before her.

"In my younger years, I marched and stood on Franklin Street for civil rights, along with protesting against the Civil War," she said. "I had my time in court."

Brock said she is an alumna of UNC, and has lived in Chapel Hill for more than sixty years. "To the students and others, I applaud your opposition to racism," she said. "But I am against the removal of Silent Sam, because I do not believe it expresses racism."

Brock said the statue is a "true veteran's monument," to honor those UNC alumni who died in the Civil War.

"It represents a part of history which is both good and bad," she said. "And it cannot be erased."
James Ward also announced himself as a graduate of the university, and he too said the statue should remain in place.

"Most of us look at the statue today and see a memorial to our ancestors, our blood kin who died in a devastating war," he said. "Most of those people went to war reluctantly, because their state had called them to fight off an invasion of the South, and they answered the call of duty."

But many of the speakers Wednesday who called for the removal of Silent Sam contested this narrative.

"To believe that Silent Sam is heritage rather than hate, requires one to ignore the statements of prominent Confederates at the time," said Thomas Hardy, who told the trustees he is a proud UNC alum and 11th-generation North Carolinian.

Hardy said many of his ancestors were slave owners.

"Now these members of my family that owned slaves were surely men of their particular time in history," he said. "Maybe they were nice to their kids, didn't kick their dogs, and maybe they went to

church on Sunday. But whatever it was about them that made them think it was okay to buy, own and sell human beings -- I can only call evil."

Hardy said the Confederates were "irritated about a number of things." But he said they were "most irritated" by threats to slavery.

"So those who wish as individuals to fly the battle flag or build private Confederate monuments, are free to do so. That's why we have the First Amendment," he said. "But they should not be surprised when many of us react with horror at their glorification of the most loathsome chapter of our history."

O.J. McGhee said the statue goes even further than that, and that there's "nothing silent" about it. He is chair of the Carolina Black Caucus, which advocates on behalf of African-American staff at UNC.

"It was erected purposefully to remind all who walked in its shadow, that no matter our advancements as a people, we would always be viewed as not equal and unwelcome," he said.

McGhee said he recognizes differences in opinion on "noble causes" of the past.

"But we should all agree that the pain of someone's oppression should have never been placed on a pedestal, to be celebrated," he said.

UNC Chancellor Carol Folt has said she would remove Silent Sam if she had the authority to do so. State legislators passed a law in 2015 requiring their approval to remove monuments from state property.

University officials could petition the state's historical commission to remove Silent Sam. But they have yet to do so.

Source: <http://wunc.org/post/debate-over-silent-sam-reveals-differing-views-universitys-history#stream/0>

Why We Should Keep The Confederate Monuments Right Where They Are

By [John Daniel Davidson](#) | *The Federalist* | AUGUST 18, 2017

Tearing down Confederate statues, or any monuments from our history, will not change the past. But it will make for a poorer, less enlightened future.

In the wake of Charlottesville, a chorus of media outlets, political activists, and random people on the Internet have called for the removal or destruction of Confederate statues in cities across the country. They say we shouldn't honor a bunch of racists who fought to preserve slavery, and that it's long past time for these painful reminders of our past to come down—stow them away in a museum or smash them to pieces, just get them off the streets.

This iconoclastic impulse is a mistake, even after the harrowing events in Charlottesville last weekend. It's a mistake not because there was anything noble about the Confederacy or its *raison d'être*, which was slavery, but because there is something noble—and, for a free people, necessary—about preserving our history so we can understand who we are and how we should live.

For all the tough talk this week about the problems with these historical monuments, there hasn't been nearly enough discussion of their history. Most of them were built a half-century after the war, as the Civil War generation was beginning to die off. Before the turn of the century, Confederate graves had for the most part not been cared for in federal cemeteries, and erecting a Confederate monument was considered treasonous. But as the veterans of the war began to die, there was a renewed push for reconciliation between North and South, and with it an outpouring of filial piety. Of course, the monument boom across the South during the first two decades of the twentieth century came at a time of terrible race relations, mass immigration, and the pernicious influence of the Lost Cause mythos, which poisoned the South.

So the monuments reflect more than one current of early twentieth-century America. They served to venerate Confederate heroes like Robert E. Lee, thereby cementing the narrative of the Lost Cause and all its misty-eyed nostalgia about the South. But they were also an outpouring of grief and remembrance for the hundreds of thousands who had died in the war. Nearly a quarter of Southern white men in their twenties were killed or died from disease. Is it any wonder that decades later, as families began to bury Confederate veterans in greater numbers, there would be a push to erect memorials to that generation?

And for as much as Lost Cause mythology adorns so many of these monuments, their purpose was also to convey to future generations why so many people kept fighting, for years and in the face of staggering casualties. For the ordinary soldiers who fought and died, devotion to the Confederate army did not arise primarily from a devotion to the institution of slavery (just as most Union soldiers were not fighting primarily to end slavery) but from a devotion to their home states and a sense of honor and duty to defend them from what they considered to be an invading army.

That they were wrong about slavery does not excuse us today from the burden of trying to understand what motivated them to fight—and what motivated them and their families to undertake a flurry of monument-building decades later as the surviving veterans began to die off.

Speaking on Memorial Day in 1884, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., a Union veteran who saw a great deal of action, talked about the importance of transmitting the emotional weight of the war from one generation to the next, and he specifically mentions the role of monuments: "I believe from the bottom of my heart that our memorial halls and statues and tablets, the tattered flags of our regiments gathered in the Statehouses, are worth more to our young men by way of chastening and inspiration than the monuments of another hundred years of peaceful life could be."

For Holmes, it was also the duty of Civil War veterans themselves to convey the significance of the war to posterity. He said, "the generation that carried on the war has been set apart by its experience. Through our great good fortune, in our youth our hearts were touched with fire... we have seen with our own eyes, beyond

and above the gold fields, the snowy heights of honor, and it is for us to bear the report to those who come after.”

This Isn't Really About Confederate Monuments

Nevertheless, a common objection to these statues today is that because they occupy public spaces, they serve to venerate their subjects, who were of course racists and fought to preserve slavery. But if we know the history, why can't we see them in a different light? Why shouldn't we view them as we should, as a haunting and cautionary tale?

Certainly, the statues were not originally meant to educate future generations about the evils of slavery and secession, but that doesn't mean that we can't take them as such today. Indeed, the fact that these statues were erected in prominent public places is itself a powerful lesson in American history—a testament to our turbulent past that would be diminished if they were removed to a sanitized display in a museum. Not every statue or piece of public art has to comfort and console us. Sometimes, they should oblige us to grapple with our nation's history and the vagaries of human nature.

Even so, some conservatives are willing to let the things go. Kevin Williamson at NRO urges conservatives to do nothing. “The Left's vandalism is intended mainly to get a rise out of the Right, in the hopes of getting some Republican to wrong-foot himself over a racial question,” he writes. Even if some conservatives sympathize with those who want to remove Confederate memorials—and plenty of prominent right-of-center writers clearly do—there's no need to join them because the iconoclasm sweeping the country, says Williamson, “mainly consists of local authorities making democratic decisions about the disposition of public property,” and thus “there is a case for political quietism in this matter.”

That would be fine advice if it were true that this is really just about local authorities making democratic decisions about statues. It would even be fine if it were just about the moral preening of Democratic politicians and activists, seizing on an opportunity to shame and embarrass Southerners for gradually abandoning their party in favor of the GOP.

But the iconoclasm on display now is about more than anathematizing the Confederacy or scoring cheap political points against hapless Republicans. It's part of the Left's overarching critique of American constitutionalism, the goal of which is to overthrow that order.

The Real Reason The Left Wants To Forget The Past

President Trump was mocked for suggesting that if we tear down statues of Lee then activists would demand the removal of George Washington or Thomas Jefferson next. But sure enough, later in the week the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC was vandalized with spray paint. A Lincoln statue in Chicago was burned. Al Sharpton said the Jefferson Memorial should be abandoned. A pastor in Chicago asked the mayor to remove the names of Washington and Andrew Jackson from city parks because they owned slaves. A writer at Vice News called for Mount Rushmore to be blown up. One columnist in Philly even argued for tearing down a statue of Frank Rizzo, who served as police commissioner and mayor in the late 1960s and '70s. In some cases, any monument would do.

All this sounds crazy, but jumping from Confederate statues to Lincoln to Rizzo follows a certain logic. For the Left, the Confederacy is just a small part of a much larger problem, which is the past. Iconoclasm of the kind we've seen this week is native to the Left, because the entire point is to liberate society from the strictures of tradition and history in order to secure a glorious new future. That's why Mao's Cultural Revolution in China torched temples and dug up ancient graves, why the Soviets sacked Orthodox churches and confiscated church property, and why various governments of France went about de-Christianizing the country during the French Revolution.

The modern-day American Left isn't as bad as all that, but its ideology about the past is more or less the same. Hence the statement issued Thursday by Seattle Mayor Ed Murray calling for the removal of all “symbols of hate, racism and violence that exist in our city.” Murray is at least consistent, as he includes not just Confederate symbols but also a well-known statue of Vladimir Lenin. These symbols, Murray says, represent

“historic injustices,” and “their existence causes pain among those who themselves or whose family members have been impacted by these atrocities.”

He is not interested in the history of the statues themselves, the people or events they depict, or “what political affiliation may have been assigned to them in the decades since they were erected.” Don’t be fooled by the therapeutic language about causing pain. The statues must go because they remind us constantly of a past that needs only to be overcome and forgotten.

A more mature society would recognize that the past is always with you and must always be kept in mind. There’s a reason Christians in Rome didn’t topple all the pagan statues and buildings in the city, or raze the Colosseum. Edmund Burke had strong words for the French during their revolution, while they were doing their best to destroy a rich past and slaughter one another in the process:

You had all these advantages in your ancient states; but you chose to act as if you had never been molded into civil society, and had everything to begin anew. You began ill, because you began by despising everything that belonged to you... If the last generations of your country appeared without much luster in your eyes, you might have passed them by, and derived your claims from a more early race of ancestors. Under a pious predilection for those ancestors, your imaginations would have realized in them a standard of virtue and wisdom, beyond the vulgar practice of the hour: and you would have risen with the example to whose imitation you aspired. Respecting your forefathers, you would have been taught to respect yourself. You would not have chosen to consider the French as a people of yesterday, as a nation of low-born servile wretches until the emancipating year of 1789.

That is part of why these memorials and statues are important. Perhaps not all of them need be preserved, but giving into the iconoclasm of the Left, with temperatures running high, will mean we lose far more than we gain by hiding these physical reminders of our nation’s troubled past.

Let them stand as a memorial of our ancestors who died, a challenge to understand their time and its troubles, and a warning for the present day.

This article was edited for clarity by Carolina K-12 from the following source: <http://thefederalist.com/2017/08/18/in-defense-of-the-monuments/>

Americans should renounce Confederate leaders the same way Germans renounce Hitler
By Gersh Kuntzman | *New York Daily News* | August 17, 2017

Ever wonder why there are no statues of Adolf Hitler in Berlin?

It's a question that President Trump should consider when declaring that monuments to Confederate leaders are part of our nation's great "history and culture." Hitler was part of German history and culture, too. But to this day, Germany rejects him as a traitor to his people.

Every American should feel the same way about the leaders of the Confederacy as Germans feel towards Hitler. The Confederacy was an act of treason against the United States of America, its Constitution and one of its greatest Presidents. But alas, there are still close to 700 Confederate monuments strewn across the South. And President Trump — who, ironically, often says he's the best President since Lincoln — wants to maintain them.

But the President is drawing the wrong history lesson from these statues and memorials. Monuments are never about history itself. They merely represent what the people putting up the monument think about history at the moment that the monument is being installed. That's why there were once so many statues of Lenin in the Soviet Union, yet so few now. Every generation gets to write history the way it wants. And every next generation gets to rewrite it.

So it's no surprise that most of these monuments to our so-called national culture were installed in two major periods of Southern racist backlash: the era of Jim Crow segregation in the 1910s and 1920s and the Civil Rights era in the 1950s and 1960s (historian Kenneth Kruse's chart makes this point very clearly). These monuments were put up by a succeeding generation to recast the earlier event, in this case that Confederate secession was not a traitorous act against the United States of America, but a noble effort to defend the honor of the South — with whites playing the starring roles.

Perhaps President Trump should recall the lesson of Benedict Arnold. Just like Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Jefferson Davis and everyone who swore allegiance to the Confederacy, Arnold was a traitor to his country. He won many great battles early in the Revolutionary War, but because he betrayed his nation, there are no monument to him anywhere in this country. In fact, a monument to the Revolution in Saratoga has places for statues in each of its four corners, but only three statues are there: Horatio Gates, General Philip Schuyler and Colonel Daniel Morgan. The place where Arnold's statue should be, given his heroism at Saratoga, is empty.

Nearby is a statue of a boot. Arnold famously injured his foot in the battle, yet fought on bravely. The plaque on the boot monument reads, "In memory of the most brilliant soldier of the Continental army, who was desperately wounded on this spot, winning for his countrymen the decisive battle of the American Revolution, and for himself the rank of Major General."

Arnold's name is not on the monument — a statement by the later generation that his traitorous acts left him unworthy of respect (tellingly, there's a monument to Arnold in England, the nation he aided in deceit). The Jim Crow and anti-Civil Rights Southerners who put up monuments to their heroes saw treason differently than the Americans who put up the Saratoga monument. The Southern goal was two-fold: a) to intimidate blacks and b) to ensure that their leaders would be celebrated as part of our culture. Now the President is serving both agendas with his horrific tweeting on Thursday.

Perhaps President Trump should recall the lesson of Benedict Arnold.

These statues are not part of our culture. They are part of a racist effort to turn a segregationist, traitorous movement into a part of our culture.

That effort must fail — and would fail if the President would find the moral integrity to just get out of the way and let today's generation recast history for itself.

Source: <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/u-s-confederate-leaders-germans-hitler-article-1.3420013>

Why White Southern Conservatives Need to Defend Confederate Monuments

by William Sturkey | March 3, 2018

Modern debates over Confederate monuments are not merely concerned with culture, historical memory, or racism. For many monument defenders, there is also a pragmatic political motivation deeply rooted in the defense of race-based inequality and privilege in contemporary America.

Many American students never learn about Jim Crow; just segregation. This distinction matters. When Jim Crow is taught merely as racial separation, the Southern system of racial apartheid that existed for nearly a century appears as an occasional minor inconvenience: a seat in the back of the bus, a poorly functioning water fountain, or balcony-level seating in a movie theatre.

Segregation was just one aspect of Jim Crow, which encompassed everything from wealth, education, employment, sex, safety, health, and criminal justice, to monuments erected in public spaces. Southern Jim Crow was fashioned to establish and maintain white supremacy over African Americans. It changed over time, and Black people persistently resisted, but Jim Crow at its core was totalizing by design.

Wealth and racial disadvantage were explicitly connected. Black social mobility was systematically restricted by limited access to jobs, schools, and neighborhoods. Many resourceful Black Southerners forged their own upward paths through entrepreneurship, education, or migration, but race always affected their destinies regardless of work ethic or talent. In most Southern communities, even the poorest white youths enjoyed better educational resources than the wealthiest Black youths. Excellence sometimes shone through oppression but race usually trumped ability. For every Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, or Mary Jackson (the three women made famous by the book and film *Hidden Figures*) there were countless more geniuses whose gifts were suppressed.

Black poverty enhanced opportunities for white families. White children attended schools bolstered by Black tax dollars and enjoyed readymade access to cheap Black labor, especially that of Black female domestics who were essentially blacklisted from other jobs. [1](#) None of this was accidental. These interconnected inequalities were intentionally woven into the Southern system of racial apartheid to compound the wealth of one race at the expense of another.

The white supremacists who built this system and monuments to the Confederacy threaded moral lessons of white supremacy into the fabric of Jim Crow. They argued that racial advantages were part of a natural order, even as they found the need to protect white supremacy through legislation, violence, and disfranchisement. Not only did Black people deserve their inferior status, white supremacists argued, they actually *needed* these race-based societal limitations for their own good. As a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) claimed in a 1914 book “unanimously endorsed” by the organization, “Many negroes conceived the idea that freedom meant cessation from labor, so they left the fields, crowding into the cities and towns, expecting to be fed by the United States Government.” Yes, you read that correctly. The UDC invoked the notion of shiftless, government-dependent African Americans commonly referred to as “welfare queens” in the modern era to describe former slaves who fled from bondage in 1865. [2](#)

As historian Karen L. Cox has argued, groups such as the UDC and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) mythologized the Confederate Lost Cause to justify the racial oppression of Jim Crow. They emphasized the benevolence of slave owners for providing food and clothing to the people they held captive and stressed the heroism of the Reconstruction-era Ku Klux Klansmen who organized “to protect the women of the South from brutal assault, and to maintain, the supremacy of the white race.” White supremacists disseminated these lessons of white supremacy and black lethargy and criminality in schools and public forums to justify, even naturalize Jim Crow’s socially and politically constructed racial order.

Confederate monuments were essential pieces of white supremacist propaganda. Although today’s neo-Confederate groups refute associations between Confederate monuments and white supremacy, historians have overwhelmingly shown that these monuments were erected not only to honor soldiers, but also to

celebrate white supremacy. This point has reached near-consensus among serious historians or anyone willing to honestly examine historical documents related to the erection of Confederate monuments. There is no great mystery here: today's historians believe that Confederate monuments represent white supremacy because that is precisely what the white supremacists said they represented when they put them up. So why do we have this current debate? Why are white conservative politicians, including Northerners and the ancestors of post-1865 immigrants, determined to protect Confederate monuments? And if they ask what harm the monuments cause in their current places of prominence, then historians should also ask: What is your investment in their maintenance in the public sphere?

Answers abound. Some proponents appeal to respect for the deceased. A more critical onlooker might invoke miseducation, political opportunism, or racial biases. But this current debate is not merely another battle in recurrent cultural wars. These monuments also carry contemporary political implications.

To acknowledge the monument builders' intentions would mean reckoning with the vestiges of the social system they built. The racial wealth gap in the United States is rooted in racial discrimination that for generations has prevented Black people from accumulating wealth in the same way as whites. This system was by no means limited to the South but was absolutely essential to the racial hierarchy of Jim Crow. There are not many old-money Black families in the South because Black families were purposefully excluded from accumulating intergenerational wealth. Herein lies a compelling contemporary political motive to deny the socio-economic legacies of the systems these monuments represent. Many white southern conservatives continue to bear the fruit of their forefathers' investment in racial apartheid (slavery notwithstanding!). Take, for example, former Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, a white Southern conservative who in 2010 famously said of the civil rights era, "I just don't remember it as being that bad." Well, the reason Barbour did not think things were "that bad" was because he went to segregated white schools in a county that spent an average of \$245.00 on each white student and only \$3.00 on Black pupils. [3](#)

His advantages did not end there. An attorney, Barbour's entire political career was enabled by a social safety net that would have been unavailable to any Black person. Barbour tragically lost his father when he was two years old. But his well-connected family secured the free services of a Black convict-laborer who helped raise the children. Barbour later matriculated at the University of Mississippi Law School at a time when the state-supported institution had yet to graduate a single Black student. Upon graduation, he took a position at a law firm started by his grandfather in 1895. Soon after switching from a segregationist Eastland Democrat to a Republican—a common shift among Southern white conservatives who opposed the racial equality promised by the 1964 Civil Rights Act—Barbour assumed a series of political appointments as a lobbyist, aide, and conservative political strategist before running for Governor of Mississippi in 2004.

There is nothing wrong with using personal and political connections to advance one's career. Who wouldn't? But white Southern conservatives refuse to acknowledge or recognize that the advantages provided by such deep-rooted family connections and wealth are only available to them because their ancestors were not Black. Thus, the issue is not necessarily advantage, but rather the absence of disadvantage. No Black person in the history of Mississippi could have ever taken a job as an attorney at a law firm started by their grandfather in 1895. Black people could not go to law school in Mississippi during Jim Crow and were effectively barred from starting law practices. It is not necessary to criticize the career trajectory of Haley Barbour or others like him but let us also recognize that Black people could not enjoy similar paths. Regardless of personal merit, the defining factor for any white conservative born in the Jim Crow South was the simple fact that he or she was not born Black.

Confederate monument defenders often claim that to remove the monuments is to erase history. But these very same people often have no sense of the false histories conveyed by those symbols or any interest in reckoning with the historical realities of carefully crafted racial disadvantages imbedded within Jim Crow. The physical monuments still occupying public space in the Southern landscape are merely the material symbols of Jim Crow's haunting legacy. The greatest benefactors of that system cling to those relics of the past as cover from the contemporary implications of acknowledging that so much of their current wealth is still a byproduct of a society intended to create opportunities for one race at the expense of another. Today, the essence of

their privilege lies in their ability to call for racially-neutral policies while still polishing the family heirlooms inherited from their white supremacist ancestors.⁴

1. Horace Mann Bond, *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970, orig., 1934), especially 92-97; and James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 148-156.
2. S.E.F. Rose, *The Ku Klux Klan or Invisible Empire* (New Orleans, LA: L. Graham Co., 1914), quoted on 9 and 14 and 15, respectively.
3. School expenditure figures taken from Charles Evers, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 42-43.
4. The author would like to thank Professor Katherine Turk for her comments that greatly helped improve this essay.

Source: <https://www.aaihs.org/why-white-southern-conservatives-need-to-defend-confederate-monuments/>

Let's start a new conversation on Confederate symbols

by Kendall Wills Sterling | Jul 27, 2015

The Confederate battle flag has come down from the State House grounds of South Carolina, and the National Park Service has removed the flag from all battlefields where it flew, sparking a debate between those for whom the flag carries hurtful connotations and others for whom it represents family and the land they love. In Memphis there is talk of removing the statue of Nathan Bedford Forrest and digging up the graves of Forrest and his wife. Here in Richmond, Confederate statues have been defaced, and nationwide there is a push to erase all mention of Confederates everywhere. It is difficult to fathom what this would accomplish other than to produce division and resentment. Certainly it would not materially alter the plight of black Americans. And in the process, millions of Southerners — some of them black — will feel that they are being deliberately humiliated and made to pay for something they did not do. It is nothing less than a cultural purge of the South — something historically associated with tyrannical regimes and unworthy of a free nation.

The story these symbols tell is more nuanced than what we typically hear. It is said that the South seceded to perpetuate slavery — and yet six slave states sent men to die for the North, and the Southern states rejected an offer from Lincoln that would have made slavery permanent in exchange for their return to the Union. In addition, although most Northern states had ended slavery by 1860, many had also passed “black laws,” a forerunner of Jim Crow, which placed tight restrictions on blacks and often forbade them from even living in the state. Furthermore, West Virginia was admitted into the Union as a slave state in 1863, and slaves in that and other Northern states had to wait until 1865, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, for their freedom.

Slavery was more than just a Southern problem; it was an American problem.

Instead of removing all vestiges of the Confederacy, let us use these statues and the names inscribed on them to start a new conversation, one that acknowledges the roles of everyone involved and offers hope for our nation and its people, both black and white. Let the statue of Nathan Bedford Forrest tell his full story, which might surprise many. Forrest is often reviled as a slave owner and the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. But seldom are we told that 45 of Forrest's slaves rode and fought alongside him as equals, their loyalty such that they remained with him even after he gave them their freedom papers; that the Klan's original purpose was to serve as a volunteer police force against rampant crime in the occupied South; and that in 1870, when the Klan morphed into a terrorist organization, Forrest resigned and ordered the group disbanded. Softened by an encounter with his God, Forrest spent his final years advocating for political and social advancement for black Americans. When he died in 1877, more than 3,000 blacks lined up to pay their respects as part of his funeral procession.

Let the statue of Robert E. Lee, and the schools that bear his name, remind us all of a Sunday in 1865 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where Lee worshiped when in Richmond. That Sunday, with the wounds of war still raw, a black man walked down the aisle of St. Paul's and knelt to receive Communion. The whites in attendance weren't certain if they could, or should, take Communion with a black man. For a moment no one knew what to do. Then came a rustle, the scrape of boots on the floorboards, and the congregation looked up to see Lee walking down the aisle to kneel beside that black man, by his own example teaching those around him the way of respect and tolerance.

America's history — both good and bad — has much to teach us, but those lessons are lost when their physical symbols are erased. This type of cultural cleansing, itself a form of intolerance, debases both America and its people and sets a dangerous precedent for our civil liberties.

We should restore the battle flag to its historical context, the battlefields, which are arguably the museums for that war, and leave the statues as they are. Let us instead use these icons to start a new conversation. In 1861, our nation came apart because neither side was willing to compromise, with both sides focused on differences rather than commonalities. The result was vast swaths of the South ruined, nearly a million killed, and millions of Southerners, both black and white, left homeless and destitute. Today we see a similar

unwillingness to compromise, with skin color increasingly emphasized and the lessons of 150 years ago seemingly unlearned — perhaps because we are telling only part of story.

The names and faces of these Southern men, and even the flag itself, speak not only of slavery and oppression, but also of decency, possibility and the power of transformation. They tell us that a nation, and men like Forrest, can overcome division and differences in skin color and work for a better world; and that although slavery is part of our past — America's past — those on both sides of this debate can, like Lee, lead by example to offer respect, acceptance and forgiveness to all.

Source: http://www.richmond.com/opinion/their-opinion/guest-columnists/article_a0bd0f2f-bf78-5222-be21-ec73402ca410.html