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WHAT THE STATUE DEBATE MEANS FOR THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a summary of how Confederate statues relate to the memory of the Civil War within American society. The debate on what should be done with these statues represents a significant cleavage within the United States. The divisions caused by this debate tie into much larger issues, including systemic racism, police brutality, freedom of speech, and the kneeling protests in the NFL. The existence of these statues serves as a callback to a culture that many people continue to be proud of, yet to others a daily reminder of the oppression that they and their ancestors faced. Should we as a society act to take down or alter these statues? By doing so, are we exacerbating the problems that these statues cause, or are we laying the groundwork for true long-term healing? How should we teach the history of these statues, the people they depict, and the beliefs that they held? And finally, should figures like Robert E. Lee be held to a different standard than the rest of the Confederacy?

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Preamble: A Story of Two Statues

August 11th and August 12th 2017, were some of the darkest days for the United States in recent American history. On the first of these days, at the town of Charlottesville, Virginia, members of the “alt-right” political movement marched with tiki torches through the streets, chanting slogans including “Jews will not replace us” and “Blood and soil”, echoing rhetoric that was harnessed by fascists and Nazis from an earlier era.¹ This would only serve as a prelude for the violence and unrest that would occur the following day. On Saturday, members of the alt-right movement, the American Nazi Party, Ku Klux Klan, and other white power movements coalesced as part of a “Unite the Right” rally. During the day, they fought protestors and members of Black Lives Matter and ANTIFA, a left-wing political group that opposes fascism. This day of violence would result in Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe having to declare a state of emergency, and culminated in the death of a protestor, Heather Heyer, as she was run over with a car by a Nazi sympathizer, as well as two police officers in an unrelated helicopter accident. While many members of both the mainstream political left and right were quick to blame the white supremacist groups, President Trump chose instead to direct blame to all parties involved, arguing that the event was an “egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides, on many sides.”² The issue at the center of this rally was the status of a statue of Robert E. Lee, the prominent Virginian and Civil War general, and whether it should remain or be removed.³ While the debate on the status of the statue was not new, and protests had turned

¹VICE News. “Charlottesville: Race and Terror.” VICE News, VICE News , 21 Aug. 2017, news.vice.com/en_us/article/qvzn8p/vice-news-tonight-full-episode-charlottesville-race-and-terror.

² Merica, Dan. “Trump Condemns 'Hatred, Bigotry and Violence on Many Sides' in Charlottesville.” CNN, Cable News Network, 13 Aug. 2017, www.cnn.com/2017/08/12/politics/trump-statement-alt-right-protests/index.html.

³ Fortin, Jacey. “The Statue at the Center of Charlottesville's Storm.” The New York Times, The New York Times, 13 Aug. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/08/13/us/charlottesville-rally-protest-statue.html.

violent, this represented the boiling over point, as this marked the first direct fatality as a result of the debate.

I was horrified at the outcome of this weekend, that someone could be killed over the status of a statue. Yet, as someone with a mother who went to Penn State, and being a current student and football fan, I could empathize with the desire to protect a statue to someone that I felt was an icon. For many Penn Staters, we were equally passionate and protective of a statue of one of our own, Joseph Vincent Paterno, our longtime football coach, who himself was mired in controversy due to his involvement in the Sandusky scandal at Penn State. While Robert E. Lee and Joe Paterno were vastly different figures from very different time periods, they became an integral part of the culture of a region, and depending on whom you ask, are lionized or vilified to this day. For me, Paterno was a flawed but honorable person, who represented higher values that I still try to aspire to. For many Southerners, Lee is a similar figure. While I do not intend to trivialize or downplay the controversy behind either figure, this motivation is important for me, as it allowed me to empathize with those that have such strong feelings on Confederate statues, because I had strong feelings of my own, as well as generate interest in this topic.

The essential question that I pose is why do Confederate symbols, particularly statues still resonate with so many people, and offend so many others? Furthermore, what wider cultural issues can be explained through the recent debate and conflict about these statues? Finally, what does the Civil War mean to people, and how is it expressed through arguments made over these statues? These statues clearly invoke passion on all sides of the issue, and it is clear that the debate is not simply just about the statues themselves.

While the Civil War was over 150 years ago, and while the Civil Rights era was over 50 years ago, it is clear that the nation has still yet to fully heal and come to a consensus on what

these issues mean today. Where one lives can determine if the conflict in the 1860s is called the American Civil War, War of Northern Aggression, or War Between the States. Likewise, one's race may also result in one having a different opinion on the war. These attitudes about the Civil War also tie into attitudes about the prevailing cultural and political debates of today. One's view on the war and the statues is likely to coincide with certain views on political issues such as systemic racism, political figures such as Donald Trump, political movements such as Black Lives Matter, and political protests such as the NFL National Anthem kneeling. The statues represent a cultural divide, much like these other flashpoints.

To answer these questions, I chose to go back to the beginning of when the statue debate became a national issue. For this, I chose to focus on New Orleans, Louisiana, where in the Summer of 2015, the Mayor and City Council chose to take down the statue of Lee, and three others. While the intention was to help promote unity within the city, state, and country, the opposite occurred, as the statue debate soon became a polarized issue and became aligned with other national sources of tension and division.

Chapter 1: Lee, New Orleans, and the Lost Cause

The central figure in the story of New Orleans and its relationship with civil war statues is Robert E Lee. His status within American history is one of controversy, and his legacy depends very much on who is being asked the question. To some, he is a hero, who stood up for what he believed in, in defense of his home state of Virginia. To others, he is a traitor, who fought a war on behalf of a Confederacy that sought to keep blacks enslaved. Ironically, Lee himself opposed the construction of statues. When asked following the war to mark troop positions at Gettysburg, Lee replied, "I think it wiser, moreover, not to keep open the sores of war but to follow the examples of those nations who endeavored to obliterate the marks of civil strife, to commit to oblivion the feelings engendered."⁴ However, in order to understand impact that his statue and Lee Circle had on the community of New Orleans, it is first necessary to understand the man behind the statue itself. Much like that of his statue, Lee's image and perception have also evolved over time.

Robert E. Lee began his military career as a cadet at the US Military Academy at West Point. While at West Point, Lee was a distinguished cadet, and graduated ranking second in his class with no demerits.⁵ He would later return and serve as the Academy's superintendent during the 1850s. One of the barracks at the Academy still bears his name, a controversial decision especially considering today's political climate.⁶ His military career prior to the war was one of

⁴ Lee, Robert E. "Lee Family Digital Archive." *Letters: 1862*, Lee Family Digital Archive , 5 Aug. 1869, leefamilyarchive.org/9-family-papers/861-robert-e-lee-to-david-mcconaughy-1869-august-5.

⁵ "Virginia Museum of History & Culture." *Lee and Grant*, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, www.vahistorical.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/lee-and-grant/war.

⁶ Randall, Michael. "West Point's Lee Barracks under Scrutiny." *Recordonline.com*, Recordonline.com, 17 Aug. 2017, www.recordonline.com/news/20170816/west-points-lee-barracks-under-scrutiny.

success and honor, and he earned “distinguished honors” for his actions at Vera Cruz during the Mexican American War, serving on General Winfield Scott’s staff as an engineer. It was Lee’s early career success and his heroism in battle that he was able to build his reputation on as someone with honor and integrity. As tensions escalated within the Union, Lee was called to Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, in 1859 to respond to and put down John Brown’s raid on the town. The radical abolitionist, seeking to start a slave uprising in the South, chose the small town as it held a federal armory, and hoped that by taking it, it would spark similar rebellions throughout Virginia and the South. While Lee called the act, “the attempt of a fanatic or madman” and felt that it would do little to end slavery, the raid would symbolize the vast rift that the institution of slavery would put between North and South.

Lee had a complicated relationship with slavery. As described by prominent Civil War historian, Eric Foner, he “was not a pro-slavery ideologue.”⁷ However, Foner later describes, “unlike some white southerners, he never spoke out against slavery.” Lee did own slaves himself and remained publicly silent on the issue. In a letter to his wife in 1856, he described the institution of slavery as “a moral & political evil in any Country”, but would also add that it was “a greater evil to the white man than to the black race” and that the “painful discipline they are undergoing, is necessary for their instruction”.⁸ Lee was far more concerned about the actions of abolitionists to liberate slaves from their owners, as they would be depriving the owners of their property, concluding the letter by describing abolitionists as people who would “persevere in his

⁷ Fortin, Jacey. “What Robert E. Lee Wrote to The Times About Slavery in 1858.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 18 Aug. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/08/18/us/robert-e-lee-slaves.html.

⁸ Lee, Robert E. “Letter to His Wife on Slavery.” Received by Mary Anna Custis Lee, *Fair Use Repository*, Fair Use Repository, 27 Dec. 1856, fair-use.org/robert-e-lee/letter-to-his-wife-on-slavery.

evil Course” and calling them “intolerant of the Spiritual liberty of others.” While some historians have described him as being kind with his slaves, one recount by a former slave, Wesley Norris depicts Lee as being crueler, ordering him whipped after he had attempted to escape captivity, citing. According to his account, the slaves “were tied firmly to posts by a Mr. Gwin, (our) overseer, who was ordered by Gen. Lee to strip us to the waist and give us fifty lashes each...Gen. Lee, in the meantime, stood by, and frequently enjoined Williams to “lay it on well.”⁹ Finally, in the election of 1860, Lee chose to vote for Breckenridge, which was the most fervent pro-slavery candidate, and a man who would later serve as the Confederate Secretary of State.¹⁰

While Lee’s views on slavery were mixed, there could be little doubt in his devotion to his home state of Virginia. Writing before the war, Lee stated, “If Virginia stands by the old Union, so will I. But if she secedes (though I do not believe in secession as a constitutional right, nor that there is sufficient cause for revolution), then I will follow my native State with my sword, and, if need be, with my life.”¹¹ Speaking further on the issue of secession, he wrote, “I can anticipate no greater calamity for the country than the dissolution of the Union. It would be an accumulation of all the evils we complain of, and I am willing to sacrifice everything but honor for its preservation.”¹² Such was Lee’s devotion to his state that he chose to fight against the Union. This factor, the fact that he was so loyal to his state, contributes to the “legend” of

⁹ Norris, Wesley. “Testimony of Wesley Norris.” *Fair Use Repository*, Fair Use Repository, 14 Apr. 1866, fair-use.org/wesley-norris/testimony-of-wesley-norris. Accessed 3 June 2018.

¹⁰ Foner, Eric. “The Making and the Breaking of the Legend of Robert E. Lee.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 28 Aug. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/books/review/eric-foner-robert-e-lee.html.

¹¹ Blount, Roy. “Making Sense of Robert E. Lee.” *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 1 July 2003, www.smithsonianmag.com/history/making-sense-of-robert-e-lee-85017563/.

¹² “Robert E. Lee's Letter Against Secession... To a Point.” *Civil War Daily Gazette*, Civil War Daily Gazette, 2 June 2015, civilwardailygazette.com/robert-e-lees-letter-against-secession-to-a-point/.

Lee. The fact that someone as distinguished as Lee was willing to take up arms against the country and army that he had spent such a long time a part of, helped contribute to the belief that there were additional factors behind the cause of war outside of slavery. While the Lost Cause mythos would have persisted without Lee, his motivation for fighting for the Confederacy would help represent a key cornerstone of the belief. Why else would Lee, someone who was a decorated war hero and loyal soldier, resign his commission to fight in a rebel army to secede from the Union?

Lee's reputation as military leader and "gentlemanly" demeanor would represent a major factor in influencing how historians would treat his legacy, as well as making him a crucial political figure in the post-war South. While Lee would have success during the early years of the war, he would make a disastrous mistake choosing the attack the Union Army at Gettysburg. However, he was able to escape much of the blame for his mistakes prior to and during the battle. Instead the blame was placed at the feet of General James Longstreet by Lost Cause historians, undoubtedly seeking to defend Lee. Longstreet and Lee, despite both being accomplished Confederate generals were treated differently in the post-war South. Despite being willing to continue the fight, even when Lee favored surrendering, Longstreet was disliked and reviled by Southerners during Reconstruction.¹³ The reason was that Longstreet advocated for cooperation with the Union Army during the Reconstruction era, and joined the Republican party, hoping to take advantage of the votes of the "newly enfranchised blacks". Interestingly, Longstreet himself chose to live in New Orleans following the war and was given command of the state militia of Louisiana. During a rebellion by the Crescent City White League in 1874,

¹³ Sears, Stephen W. "General Longstreet And The Lost Cause." *American Heritage*, American Heritage Publishing, 2005, www.americanheritage.com/content/general-longstreet-and-lost-cause.

which was a group made up of disaffected former Confederates seeking to overthrow the governor, Longstreet led his militia, which was comprised of mostly blacks to put down the rebellion and restore order. Following the outcome, he was forced to relocate his family to Gainesville, Georgia. While Lee was seen as a hero and someone who upheld the “Lost Cause”, Longstreet was seen as a “scalawag”, due to his “collaboration” with the Northerners who sought to “embarrass” the South. It’s not a coincidence that Lee remained relatively quiet on the atrocities being committed against African Americans, while also supporting southern Democrats as they opposed Radical Reconstruction.

Throughout the Civil War, Lee continued to support slavery, even following Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.¹⁴ Lee opposed the proclamation rather strongly, stating, “In view of the vast increase of the forces of the enemy, of the savage and brutal policy he has proclaimed, which leaves us no alternative but success or degradation worse than death.”¹⁵ Lee made it abundantly clear that while he felt that the war was tragic, that he was extremely opposed to offering freedom for blacks during the war, a point that was often glossed over by Lost Cause Historians. When Lee chose to march North prior to Gettysburg, he also rounded up escaped slaves who had fled the South.¹⁶ Additionally, following the Battle of the Crater at Petersburg, Virginia, in July 1864, Lee’s men reportedly executed surrendering black Union soldiers. These uncomfortable truths challenge many of the beliefs of the Lost Cause historians and make it

¹⁴ Lincoln, Abraham. “The Emancipation Proclamation.” *National Archives and Records Administration*, National Archives and Records Administration, 1 Jan. 1863, www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation.

¹⁵ Hennesy, and Harrison. “‘Degradation Worse than Death’—Lee Responds to the Emancipation Proclamation?” *Fredericksburg Remembered*, WordPress, 11 Dec. 2011, fredericksburghistory.wordpress.com/2011/02/16/degradation-worse-than-death-lee-responds-to-the-emancipation-proclamation/.

¹⁶ Levin, Kevin M. “Robert E. Lee Topples From His Pedestal.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 19 May 2017, www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/05/robert-e-lee-new-orleans-monument-confederate/525726/.

difficult to separate Lee's love of his state and the Confederacy's desire to maintain the institution of slavery.

As the war drew to a close, Lee's grace in defeat would help contribute to the growth of the Lost Cause theory. Lee would surrender to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia, in April 1865. While the aforementioned Longstreet wished to continue the fight, Lee told his soldiers to surrender peacefully and accept the result of the war.¹⁷ Lee issued an order to his troops, "After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yeild [*sic*] to overwhelming numbers." Furthermore, the order highlights the "valor and devotion" of his troops, and that the "consciousness of duty" had been "faithfully performed". Essentially his order of surrender painted a picture that there could be "dignity in defeat" and that those who had fought on his side had fought for noble reasons. To Lee and his men, the war was about a noble, valiant, struggle against a much a stronger foe. Even though Lee did surrender to Grant, he also did not turn over his sword, as was custom when surrendering. While Lee did clearly recognize that the war was over, this was possibly one last act of defiance against the Army that had been his foe.

Following the war, Lee would not become a particularly vocal political figure. However, he would still support Presidential Reconstruction under President Johnson, standing with Southern Democrats who would push back against the Radical Republicans. When asked by Congress as to what should be done about newly liberated blacks, Lee opposed giving them voting rights, testifying that, "My own opinion is that, at this time, they cannot vote intelligently,

¹⁷ Lee, Robert E. "General Order No. 9 ." Received by Head Qrs Army N Va, *History Now* , Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 10 Apr. 1865, www.gilderlehrman.org/content/surrender-robert-e-lee-1865.

and that giving them the right of suffrage would open the door to a great deal of demagogism.”¹⁸ He also believed that it would be better for blacks to live outside of his state, favoring either deportation to Africa or sending them to another state. His testimony continued, “I think it would be better for Virginia if she could get rid of them. That is no new opinion with me. I have always thought so, and always been in favor of emancipation—gradual emancipation.” Lee also chose not to speak out against violence by the Ku Klux Klan and other groups against blacks and their supporters.¹⁹ When Lee became President of Washington College, a university that would eventually bear his name as Washington and Lee, students there founded a chapter of the Klan, and Lee took no action to stop or move against it, even as they attempted to lynch newly freed blacks. While many historians believe Lee was vital in assisting the “reconciliation” between North and South, it is necessary to recognize that he only primarily directed his efforts at whites. In addition, he often did the bare minimum, especially when compared to contemporary generals such as Longstreet. General Grant prominently argued that Lee was “setting an example of forced acquiescence so grudging and pernicious in its effects as to be hardly realized.”²⁰

It is these facts about Lee that make him the perfect conduit for the Lost Cause mythos of the post-War South as well as the general desire by both Northern and Southern whites for the country to re-unify, even if it meant leaving blacks behind. Lee’s causal disregard for the rights of blacks and the barbarity of slavery aligns with attempts by Lost Cause historians to trivialize and downplay the institution of slavery, one of the major aspects of Lost Cause mythology. He

¹⁸ “Page 129 .” *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, by William Pitt Fessenden and James W. Grimes, Books for Libraries Press, 1971.

¹⁹ Serwer, Adam. “The Myth of the Kindly General Lee.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 4 June 2017, www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/06/the-myth-of-the-kindly-general-lee/529038/.

²⁰ Varon, Elizabeth R. “Lee Surrendered, But His Lieutenants Kept Fighting.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 9 Apr. 2015, opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/04/09/lee-surrendered-but-his-lieutenants-kept-fighting/.

provides a focus for the war other than slavery. In order to understand the relationship between Lee and New Orleans, it is necessary to also understand how they are seen through the lens of the Lost Cause. The central argument of the Lost Cause, as characterized by John B. Gordon, that “responsibility for slavery could not be laid at the South’s door and that it was not the desire to hold others in bondage, but the desire to maintain their own rights that actuated the Southern people throughout the conflict.”²¹ Essentially, the argument that the Civil War was not about slavery, but more a combination of state’s rights and defending one’s honor. And that because of this reason for fighting the war, Confederate soldiers were noble and defending themselves, rather than the oppressive institution of slavery. Other facets of the Lost Cause include the downplaying of the severity of slavery, and the exaggeration of the cruelty of the North during the period of Reconstruction. The goal of this mythos was to essentially re-write history into a tale of a story more sympathetic to the South in that the rebellion was a struggle to preserve one’s liberty.

There was a strong desire within the South to justify and defend the rationale behind the war, to find a sense of honor, and ensure that so many of its sons had not died in vain. According to Blight, “the Lost Cause took root in a Southern culture awash in an admixture of physical destruction, the psychological trauma of defeat, a Democratic Party resisting Reconstruction, racial violence, and with time, an abiding sentimentalism.”²² During the early years following the war, particularly from the late 1860s to the late 1880s, Lost Cause advocates, focused on the deification of Lee, depicting him as a giant that could only have fallen to the Union because of

²¹ Race and Reunion: the Civil War in American Memory.” *Race and Reunion: the Civil War in American Memory*, by David W. Blight, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 282–283.

²² Race and Reunion page 258

overwhelming material odds. The movement would evolve from generation to generation, but there was a consistent theme of opposing the goals of Reconstruction and eventually focusing on the goal of reconciliation. Throughout these generations, there were three ever-present elements however. The first was the movement's objective of shaping how the history of the war itself was perceived and taught. The second was the usage of white supremacy as "both a means and an end". The final element was the heavy involvement of women to preserve the mythos.

The Lost Cause relied on past Confederate figures to gain popular appeal, either through memorializing dead Confederates, or by the actions of surviving ones to promote it. Jefferson Davis his memoir *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, would play a significant role in promoting this mythos.²³ He chose to blame the North for the majority of the South's problems and argued that all of its actions were in response to oppression and aggression by the Yankees to protect their "natural rights". He also claimed that slavery was a benevolent institution, that blacks were uncivilized and that they were better off living as slaves than as free men, in a world they were not prepared for. Edward Pollard, arguing in his book *The Lost Cause (1866)*, made the claim that, while the South may have lost the physical war, through the triumph of ideology like the Lost Cause, they will have won the war of ideas. One key organization that was responsible for the promotion of these ideas was the Southern Historical Society, which was founded in New Orleans in 1869, with the goal to "vindicate the truth of history."

On the idea of reconciliation and Lee, even Ulysses S. Grant, his prominent northern adversary, contributed to it from the moment the surrender terms were finalized at Appomattox. Grant ordered the "cessation of salutes, and any other celebrations within his army" and took measures to avoid humiliating the surrendering confederates²⁴ Additionally, Grant would write

²³ Race and Reunion page 259

²⁴ Race and Reunion page 214

about about his “deep admiration” for Lee, citing that following the surrender, his “own feelings which had been quite jubilant at the receipt of his (Lee’s) letter, were sad and depressed. I felt like anything rather than rejoicing at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and violently and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was. one of the worst for which a people had ever fought.” While Grant was not a supporter of the Lost Cause, it is clear that his point of view would lend credence to those who believed. If General Grant, of all people, who fought against the Confederacy and who would later spend years trying to put down insurrections and promote rights for freed blacks, believed that there was some nobility to the Southern cause, was there not some legitimacy to the theory? In addition, his remarks indicate that many northern whites were more concerned about reunifying the country than assisting newly freed blacks. From their perspective, even though they had fought a war against the South, one could argue that most northern whites felt that they had more in common with their southern brethren than the blacks they had fought to free. The desire for national unity by many, and to end the divide between North and South undoubtedly helped create a space for the Lost Cause Movement to grow and expand, even if not all northerners agreed that unification should come so easily. While not all northerners shared the same view, as Reconstruction went on there was a gradual disillusionment with the process by which the South was readmitted, with many believing that unifying the country again should take precedence, even if it meant that blacks would not be able to fully achieve their freedoms.

Also central to the Lost Cause was the idea of the gentility of the institution of slavery. While Lost Causers argued that the war was mostly not about slavery, they also sought to downplay the cruelty of the institution itself, in order to trivialize the role that it played in the

war's onset. They also crafted the image of the "loyal" slave, which was passed down and taught in history texts for generations.²⁵ This also had the purpose of arguing that blacks were naturally subservient to whites, and that this was an arrangement that they enjoyed and benefited both whites and blacks equally. Even though they had gained their freedom, they were still inferior to whites in the social order of the South, and it was important for them to recognize that. From the 1890s onward, publications like the *Confederate Veteran* would publish tributes to faithful slaves, typically written by their former masters. This made the argument that while they had been granted freedom, it was a state of being that they never really desired and helped erode one of the significant outcomes of the war, the disruption of the institution of slavery. If the war had been about slavery, then the Union had only made things worse off for blacks, who clearly preferred life in captivity. Lee fits into this model, as many texts would describe him as a "kind and caring" slave-owner.

Constructing the narrative around slavery and the war in this way, helped former Confederates and Redeemers to sustain the culture of white supremacy that had existed before the war. While the institution of slavery was no more, the subjugation of African Americans would continue during the era of Jim Crow. And while the Lost Cause had originated during the Reconstruction era, it would be during the Jim Crow era throughout the late 19th and early 20th century when it would be the most widely accepted. It was during this time period, that it would be promoted in D.W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation*, a groundbreaking film which portrayed a sanitized Confederacy, and an "honorable" South. Blacks were depicted as brutes and rapists, abolitionists and postbellum carpetbaggers/Republicans were shown as corrupt troublemakers who sought to divide white people, slavery was downplayed, and the Ku Klux Klan was

²⁵ Race and Reunion Page 284

glorified. Finally, the film posited that the white South was the true victor, as it glorified how they were able to reclaim their states from black rule. The film ends with the Klan intimidating blacks into not voting, resulting in much fanfare and celebration. When it was shown in the White House to then President Woodrow Wilson, he reportedly remarked, "It's like writing history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all terribly true,"²⁶ doing much to legitimate the film's depiction of the Confederacy. The film would set box office records that would remain unbroken until *Gone with the Wind* a generation later, ironically another film that perpetuates the Lost Cause.²⁷ The film would also play a part in the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, further perpetuating Jim Crow against African Americans.

Furthermore, the Lost Cause ideology would continue to further justify feelings of and mechanisms for implementing white supremacy. According to historian John Coski, the flag to its proponents represented a "consistent argument that the South fought a legitimate war for independence, not a war to defend slavery, and that the ascendant "Yankee" view of history falsely vilified the South and led people to misinterpret the battle flag."²⁸ The Confederate flag would become one of the more modern symbols of the Lost Cause. Much of the debate would coincide with and then continue after the Civil Rights era of the 50s and 60s. At the University of Mississippi, the Confederate flag would remain a staple on campus and at football games until it

²⁶ Hartstock, Peter I. "Opinion | The Unfortunate Effects of 'The Birth of a Nation'." The Washington Post, WP Company, 21 July 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-unfortunate-effects-of-the-birth-of-a-nation/2017/07/21/b6fc5920-6c1e-11e7-abbc-a53480672286_story.html?utm_term=.c815dcf67dda.

²⁷ Corliss, Richard. "Birth of a Nation at 100: The Power of the 1915 Film." *Time*, Time, 3 Mar. 2015, time.com/3729807/d-w-griffiths-the-birth-of-a-nation-10/.

²⁸ Coski, John M. *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.

was banned in 1997.²⁹ It's no coincidence that this is the same university that where the integration of black student James Meredith caused riots on campus in 1962. Likewise, the song Dixie, a minstrel show song which romanticizes the antebellum South, would be sung at football games until 2016, when it was banned. Even after the Civil Rights era, the flag would still be flown throughout the South, as well as many parts of the North, serving as a reminder to blacks of their past. Until the inception of the statue debate, the Confederate flag frequently served as one of the most common points of contention for Lost Causers.

Monuments would come to represent a significant aspect of the Lost Cause and the rewriting of history along lines more sympathetic to the white South. They were, according to Mills, “unveiled with elaborate ritual and rhetoric, they bear inscriptions speaking of honor, courage, duty, state’s rights, and northern aggression.”³⁰ Other statues displayed so called “loyal negroes”, which were offensive stereotypes of African Americans and depicted them as loyal to the South, further used to justify Jim Crow.³¹ If they spoke out, Lost Causers would simply point to these statues as “evidence” of the “loyal negro”. These monuments were just one of the ways that Southerners tried to find a purpose and reason for their involvement in the war. They did not want their families dying in vain simply to uphold an institution as wrong and abhorrent as slavery insofar as they found it to have been wrong. There had to have been another reason, for something far more noble. Many of these monuments came about because the Federal government only built and commemorated cemeteries for Union troops, not Confederate ones. It

²⁹ Starnes, Todd. “Ole Miss Dumps 'Dixie' From Football Games.” Fox News, FOX News Network, 20 Aug. 2016, www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/08/20/ole-miss-dumps-dixie-from-football-games.html.

³⁰ “Introduction.” *Monuments to the Lost Cause*, by Cynthia Mills, University of Tennessee Press, 2017.

³¹ “Putting White Supremacy on a Pedestal.” *National Museum of African American History and Culture*, Smithsonian Institution, 7 Mar. 2018, nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/putting-white-supremacy-pedestal.

did not go unnoticed that Lee's own plantation was used to create Arlington National Cemetery, one final insult to the very symbol of the Southern belief in the Lost Cause.³² While the organizations behind these monuments chose to dedicate their statues to many confederate veterans. As argued by Mills, no Confederate was as well regarded as Lee, and a particular reverence was saved for his statues, much like the mythology surrounding Lee in other areas of the Lost Cause. While other Confederates would also carry water for the Lost Cause, Lee was its most effective ambassador at portraying a valiant struggle against impossible odds.

The city of New Orleans would become tied to both Lee and the Lost Cause. Prior to the war, it was one of the South's largest cities, with a population of roughly 170,000 people.³³ By the end of the war, while it had suffered very little under Union occupation from 1863 onward, especially relative to such cities as Atlanta, Baton Rouge, and Charleston, its people, initially more hesitant about secession, in their view, had been humiliated. This perceived humiliation would be a contributing factor for it to become one of the largest sources of Southern nationalism in the Reconstruction era. Additionally, while Lee had scarcely set foot in the city and had no personal connection to it, many of its men had fought under him in the Army of Northern Virginia.³⁴ Thus it should not come as a surprise that much of the city's population displayed a particular affinity for Lee, and began efforts to fundraise for a statue not long after his death in 1870. The idea of the Lost Cause, of a war based on honor and defending oneself, rather than the more sinister cause of slavery, found fertile ground for both New Orleans and Lee.

³² Poole, Robert M. "How Arlington National Cemetery Came to Be." *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 1 Nov. 2009, www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-arlington-national-cemetery-came-to-be-145147007/.

³³ Hunter, G Howard. "Fall of New Orleans and Federal Occupation." *Know Louisiana*, Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, www.knowlouisiana.org/entry/fall-of-new-orleans-and-federal-occupation.

³⁴ Nicholson, Amber. "Robert E. Lee Monument." *New Orleans Historical*, University of New Orleans and Tulane University, 2016, www.neworleanshistorical.org/items/show/1279.

What is perhaps most interesting about New Orleans prior to the war was that, like Lee, it had very little desire to secede from the Union. However, while Lee voted for Breckenridge, New Orleans as a city, overwhelmingly voted for John Bell of the Constitutional Union Party, essentially taking the more moderate choice.³⁵ Additionally, the second highest vote getter was Northern Democrat Stephen Douglas, causing Breckinridge, who was extremely popular in the South, to finish third. This vote tally differed from the rest of the state, which voted overwhelmingly for Breckenridge and favored secession. Despite these leanings, the mayor of New Orleans, John T. Monroe, was a vocal secessionist. However, because a large proportion of its population was either immigrant, born in the North, or Creole, there was a contingent of New Orleaners that was more ambivalent about the Confederacy. Much like Lee, when the clouds of secession circled the state, it decided to follow its brethren, even if it may have been a more reluctant supporter.

The city did not last long under Confederate control. Most of its troops were sent to the front and enlisted in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, which left the city virtually undefended. While it was in the heart of the South, making it difficult for a land army to reach it, it was still a relatively easy target to reach by sea.³⁶ As it was the largest city in the South at the time, it was a prime target for the North. In March 1862, A Union fleet, led by Admiral David Farragut was able to move along the Gulf of Mexico to the mouth of the Mississippi River, where New Orleans was located. He brought with him an army of about 18,000 Union troops, whereas the city was defended by a contingent of only 3000 men.³⁷ Outnumbered, the Confederate force

³⁵ "Fall of New Orleans..."

³⁶ Jones, Terry L. "The Fall of New Orleans." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 25 Apr. 2012, opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/25/the-fall-of-new-orleans/.

³⁷ "Fall of New Orleans and Federal Occupation..."

quickly fled, and the Union Army took the city easily. The city of New Orleans, a reluctant participant in the war, had fallen to the Union with little resistance.

For many in New Orleans, the quick and easy victory by the Union was only the beginning of the city's "humiliation". The occupation of the city was led by General Benjamin Butler, who would come to be known as the "Beast" by locals for his perceived cruelty towards New Orleans's citizens.³⁸ Clearly displeased with Union presence, the locals spat on Union soldiers, and a woman reportedly emptied a chamberpot on Admiral Farragut's head.³⁹ In response, General Butler issued "General Order Number 28" or "Women's Order". This stated, "As the officers and soldiers of the United States have been subject to repeated insults from the women...it is ordered that hereafter when any female shall...insult...any officer or soldier of the United States she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation."⁴⁰ This order drew the ire of Confederate President Jefferson Davis, who ordered that if captured, Butler should be summarily executed, stating that "he be no longer considered ... simply as a public enemy of the Confederate States of America but as an outlaw and common enemy of mankind, and that in the event of his capture the officer in command of the capturing force do cause him to be immediately executed by hanging."⁴¹ While this treatment was relatively mild compared to how other rebels in other conflicts were treated at the time, it

³⁸ "Fall of New Orleans and Federal Occupation"

³⁹ "New Orleans Seethed under Union Occupation"...

⁴⁰ Strong, Geo C. "General Orders No. 28 (Butler's Woman Order)." Received by All, Headquarters (Department of the Gulf), 15 May 1862, New Orleans , Louisiana.

⁴¹ "New Orleans Seethed Under Union Occupation"

certainly did play into the Southern belief that they had been unfairly persecuted and victimized by Union forces.

Butler also caused controversy for ordering the execution of William Mumford, a man who had been responsible for ripping down the Union flag that flew over the city. He was also concerned about a potential uprising and took several steps to maintain order in the city. These included imprisoning citizens suspected of spying and shutting down churches and newspapers that would potentially undermine his authority.⁴² These actions, along with his Women's Order, drew ire within the city, back in Washington, and abroad, which resulted in calls for his removal as the temporary governor of the city. While Butler would prove to be an effective administrator, his unpopularity would cause him to be a political liability and result in him being succeeded by Nathaniel P. Banks, who had previously served as Governor of Massachusetts and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.⁴³

This appointment would temporarily quell tensions within the city as compared to Butler, Banks was a far more moderate administrator and he took steps to reverse some of Butler's more draconian measures, which included reopening churches, returning property, and freeing those who were deemed "seditionists". He also chose to decommission black officers who had honored themselves in previous battles, concerned that their presence would antagonize the locals. Under his governance, he attempted to push New Orleans and the state of Louisiana to apply for readmittance into the Union. Louisiana, and New Orleans along with it, would be the first test of Lincoln's 10 Percent Plan, which required ten percent of the voters from the 1860 election to

⁴² "Fall of New Orleans and Federal Occupation"

⁴³"Fall of New Orleans and Federal Occupation"

vote in an election and then submit a Constitution to the Federal government for approval. If a state met this threshold, they would be re-admitted into the Union.

In the first gubernatorial election in Louisiana under Union occupation, a Bavarian immigrant, Michael Hahn, won with 54 percent of the vote, defeating the radical and conservative candidates on his flanks, putting him in charge of the negotiations and writing of the new constitution of the state.⁴⁴ The election got twenty percent turnout from 1860 voters, meeting Lincoln's required threshold. All that was required was an adequate constitution, which is where things fell apart. While it did abolish slavery, mandate a minimum wage, create a nine-hour work day, and extend the vote to all white men, it did not offer adequate concessions for blacks, freed or enslaved. The population tally of the state was only to include whites and it did not give the vote to blacks. Many of the blacks in the state had fought for the Union Army so their leaders petitioned Hahn and Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner for more concessions.

While Hahn backtracked, offering the possibility of black suffrage through the Louisiana legislature, this concession was not seen as adequate for the black population, particularly the blacks which were already free. The constitution submitted would die in committee due to Sumner. However, the years of Union occupation had laid the groundwork for political enfranchisement for blacks, who four years prior, would never have dreamed of political representation. This change was extremely significant and this, when combined with the perceived humiliation of its white residents by the Union Army, would result in the city becoming a hotbed of Southern nationalism and the ideology of the Lost Cause following the war. This mentality would make the city an ideal place to honor the memory of General Lee.

⁴⁴ "Fall of New Orleans and Federal Occupation"

Following the war, New Orleans quickly became a major flashpoint during the Reconstruction era. In July 1866, the New Orleans Massacre, also known as the New Orleans Race riot occurred.⁴⁵ It occurred during the Louisiana Constitutional Convention, reconvened due to the failure of the 1864 Constitutional Convention and because the state legislature had implemented black codes, focused on preventing newly freed blacks from voting, having taken advantage of the reinstatement of secessionist Mayor John T. Monroe and the withdrawal of Union troops from the region. Black and white delegates were en route to the convention, when they were stopped by a mob of former confederates, police, and white supremacists. This confrontation resulted in a shooting that left over 200 black Union veterans, which included 40 delegates to the convention. Dissatisfied with President Johnson's leadership, and angered by the events that transpired, this event was partially responsible for the Radical Republicans taking control of Reconstruction away from the President and instituting Congressional Reconstruction. Some of the consequences included the re-introduction of martial law and the removal of Mayor Monroe, further angering Southern whites and building resentment against blacks.

It was during this time that newly freed blacks began to make a significant amount of progress within New Orleans in the face of growing white opposition. The early years of Reconstruction offered a unique and optimistic opportunity, particularly the Radical Reconstruction era, which brought the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, alongside a host of other legislation empowering blacks. Through the black publications *L'Union* and *New Orleans Tribune*, radical blacks sought to advocate a new economic order, as they recognized that "emancipation could succeed only if freedmen were able to break away from the oligarchical

⁴⁵ Stolp-Smith, Michael. "New Orleans Massacre." The Black Past: Remembered and Reclaimed, BlackPast.org, www.blackpast.org/aah/new-orleans-massacre-1866.

domination of the planters and inaugurate a new economic order.”⁴⁶ In order to help create this system, the bi-racial Freedmen Aid Association was created, to “help promote the interest of freed labor”.⁴⁷ The goal of this was to create companies that would control the land in which workers would be paid wages while also having the opportunity to buy shares in these cooperatives. One such example of this was the People’s Bakery, founded in New Orleans in 1865, which was an urban example of this type of cooperative. Revenue generated from this was to be funneled to help establish other cooperatives⁴⁸. While it would only last a year and would not survive beyond its experimental phase, it represented the optimism that the black community had that it could reshape the order that had existed prior to the Civil War. However, the black politicians that would arise following the war and during Reconstruction differed markedly from their constituents. They were typically freemen before the war, highly educated, lighter skinned, part of the professional class, and many had served in the Union Army.⁴⁹ In contrast, their constituents were typically illiterate or not formally educated, poor, been enslaved, and darker skinned. This marked a significant challenge for newly freed blacks, as many of their representatives had benefited from the pre-war order. Thus, newly freed blacks felt pressure from throughout the political and racial spectrum.

It was during Congressional Reconstruction that the Federal Government tried to ensure the rights of blacks in the post-slavery era. While the 13th amendment which abolished slavery

⁴⁶ Vandal, Gilles. “Black Utopia in Early Reconstruction New Orleans: The People's Bakery as a Case-Study.” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, vol. 38, no. 4, 1997, pp. 440. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4233445.

⁴⁷ Vandal pp 443

⁴⁸ Vandal pp 449

⁴⁹ Rankin, David C. “The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction.” *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 40, no. 3, 1974, pp. 435. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2206492.

was passed during the waning days of the war, it became clear that more constitutional protections were necessary. Through the 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution, the Federal government granted citizenship and equal protection to blacks and established the right the vote in order to create a post-war order that was fairer to blacks.⁵⁰ Following these amendments and during Radical Reconstruction, many African Americans were able to vote for the first time, and some were even able to run for and win public office, at both the local, and federal level. In 1870, Hiram Revels of Mississippi and Joseph Rainey became the first black Senators and Congressmen respectively.⁵¹ Ratification of all of these amendments was a requirement for Confederate states in order to be readmitted to the union. In addition, blacks began to experience freedom in other areas as well. Many blacks learned to read and were given the right to own property, practices that were forbidden for slaves.⁵² Others were able to acquire land, often coming at the expense of their former owners. This was a time of great optimism, as through institutions such as the Freedman's Bureau, as well as by forming institutions of their own, blacks were able to find new economic opportunities and improve their quality of life. However, with the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and other groups opposing equality for blacks, further action would become necessary. Many state governments were either unwilling or afraid of a white backlash in order to enforce these amendments, as blacks, northerners, and members of the Freedman's Bureau were terrorized by white militias and the Klan. In response Congress

⁵⁰ "Landmark Legislation: Thirteenth, Fourteenth, & Fifteenth Amendments." *US Senate*, Senate Historical Office , 12 Jan. 2017, www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/CivilWarAmendments.htm.

⁵¹ "Black Americans in Congress: An Introduction." US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives, Library of Congress, history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Historical-Essays/Introduction/Introduction/.

⁵² Brundage, W. Fitzhugh. "Reconstruction and the Formerly Enslaved, Freedom's Story, TeacherServe®, National Humanities Center." National Humanities Center, National Humanities Center, nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1865-1917/essays/reconstruction.htm.

passed the Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1871, as well as the Ku Klux Klan Act.⁵³ The goal of these laws was to “ensure blacks' right to vote, hold office, serve on juries, and receive equal protection of laws” via federal enforcement. This essentially enabled President Grant the authority to dispatch federal troops and declare martial law in areas which were violating these acts.

While these acts were mostly successful at weakening the Ku Klux Klan, they would fall victim to another entity. In April 1873, following a highly contentious election in the evenly divided between white and black Grant parish of Louisiana, an all-black militia took control of a local courthouse, in response to unrest caused by the local chapter of the White League and out of concern that they may try to overthrow the parish's Republican government.⁵⁴ In response, the White League alongside former members of the Klan surrounded the courthouse and fired on the occupants inside. When the blacks inside surrendered, many of them were then summarily murdered and lynched by the angry mob, with between 60 and 150 blacks being killed. Since the courts were packed with Democrat judges, who would likely have let the defendants walk, nine whites were charged and three would be convicted for the crime of “banding” under the Enforcement Acts, a federal law and thus, subject to federal courts.

It was argued that through their actions, the defendant, William Cruikshank and others had prevented blacks from exercising their rights. Cruikshank appealed to the Supreme Court, and the Court ruled in their favor. Justice Waite, in his opinion, argued that “The right to vote in the States comes from the States, but the right of exemption from the prohibited discrimination

⁵³ Wormser, Richard. “The Enforcement Acts .” Thirteen: Media With Impact, Educational Broadcasting Corporation , 2002, www.thirteen.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_enforce.html.

⁵⁴ Lewis, Danny. “The 1873 Colfax Massacre Crippled the Reconstruction Era.” Smithsonian.com, Smithsonian Institution, 13 Apr. 2016, www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/1873-colfax-massacre-crippled-reconstruction-180958746/.

comes from the United States. The first has not been granted or secured by the Constitution of the United States, but the last has been.”⁵⁵ In his view, the 14th Amendment only applied to actions by states, and not individuals, and that it was the responsibility of Louisiana to sanction him. This narrow ruling gutted the Enforcement Acts and severely restricted the ability of the Federal government to act.

During this period of Congressional Reconstruction, when opposition to Reconstruction began to mount, the aforementioned Crescent City White League would rebel against the ruling Republican government led by Governor William Kellogg in 1874, in what was known as “The Battle of Liberty Place”.⁵⁶ They were able to seize control of the entire city before being put down by General Longstreet. While they were eventually defeated and unable to seize power, they severely weakened the power of the Metropolitan police and black militia. If not for the intervention of federal troops, the White League would have held the city. Following the Compromise of 1877 which ended Federal Reconstruction, the White League would then take power in the city and in the legislature of Louisiana. The Battle marked a significant turning point for the city and state, and this was the defining event for “redemption” in Louisiana. This event would receive a monument of its own in 1891, in memoriam for all of the members of the White League, with no mention of any of their victims and would become a popular meeting spot for white supremacists.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Supreme Court of the United States. *US v. Cruikshank*. 27 Mar. 1876. Justia, supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/92/542/case.html.

⁵⁶ Nystrom, Justin A. “The Battle of Liberty Place.” Know Louisiana, Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, www.knowlouisiana.org/entry/the-battle-of-liberty-place.

⁵⁷ Chadwick, Gordon. “The Creation of the Battle of Liberty Place Monument .” New Orleans Historical, University of New Orleans and Tulane University, 2016, neworleanshistorical.org/items/show/150.

Founded just a month after Lee's death in 1870, the Robert E Lee Monument Association of New Orleans began to raise money to construct a statue in his honor.⁵⁸ This association joined others nationwide that were created to honor the memory of General Lee. This was during the heart of Reconstruction, and members of its board of directors included General P.T. Beauregard, William S. Pike and William M. Perkins, which were prominent Civil War veterans and white New Orleanders. Unlike most other Civil War monument associations, which typically featured mostly women, the membership of its board was entirely male. By the late 1870s, fundraising had concluded, raising approximately \$40,000 towards the statue.⁵⁹ Two men were tasked with the design and erection of the monument. The base was constructed by a local, John Roy, who constructed a 60 foot marble column for which the statue would be placed.⁶⁰ The statue was commissioned by a northerner and New Yorker, Alexander Doyle to create a 18-foot tall, 7,000-pound bronze statue.⁶¹ Whether it was the intention of the association or not, the construction of the monument by both a Northerner and a Southerner certainly represented the desire for reunification and togetherness. Symbolic of Lee's resistance and the idea behind the Lost Cause, Lee faced north, arms crossed, seemingly in a permanent act of defiance opposing the side with which he spent 4 years fighting against.

While at a first glance, it is difficult to see the connection between New Orleans and Lee, particularly considering Lee's lack of personal connection to the city and why it was chosen as the staging ground for one of the first Confederate statues. Upon closer inspection it is clear that

⁵⁸ Nicholson, Amber. "Robert E. Lee Monument." New Orleans Historical, University of New Orleans and Tulane University, 2016, www.neworleanshistorical.org/items/show/1279.

⁵⁹ Larino, Jennifer. "The History of New Orleans' Lee Circle." NOLA.com, The Times Picayune , 25 June 2015, www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/lee_circle_history_new_orleans.html.

⁶⁰ "Robert E. Lee Monument"

⁶¹ Larino, Jennifer.

the two figures are intertwined with the idea of the Lost Cause. Fundraising for the statue took barely six years, much faster than the pace of some of the other Lee statues. Both the city and the man were depicted as reluctant participants in a war that they did not necessarily want to fight. However, both figures were perceived as subject to humiliation and disrespect following the war. The time period for commemorating Lee also coincides with the larger timeline of Southern Redemption during the period of Reconstruction. By the time the funds had been collected, Reconstruction had gone from what had been perceived as a necessary undertaking to one that virtually the entire country wanted to end. The commemoration of the statue of Lee would represent the bookend or the final step in the process of the South redeeming itself from its self-perceived humiliation.

Chapter 2: The Life (and Death) of a Statue

The life of Robert E. Lee's statue in New Orleans truly began on February 22, 1884, with the commemoration of it at the World Cotton Grower's Exposition.⁶² That date itself was specifically chosen because it also marked the birthday of George Washington, another rebel which proponents of the Lost Cause liked to compare Lee to.⁶³ Additionally, Lee's father, Henry Lee III was a close confidant of George Washington during the American Revolutionary War, and even gave the eulogy at Washington's funeral.⁶⁴ It began by renaming the city circle from which the monument adorned from Tivoli Circle, to Lee Circle, in order to align with the statue. This was a practice that was common throughout the post-Reconstruction South, in order to enshrine the leaders of the Confederacy. It was an occasion with much fanfare, and while rain sought to disrupt the festivities, there was a large turnout, with swathes of both Northern and Southern veterans appearing to commemorate the life of Lee. Prominent Confederates like Jefferson Davis and P.T. Beauregard were present, but the ceremony was depicted as one of unification rather than division. Instead of seeking to continue sow division, the ceremony focused on Lee's military career, loyalty, honor, and courage. It is important to note that virtually all in attendance of the ceremony were white, and it was characteristic of the desire by whites, both northern and southern to essentially move on from the conflict. However, this sentiment

⁶² Nicholson, Amber. "Robert E. Lee Monument." New Orleans Historical, University of New Orleans and Tulane University, 2016, www.neworleanshistorical.org/items/show/1279.

⁶³ Larino, Jennifer. "The History of New Orleans' Lee Circle." NOLA.com, The Times Picayune , 25 June 2015, www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/lee_circle_history_new_orleans.html.

⁶⁴ Hughes , Hillary. "First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of His Countrymen." George Washington's Mount Vernon, Mount Vernon Ladies Association , www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/first-in-war-first-in-peace-and-first-in-the-hearts-of-his-countrymen/.

was not shared by all. The New York Times noted that "the greatest of those who drew his sword to destroy what Washington created," pointing out the clear irony in honoring Lee on Washington's birthday.⁶⁵

Following the dedication of the monument, several years passed by without incident. While the statue in its early years generated little outright controversy, it would come to be perceived as a symbol of oppression by many African Americans over time. It would also become a harsh reminder of the reality that other marginalized communities within New Orleans would have to face. Italian-Americans were also a minority within the city and following the murder of the city's Superintendent of Police, David Hennessy, on October 15th 1890, by a group of unknown assailants, the blame was passed onto them.⁶⁶ Nine men were charged, and while they were able to establish alibis during their trials, resulting in six acquittals and three hung juries, much of the city's population wanted blood. A large mob gathered at multiple points throughout the city, one of which was the Robert E. Lee statue, and marched on the prison, where they took the nine accused men, along with two others, and hung them from lamp posts, where they were then shot.⁶⁷ Additionally, 14 African Americans would be lynched in the city from 1877 to 1950, making New Orleans one of the more notorious cities during the era of Jim Crow.⁶⁸ The entire state of Louisiana had 540 total victims during this period, with only two

⁶⁵ Karst, James. "Lee Circle by Another Name, a Confederate Monument's True Label: Our Times." NOLA.com, The Times Picayune, 28 June 2015, www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/lee_circle_by_another_name_a_c.html.

⁶⁶ Nystrom, Justin A. "Sicilian Lynchings in New Orleans." Know Louisiana, Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, www.knowlouisiana.org/entry/sicilian-lynchings-in-new-orleans.

⁶⁷ Mock, Brentin. "Is There an 'Appropriate' Replacement for Cities' Confederate Monuments?" CityLab, The Atlantic Monthly Group, 22 Aug. 2017, www.citylab.com/equity/2017/08/projecting-new-stories-onto-new-orleans-former-confederate-monument-grounds/537402/.

⁶⁸ "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror." Equal Justice Initiative, Equal Justice Initiative, 2015, eji.org/reports/lynching-in-america.

other states, Georgia, and Mississippi, having more victims. The Lee Statue, due to its size as well as its symbolism, would remain a common location where these mobs would meet prior to resorting to violence.

While the Lee statue and the other Confederate statues remained with little public opposition, the importance of the statue did resonate with some citizens. When the statue was removed in January 1953 for renovations and repair, several expressed their displeasure as well as concern that it might be stolen or damaged before it could be returned to its marble base. As the statue was removed, several cracks within the base were found, and if not for the restoration work, the monument might have toppled over. Within a year the monument would be returned to its pedestal, with a small rededication ceremony occurring on January 19, 1954, during the early stages of the Civil Rights Era.⁶⁹ Speaking on the unrest, Daughter of the Confederacy, Mrs. A.D. Carpenter remarked, “There are forces that are doing much to tear down the ideals and traditions of our Southland, but this is where the heritage of courage and dignity comes to the front.” Her rhetoric echoes many other individuals who promoted the theory of the Lost Cause. However, not all citizens supported the notion to repair and rededicate the monument. An anonymous letter, with the pseudonym, “L.M.K.” was sent titled, “Move Statue and Abolish Lee Circle.” It called for the statue to be moved away from the circle due to its central location, asking city and its citizens to change, “Let's not live in the past, especially a lost cause.” There is no other information about the author, but it is interesting as this would be the first recorded call for the statue to be removed, even if it did not gain much public attention.

⁶⁹ Karst, James. “The Leaning Tower of Lee: Statue of Confederate General Was Encircled in Controversy in 1953.” NOLA.com, The Times Picayune , 14 May 2017, www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2017/05/the_leaning_tower_of_lee.html.

While this was the first call for removal and incident of controversy, it would not be the last. However, the budding Civil Rights movement chose instead to focus on more prominent goals, particularly ending Jim Crow, bringing about desegregation and ensuring that blacks were able to vote without being intimidated. While Dr. Martin Luther King a major figurehead of this movement, other groups, such as the Nation of Islam and Black Panthers split from the movement over disagreements over strategy and goals. These groups were more militant than King, who preferred peaceful direct action, and were more willing to use violence as a method of achieving their goals. In 1972, a confrontation between the Black Panthers and segregationist politician Addison Roswell Thompson at the Lee statue would result in the arrests of many, including David Duke, future Grand Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and perennial Louisiana Governor and Senate candidate. Duke was arrested for “inciting a riot” after he attempted to plant a Confederate flag at the base of the monument. Duke and his followers, dressed in Klan robes, showed up at the monument in Klan robes and waving Confederate flags in order to celebrate Lee’s birthday.⁷⁰ During this standoff, bricks were reportedly thrown at each other by both sides, and the two sides fought each other, according to Duke, with police stepping in to arrest Duke and two of his fellow Klansmen. Duke would brag about the incident when talking to other members, and it would be the first of many arrests for the Klansman.

The Lee Statue was not the only statue in the city that would draw controversy. The obelisk with the inscribed words “white supremacy” honoring the Battle of Liberty Place was the most controversial of the four statues that would be removed in 2016. It also underwent renovation, and it was temporarily removed in 1965, returned in 1970, and rededicated shortly

⁷⁰ “The Klan.” *The Klan*, by Patsy Sims, Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1997, pp. 152–153.

after, featuring multiple city councilmen and representatives.⁷¹ Shortly after, it would be vandalized, with unknown individuals throwing black paint on the monument. It would also become a common area of protest for black activists, given the extraordinary controversy of the incident that it honored. In 1976, the NAACP Youth Council would formally call for the monument's removal, resulting in the monument, much like the Lee Statue, becoming a crucial rallying point for the Ku Klux Klan.

In 1981, the monument's status would become hotly debated among the general public.⁷² Mayor Ernest Morial called for the monument to be "laid to rest, because of what it symbolizes, has long been a source of divisiveness in our community and in the interest of public harmony." This statement was made following a series of ads in multiple newspapers calling for the monument's removal. However, several city councilmen opposed this measure, citing that they had not been consulted. Calls into radio shows complained that "he was trying to rewrite history" and arguing that the monument stood as a reminder of opposition to Northern carpetbaggers rather than out of pure racism. The large outcry of public opposition to the mayor's statement caused the mayor to walk back his comments and a compromise measure of removing the words "white supremacy" from the monument, passed by the City Council. However, in 1989, the monument would be removed again, for "safe-keeping" during road construction nearby, with a set date for it to return a year later.⁷³ However, the mayor's office missed the original deadline

⁷¹ Chadwick, Gordon. "Protest and Removal of Battle of Liberty Place Monument - Stop 4 of 4 in the Battle of Liberty Place Tour." New Orleans Historical, New Orleans and Tulane University, neworleanshistorical.org/items/show/283?tour=8&index=3.

⁷² "RACISM IS ISSUE IN CLASH OVER NEW ORLEANS MONUMENT." The New York Times, The New York Times, 18 Jan. 1981, www.nytimes.com/1981/01/18/us/racism-is-issue-in-clash-over-new-orleans-monument.html.

⁷³ "Protest and Removal"...

and then the second revised deadline, resulting in a lawsuit by David Duke to have the statue returned in 1991.⁷⁴ During the suit, the editor in chief of the Times Picayune, Keith Woods, who is black, wrote, “Put the Liberty Monument back. Do it to preserve the truth. Do it for white children. Black parents will always have to explain prejudice, with or without monuments. We can go on hiding each new shameful monument to failed race relations. But one day we’ll run out of warehouse space. And then what?”

Duke’s camp would go on to win the suit, and a federal court mandated that the monument be returned in 1993. The monument was rededicated on March 7th, and the ceremony was picketed and protested by many African American activists, furious that not only the monument was being returned but also rededicated by public officials. What particularly caused outrage was the choice to appoint David Duke as the keynote speaker for the dedication, well after his association with the Ku Klux Klan had become publicly known of. One of the protestors was African American State Senator and Reverend Avery Alexander, who was carried out by police and put in a chokehold, alongside 4 other protestors, who were arrested. In response to Duke claiming that the monument “may be politically incorrect, but not racist”, radio announcer Walter Ross retorted, “This is a monument to the people who murdered us, who raped our women and kept our children illiterate,” before being removed by police.⁷⁵ None of Duke’s supporters or members of the Klan would be arrested. During this time period, the debate on statues had begun to intensify and polarize in this era, but the prevailing political consensus was

⁷⁴ DeSantis, John E. “Confederate Insurgency Monument Stirs Controversy Over Race, History.” Chicago Tribune, Chicago Tribune, 2 Apr. 1993, [articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-04-02/news/9304020396_1_liberty-monument-reconstruction-government-white-supremacy](https://www.chicagotribune.com/1993-04-02/news/9304020396_1_liberty-monument-reconstruction-government-white-supremacy).

⁷⁵ DeSantis, John E. “MONUMENTAL DIVISION IN NEW ORLEANS.” The Washington Post, WP Company, 22 Mar. 1993, www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/03/22/monumental-division-in-new-orleans/22f3e654-20bc-4748-822a-78aa2d2df42e/?utm_term=.d2d8212ca575.

that they still had a place within the public sphere. Opposition to the statues had yet to fully attain a mainstream audience.

These feelings of frustration and hurt from the monuments would simmer down for the next two decades, but would bubble back to the surface in 2014, when Michael “Quess” Moore, an African American community activist and future leader of Take ‘Em Down NOLA, the group that would become instrumental in pushing to get the monuments removed, decided to organize a protest over police brutality at Lee Circle.⁷⁶ He was a member of Black Youth Project 100 (BYP 100), a civil rights organization with chapters all over the country, and chose the location for its history and symbolism as well as its convenience as large public space to organize. In November, Moore drafted and circulated a petition at one of these protests to propose taking down the Lee Statue. By July 2015, the movement had grown in influence and the organization Take ‘Em Down had officially been founded as an offshoot of BYP 100, specifically dedicated to the mission of removing the Lee statue, as well as street signs and other public symbols of the Confederacy. They would hold protests, knock on doors, organize the city’s African American community, host town halls, and were starting to gain traction in the media. This would result in their getting the attention of several of the city’s officials and councilmembers. Council Member Jason Williams, a first term African American councilman, in particular took interest in the group, citing past experiences where when passing monuments would say things like, “I thought they lost the war.” Williams would hold a public meeting in July 2015 to discuss the statues. While Mayor Landrieu would soon speak out publicly in favor of removal, the early stages of

⁷⁶ Meyerson, Collier. “Inside the Fight to Take Down the Confederate Monuments in New Orleans.” *The Nation*, The Nation Company LLC, 21 June 2017, www.thenation.com/article/inside-the-fight-to-take-down-the-confederate-monuments-in-new-orleans/.

organizing would take place prior to the summer of 2015, where the status of civil war statues and the Confederacy would become a national issue.

The simmering debate on the role and nature of these statues took on heightened intensity on June 17th, 2015. On this day, Dylan Roof, a 21-year-old white supremacist, walked into the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and opened fire, killing nine people.⁷⁷ He had posted a number of photographs online of him posing in front of the Confederate Flag and the flag of Rhodesia, a former British colony that was governed by a white minority government until it became Zimbabwe. On his website, “The Last Rhodesian,” Roof had posted a manifesto detailing his motivations. Key among them was anger at what he termed “black on white violence” and a desire to start a race war. On the subject of segregation, he wrote, “Segregation was not a bad thing. It was a defensive measure. Segregation did not exist to hold back negroes. It existed to protect us from them.”⁷⁸ In 2017, Roof would be convicted on 33 total federal charges, including 9 counts of murder, for which he was sentenced to death.⁷⁹ He is currently on death row, undergoing the appeals process and is also facing trial in South Carolina.

Following the shooting and as Roof’s motivations came to light, a widespread nationwide campaign began against Confederate symbols, particularly the Confederate flag. Within a month, four Confederate flags were removed from the Alabama State Capitol and South Carolina

⁷⁷ Payne, Ed. “Charleston Church Shooting: Who Is Dylann Roof?” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 16 Dec. 2016, www.cnn.com/2015/06/19/us/charleston-church-shooting-suspect/index.html.

⁷⁸ “Dylann Roof’s Manifesto.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 13 Dec. 2016, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/13/universal/document-Dylann-Roof-manifesto.html.

⁷⁹ Schuppe, Jon, and James Morrison. “Dylann Roof Sentenced to Death for Charleston Church Massacre.” *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 10 Jan. 2017, www.nbcnews.com/storyline/charleston-church-shooting/dylann-roof-sentenced-death-charleston-church-massacre-n705376.

Governor Nikki Haley signed a law removing the flag from the South Carolina State Capitol.⁸⁰ In Georgia, Governor Nathan Deal signed a memorandum that changed the names of Confederate holidays to “state” holidays. While the campaign in New Orleans to remove the statues to Lee, Beauregard Davis, and Liberty Place had already begun, the shooting did breathe new life into it. One commentator likened the event to this century’s Birmingham Church bombing, noting, “it could be that, much as an act of terrorism at a Birmingham church pushed the nation closer toward passage of the Civil Rights Act, a massacre at a South Carolina church may have tipped the argument in New Orleans, leading to removal of statues that once seemed as much a part of its landscape as the sprawling oaks.”⁸¹

For New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, this groundswell of public opinion was a call for action. While he had considered a push to remove the statues for over a year, the shooting had brought national attention to the question of confederate symbols. On June 24th, he called for a vote on the matter of the four controversial statues, but also the necessity of a “community discussion” on their status.⁸² On December 17th, 2015, after widespread and rigorous debate, including op-eds, petitions, and protests, the New Orleans City Council would vote 6-1 in favor of removal.⁸³ One such op-ed was published by Wynton Marsalis, a black Pulitzer Prize winning

⁸⁰ Bentley, Rosalind. “After Dylann Roof, What's the Fate of the Confederate Flag?” *Ajc*, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 9 Jan. 2017, www.ajc.com/news/crime--law/after-dylann-roof-what-the-fate-the-confederate-flag/HaCtiPvplkXOdQbn6jAhAN/.

⁸¹ McGill, Kevin, and Associated Press. “Analysis: Did the Emanuel AME Church Massacre Push New Orleans to Remove Confederate Monuments?” *Post and Courier*, Post and Courier , 14 May 2017, www.postandcourier.com/news/analysis-did-the-emanuel-ame-church-massacre-push-new-orleans/article_25c9b8b8-38e7-11e7-b401-8b4b0e2321e8.html.

⁸² McClendon, Robert. “Mitch Landrieu on Confederate Landmarks: 'That's What Museums Are for.'” *NOLA.com*, The Times Picayune , 8 July 2015, www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/lee_circle_statue_new_orleans.html.

⁸³ Victor, Daniel. “New Orleans City Council Votes to Remove Confederate Monuments.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 21 Dec. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2015/12/18/us/new-orleans-city-council-confederate-monuments-vote.html.

jazz musician from the city, who would prove to be highly influential in pushing Landrieu to remove the statues. Writing in the Times-Picayune, he argued that “Lee's monument was erected to proclaim this arrogance across the ages and reclaim as a victory what was lost on the battlefield. It's time for this age to speak back in clear opposition to this hubris. A monument in the middle of our city glorifying a losing general who fought against our country, against freedom and against the maximizing of our human potential.”

The vote to remove the statues did not bring closure to the controversy, as some had hoped, but rather caused the issue to become even more salient. While there was some opposition in the case of the Confederate flag, it was not as aggressive nor as popular as was the defense of statues. When it came to the statues, particularly the Lee statue, strong passions and feelings arose on both sides of the issue. The statues became the site of numerous protests and counter-protests. Those in favor of keeping the statues used a variety of tactics to try and prevent their successful removal. In the 6 months following the shooting, there were 360 protests nationwide against the decision to remove confederate monuments and symbols.⁸⁴

While the city council planned to remove the statues quickly and quietly, their plans were put on hold following the decision by their initial contractor, H&O Investments LLC. of Baton Rouge, to pull out of the removal project on January 12th, 2016. This was a result of a series of death threats sent to the company. A week later, a Lamborghini, owned by the owner of H&O Investments, was reportedly vandalized and set on fire. When the city sought out other companies to do the job, these contractors were reportedly harassed with emails and phone calls demanding that they not get involved. As a result, the city was forced to anonymously meet with

⁸⁴ Associated Press. “Confederate Statue Removal in New Orleans Turns Nasty.” *NOLA.com*, The Times Picayune , 25 Mar. 2016, www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/03/confederate_statue_removal_in.html.

contractors and closed the formerly public bidding process for the contract. Finally, on May 2nd, the situation became openly violent, when a group of armed Confederate supporters and members of Antifa got into a confrontation around the Jefferson Davis statue, resulting in five arrests.⁸⁵ Antifa, short for Anti-fascists, is a controversial decentralized left-wing movement that opposes right-wing and white supremacists through direct action, ranging from protesting to participating in violence with those it opposes.⁸⁶ Because the group lacks no structured hierarchy, any individual may declare themselves a member and organize.

In addition, the city also faced a number of legal challenges. Four separate groups, including the Monumental Task Committee, filed petitions within District Court arguing that against the removal, citing that it would cause “irreparable harm.”⁸⁷ When the court ruled in favor of the city, the case was appealed to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals which upheld the ruling on March 7th, 2017, citing that the “Appellants here have failed to put forward even a prima facie showing in support of their two claims that this federal court must interfere with this local political process which required consideration of heated and disagreeing viewpoints.” The final obstacle that the city had to cross was opposition from the Louisiana State Legislature. Two separate bills were proposed, one of which passed the Louisiana House of Representatives.⁸⁸ This bill would have mandated that the removal of “military monuments” would have to be

⁸⁵ Landrieu, Mitch. *In the Shadow of Statues: a White Southerner Confronts History*. Viking, an Imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2018. Pg 196

⁸⁶ Suerth, Jessica. “What Is Antifa?” CNN, Cable News Network, 17 Aug. 2017, www.cnn.com/2017/08/14/us/what-is-antifa-trnd/index.html.

⁸⁷ Chappell, Bill. “New Orleans Can Remove Confederate Statues, Federal Appeals Court Says.” *NPR*, NPR, 7 Mar. 2017, www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/03/07/518986603/new-orleans-can-remove-confederate-statues-federal-appeals-court-says.

⁸⁸ Litten, Kevin. “Confederate Monuments: Louisiana Legislature Kills Bills to Block Removal.” *NOLA.com*, The Times Picayune, 31 May 2017, www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2017/05/confederate_monuments_house_se.html.

approved via a referendum. When it passed the House, on May 15th, a number of black legislators walked out of the chamber in protest and refused to return for the remainder of the day. However, both bills were killed in the Louisiana State Senate on May 31st. They both failed by votes of 4 votes to 2, with 4 black Democrats making up the majority.

The official action of removing the statues had begun just a month earlier. On April 24th, 2017, workers began dismantling the Battle of Liberty Place Obelisk, under the cover of darkness.⁸⁹ The contractors dismantling the monument wore scarves, flak jackets, and helmets for their safety, and the company name on their vehicles was covered up to protect their anonymity. Next to go was the Jefferson Davis statue, on May 11th, as workers followed an identical protocol, with no advance warning of the time given out, just a day before the 152nd anniversary of his capture by Union forces.⁹⁰ Five days later, the statue of P.T. Beauregard was removed, following similar protocol.⁹¹ The statue of Robert E. Lee was the last to be removed, on May 19th, 2017. Except this time, the statue was taken down in the light of day.⁹² The removal was mostly accompanied by a large group of people celebrating with chants of “Take him down, take him down!” and “Hey, hey, good-bye!” with small pockets of opposition

⁸⁹ Mele, Christopher. “New Orleans Begins Removing Confederate Monuments, Under Police Guard.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 24 Apr. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/us/new-orleans-confederate-statue.html.

⁹⁰ Mele, Christopher. “Jefferson Davis Statue in New Orleans Is Removed.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 11 May 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/05/11/us/jefferson-davis-statue.html.

⁹¹ Times-Picayune, NOLA.com | The. “Confederate Monuments: Crews Remove P.G.T. Beauregard Statue.” *NOLA.com*, The Times Picayune , 18 May 2017, www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2017/05/pgt_beauregard_statue_coming_d.html.

⁹² Gonzales, Richard, and Amy Held. “New Orleans Takes Down Statue Of Gen. Robert E. Lee.” *NPR*, NPR, 19 May 2017, www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/05/19/529130606/new-orleans-prepares-to-take-down-statue-of-gen-robert-e-lee.

protests. The total cost to remove the statues would total almost \$2.1 million, much higher than the original estimated total of \$170,000, due to litigation and security costs.⁹³

Just prior to the removal, Mayor Landrieu spoke publicly, and his remarks would be widely circulated and invoked by proponents of removal. In his speech, Landrieu effectively synthesized many of the arguments for removing the statues, while also grappling with his own guilt as a white southerner. He would further reflect upon his guilt in his memoir, *In the Shadow of Statues*, in which he recalled a conversation in 2014 with Wynton Marsalis. This conversation was crucial in helping convince Landrieu to pursue the cause of removing the statues. Marsalis began by asking Landrieu to take down the statue of Robert E. Lee and change the name of Lee Circle. When asked by Landrieu as to why he should, Marsalis responded by questioning the logic and purpose of having such a statue, “Who is he? What does he represent? And in that most prominent space in the city of New Orleans, does that space reflect who we were, who we want to be, or who we are?”⁹⁴ This conversation would be transformative for Landrieu and would set him on the path that would lead to him publicly calling for the statues’ removal, even if it was not initially politically feasible. While Landrieu was not the one who started the debate on the status of these statues, nor would he resolve it, he would help artfully evoke the feelings of hurt and resentment that they caused in so many.

⁹³ LeBlanc, Paul. “Cost of Removing Confederate Monuments in New Orleans: \$2.1 Million.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 12 June 2017, www.cnn.com/2017/06/12/us/new-orleans-confederate-monument-removal-price-trnd/index.html.

⁹⁴ Landrieu, Mitch. Pg 163

Chapter 3: Culture Wars

This concern expressed both for and against the removal of these statues, both within and outside of New Orleans, is indicative of a cultural divide within the United States. To someone who wants to keep the statues up, the assault on them represents yet another change and step away from “the way things used to be.” When one has been taught and accepted the Lost Cause as historical fact, or at the very least believed that Lee and others were flawed but truly honorable men, it is not easy to accept a history that offers a much harsher interpretation of these men and their motivations. Amid this, coupled with other changes such as the restructuring of the economy, the rise of causes such as Black Lives Matter, the legalization of gay marriage, demographic changes, and other cultural shifts, the country that they grew up in seems far different to the one they live in now. Yet, to someone who views the statues as a bulwark of oppression, many of these very same changes may seem welcome. The removal of these statues, they believe, may help them finally have their story told.

As the person who coined the phrase “culture wars”, Pat Buchanan was an early voice of resistance to many of the changes that would happen within the United States. A key advisor to Nixon, Ford, and Reagan, he became most prominent in 1992, when he challenged sitting President George H.W. Bush from the political right in the Republican Party Presidential Primary.⁹⁵ He had opposed affirmative action, the desegregation of school buses, and had defended the Confederate flag. During his campaign, he took protectionist stances, making immigration a key issue, while also pushing social conservative issues such as prayer in schools and opposing LGBT rights. While he was defeated, and would eventually fall into line to support

⁹⁵ Allen, Henry. “THE IRON FIST OF PAT BUCHANAN.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 17 Feb. 1992, www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1992/02/17/the-iron-fist-of-pat-buchanan/832ad9b5-783d-425c-a792-b5fc5bc8e70a/?utm_term=.e192e901c798.

Bush, his “Culture Wars” speech would draw the battle lines that would define the decade’s cultural and political fights for decades. In a polarized speech and controversial speech, Buchanan argued that the Democratic Party supported, “abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat units” and that these changes would destroy the very “Judeo-Christian values and beliefs upon which America was founded.”⁹⁶ To Buchanan, religion, culture, and politics were closely intertwined, and he believed the changes that Democrats proposed would erode the values of the United States. “There is a religious war going on in this country. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as was the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America.” Regardless of whether one agrees with Buchanan’s political positions and beliefs, his rhetoric aptly describes the conflict between Americans to define the nation’s values and future.

A quarter century later, Buchanan would join alongside other conservatives in pushing back against the removal of the Lee statue and others, except he would voice directly what other commentators would only imply or allude to. While his allegory of calling the clash a “cultural war” was inflammatory and further sowed division, it was not necessarily wrong. Writing on his personal website, in an article that would be circulated within the Conservative sphere, he described this conflict as “America’s Second Civil War”. On the subject of Lee, he argues that the “history” of Lee has not changed, citing that no new information about Lee has come out, rather the country itself has changed.⁹⁷ Instead, the country has changed, and its interpretation of Lee has changed. He believes that his side has been “losing” the culture wars through changes in

⁹⁶ Buchanan, Patrick. “Culture War Speech,” .” *Voices of Democracy*, Admin /Wp-Content/Uploads/2014/07/Vod-Logo.png, 17 Aug. 1992, voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/buchanan-culture-war-speech-speech-text/.

⁹⁷ Buchanan, Patrick J. “Pat Buchanan: America's Second Civil War.” *VDARE.com - America's Immigration Voice.*, 17 Aug. 2017, www.vdare.com/articles/pat-buchanan-americas-second-civil-war.

LGBT rights, taking prayer out of schools, the legalization of marijuana, teaching evolution, and other areas. He claims that, “We have passed through a great social, cultural and moral revolution that has left us irretrievably divided on separate shores.” It is in this context that he laments the revisionism regarding Lee and other figures and poses the question, Where will this end? And in turn he argues that it will truly never end, as the “Marxist left” desires to continually rewrite and suppress history, moving from Confederates to figures such as a Washington and Jefferson. Thus, he uses it as justification for not compromising on the issue, as in his view, any shift in opinion would represent an opportunity for others to exploit in coming months and years.

This slippery slope argument would become a common theme for proponents of keeping the statues, as would directing the blame for the violence onto the “radical left”, referring to groups such as Black Lives Matter and ANTIFA. When the issue gained national attention following the events at Charlottesville, President Trump chose to both tweet about his displeasure at seeing monuments and statues removed and speak out against it in a press conference.⁹⁸ His two tweets produced the following quote, “Sad to see the history and culture of our great country being ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful statues and monuments. You can't change history, but you can learn from it. Robert E Lee, Stonewall Jackson - who's next, Washington, Jefferson? So foolish!” He also decried violence by “many sides” and “all sides” at the rally and took multiple days to outright condemn the violence by the white supremacist groups present. Trump would make the “slippery slope” argument a major part of the public discourse that would soon follow.

⁹⁸ Nakamura, David. “Trump Mourns Loss of 'Beautiful Statues and Monuments' in Wake of Charlottesville Rally over Robert E. Lee Statue.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 17 Aug. 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/08/17/trump-mourns-loss-of-beautiful-statues-and-monuments-in-wake-of-charlottesville-rally-over-robert-e-lee-statue/?utm_term=.e8cf556e93d2.

Some on the left even agreed, acknowledging that other statues and symbols of other figures, including some of the “Founding Fathers” should come down. In a television interview on CNN, commentator and CEO of advocacy firm IMPACT Strategies, Amber Rye, called for the removal of additional statues beyond Lee, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. She argued that, “American history is not all glorious...George Washington was a slave owner. Whether we think they were protecting American freedom or not. He wasn’t protecting my freedom... To me, I don’t care if it’s a George Washington statue or a Thomas Jefferson statue or a Robert E. Lee statue, they all need to come down.” In August 2015, Princeton, in addition to removing a statue of Jefferson Davis, also chose to remove a statue of President Woodrow Wilson, who was a noted racist and champion of the film, *Birth of a Nation*.⁹⁹ However, the statue of George Washington remained, meaning that there still were some limits as to which figures could remain.

Mayor Mitch Landrieu, of New Orleans, offered a different interpretation. He argued that keeping these statues up is not preserving history at all, rather promoting a false narrative that is labeled as “The Cult of The Lost Cause”. He argued that the role of these statues was “to rewrite history to hide the truth, which is that the Confederacy was on the wrong side of humanity...These monuments purposefully celebrate a fictional, sanitized Confederacy; ignoring the death, ignoring the enslavement, and the terror that it actually stood for.”¹⁰⁰ Landrieu found himself forced to reflect on his own education and his own background, as he was taught a very

⁹⁹ Philpott, Ben, and Andrew Weber. “Woodrow Wilson Statue Removal Prompts a Closer Look at His History with Race Relations.” KUT, 31 Aug. 2015, kut.org/post/woodrow-wilson-statue-removal-prompts-closer-look-his-history-race-relations.

¹⁰⁰ “Mitch Landrieu's Speech on the Removal of Confederate Monuments in New Orleans.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 23 May 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/opinion/mitch-landrieus-speech-transcript.html.

different perspective of the Civil War. He learned that the war was called “The War Between the States” and that the war was not about slavery, but defending regional integrity.¹⁰¹ This view, he argued, allowed a society that tolerated lynching’s in the 19th and 20th centuries that would continue to allow figures like David Duke to rise up and become a force within state politics.¹⁰² By continuing to allow these statues to exist, Landrieu continued, this false view of the Civil War would not only be accepted, but implicitly promoted.

While it seemed that compromise would not be possible on the issue because of the pervasiveness of the slippery slope argument, other commentators cautioned against further agitation while also noting the necessity of reform. Writing in the Libertarian publication, *Reason*, on the decision by Baltimore, inspired by New Orleans, to remove its Confederate memorials, Eric Boehm argued that monuments to leaders should be removed, but memorials to war dead, should be preserved, that “memorials to Confederate dead or Confederate soldiers should be viewed through a different lens than those to specific Confederate leaders like Lee or Jackson or Jefferson Davis.¹⁰³ Even if they died for a wrongful cause, all communities should have a right to mourn their dead and remember the awful cost of war.” He would also cite that there was a distinct difference between Confederate leaders and founders who owned slaves. This view would enable us to still honor those that died, while holding those accountable that were responsible for rebellion and the perpetuation of slavery.

¹⁰¹ Landrieu, Mitch. Pg 167

¹⁰² Landrieu, Mitch. Pg 168

¹⁰³ Boehm, Eric. “Can You Tell The Difference Between Confederate Leaders and George Washington? Baltimore Officials Can.” *Reason.com*, Reason, 16 Aug. 2017, reason.com/blog/2017/08/16/baltimore-officials-successfully-identif.

Ben Shapiro, writing for the Daily Wire, would combine slippery slope arguments with a concern over the “radical left”. For Sha, the statue debate represents a synthesis of multiple issues and concerns that other commentators had brought up. He would argue that the Left is going after statues not through debate and discourse, but through violence and lack of due process.¹⁰⁴ He later states that he is against the use of the Confederate flag on public property. However, he disagrees with other commentators, arguing that the statues have little to do with modern day perpetuation of racism while still acknowledging that the “best solution” would involve privatization of memorials and placing them in museums. The crux of his article is what he believes is the “violent left” in which he argues that they label everything as racist and try and destroy these symbols through vandalism and a lack of due process, as well as fighting anyone who disagrees with their own interpretation. He cites concerns against the tearing down of statues of Jefferson across the country, as well as concern for other “patriotic” symbols such as the American flag or National Anthem. While he is more sympathetic, his tone throughout the article indicates that he takes much more of an issue with perceived “censorship” and the aforementioned slippery slope, than the statues themselves.

While the election of Donald Trump as President predates the statue debate itself, some of the same cultural issues that Buchanan argued for represented a key aspect of his campaign. David Brooks, writing for the New York Times, noted that, “He was elected to shred the dominant American culture and to give voice to those who felt voiceless in that culture. He’s doing that every day.”¹⁰⁵ On the political right, there was a belief that the “radical left” had

¹⁰⁴ Shapiro, Ben. “The Left Focuses On Tearing Down Statues When They Should Be Condemning Violence.” *Daily Wire*, The Daily Wire, 15 Aug. 2017, www.dailywire.com/news/19757/left-focuses-tearing-down-statues-when-they-should-ben-shapiro.

¹⁰⁵ Brooks, David. “The Abbie Hoffman of the Right: Donald Trump.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 26 Sept. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/09/26/opinion/abbie-hoffman-donald-trump.html.

begun to dominate the political discourse and that they were unable to express their own views without being shamed. By taking positions such as cracking down on illegal immigration, his wall proposal, the Muslim ban and by using inflammatory rhetoric, he was pushing back hard against an alleged left that significant portions of the country resented. While conservatives in the past may have supported versions of these positions, Trump was willing to double down on them and make them the cornerstone of his campaign. To them, the Republicans had let them down by surrendering and choosing to focus on other issues.¹⁰⁶ In Trump, they finally had someone who not only listened and validated their frustrations but fought for them as well.

One of the key movements involved in the pushback against the statues was the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. While not officially a leftist movement, BLM shares common cause with many other leftist movements and has gotten much more support from the political left than the political right. Black Lives Matter was officially founded in 2013, following the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who had shot and killed Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teen in Sanford, Florida.¹⁰⁷ It began as the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on Twitter, which was soon co-opted by three community organizers, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi to form the actual movement. The movement describes itself as “an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks’ humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.”¹⁰⁸ However, it was the shooting of Michael Brown,

¹⁰⁶ Scher, Bill, et al. “The Culture War President.” *Politico*, POLITICO, 27 Sept. 2017, www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/27/trump-culture-war-215653.

¹⁰⁷ Day, Elizabeth. “#BlackLivesMatter: the Birth of a New Civil Rights Movement.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 19 July 2015, www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/19/blacklivesmatter-birth-civil-rights-movement.

¹⁰⁸ “Herstory.” Black Lives Matter, Black Lives Matter Global Network, 2018, blacklivesmatter.com/about/herstory/.

another unarmed black teenager, by Officer Darren Wilson of the Ferguson Police Department in August 2014, that caused the movement to gain national prominence. Both incidents caused widespread protests as well as civil unrest and looting. The phrase and movement would continue to grow throughout the country, following prominent police shootings and killings of individuals such as Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, and Tamir Rice, but also other instances of systemic racism, focusing on other issues such as racism on college campuses, voter suppression, and mass incarceration.¹⁰⁹ Public protests, including the disruption of campaign rallies, hunger strikes, and boycotts, have been popular tactics. However, the movement would also transition into employing political tactics, such as endorsing candidates, sponsoring town halls, creating political action committees, and working with donors to influence potential platforms. What helped set Black Lives Matter apart from black liberation movements prior to its founding was that a core tenet was empowering women, queer, and transgender people, along with black men, and it does not follow a centralized leadership structure, allowing anyone to speak out. This has shown to be both a blessing and a curse, as it allows for opinions of all extremes, and it has made coordinating a consistent message difficult, which has in turn made tackling the statue debate challenging for the movement.

Black Lives Matter has not been a movement without either controversy or its critics. Hashtags and sayings such as #AllLivesMatter and #BlueLivesMatter have been created in response, citing that the phrase “Black Lives Matter” is inherently unequal and divisive. Former NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani went as far as to label the movement “inherently racist” because “it

¹⁰⁹ Eligon, John. “One Slogan, Many Methods: Black Lives Matter Enters Politics.” *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 19 Nov. 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/us/one-slogan-many-methods-black-lives-matter-enters-politics.html.

divides us”.¹¹⁰ This was in response to the shooting of two Dallas police officers patrolling a Black Lives Matter march protesting the deaths of Alton Sterling and Philandro Castile by law enforcement. While the gunman was not affiliated with the movement at all, some critics were quick to argue that BLM was culpable. his shooting led to the creation of the hashtag and counter-movement, Blue Lives Matter, focusing on showing support for police officers and law enforcement. From their perspective, the Black Lives Matter movement was condoning a “war on cops”, and they highlighted 64 police officers were shot and killed in 2016, an increase by 23 from 2015.¹¹¹ Additionally, they also argued that the movement should focus more on “black on black” violence, which resulted in more far more fatalities than violence from police. Finally, the Blue Lives Matter movement has pushed for legislation extending hate crime protections to law enforcement, in order to increase penalties for crimes against law enforcement officers.

The movement has also injected itself into the statue debate and has not shied away from arguing for the complete removal of Confederate symbols. Just ten days after the Charleston shooting, Bree Newsome, an activist with Black Lives Matter, climbed the flagpole at the South Carolina State Capitol and removed the Confederate flag from it to applause from fellow members of the movement.¹¹² She was then immediately arrested but would be hailed by supporters throughout the nation. A crowd funding movement quickly raised \$66,000 to post her bail and #FreeBree would become the top-trending hashtag on Twitter. While the flag was raised

¹¹⁰ Lim, Naomi. “Rudy Giuliani: Black Lives Matter 'Inherently Racist'.” CNN, Cable News Network, 11 July 2016, edition.cnn.com/2016/07/11/politics/rudy-giuliani-black-lives-matter-inherently-racist/index.html.

¹¹¹ Smith, David “The Backlash against Black Lives Matter Is Just More Evidence of Injustice.” The Conversation, The Conversation, 22 June 2018, theconversation.com/the-backlash-against-black-lives-matter-is-just-more-evidence-of-injustice-85587.

¹¹² Helms, Ann Doss. “Flagpole Climb Turns Spotlight on Charlotte Activist Bree Newsome.” Charlotteobserver, Charlotte Observer, 27 June 2015, www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article25654843.html.

again less than two hours after, it would finally be removed following the actions of Governor Haley. In Charlottesville, VA, where violence would erupt in 2017, the slogan “BLM” would be spray painted on the statue of Lee shortly after the Charleston shooting.¹¹³ In New Orleans, removing the Lee statue would become a rallying cry for Black Lives Matter activists, and other chapters throughout the country would follow suit in calling for the removal of statues within their own localities.

One of the key aspects of Black Lives Matters is to help people who had been voiceless tell their own story. The decision to remove the statues helps promotes this mission. Mayor Landrieu, borrowing from his discussions with his black constituents, would argue that too many stories of black Louisianans are neglected by promoting only the statues and stories of white Confederates. “One story told. One story forgotten or maybe even purposefully ignored. As clear as it is for me today... for a long time, even though I grew up in one of New Orleans’ most diverse neighborhoods, even with my family’s long proud history of fighting for civil rights... I must have passed by those monuments a million times without giving them a second thought.”¹¹⁴ He added that New Orleans was the largest slave market within the United States, and that there were other instances of certain histories not being told.¹¹⁵ This has the same effect of promoting the “Lost Cause”; by neglecting to tell the full story, it enables one particular narrative to dominate. When people in New Orleans walk by Lee Circle and pass statues of Lee and Beauregard, it becomes a part of their daily life. Landrieu also questioned why these figures were

¹¹³ Woodley, Jenny. “Charlottesville, Virginia: the History of the Statue at the Centre of Violent Unrest.” *The Conversation*, The Conversation, 25 June 2018, theconversation.com/charlottesville-virginia-the-history-of-the-statue-at-the-centre-of-violent-unrest-82476.

¹¹⁴ Mitch Landrieu's Speech on the Removal of Confederate Monuments in New Orleans.”

¹¹⁵ Landrieu, Mitch. Pg 164

given the honor of public statues, when so many other New Orleanders had not been given the same honor. Why should Lee, who set foot in the city twice, Beauregard, who fired the first shots at Fort Sumter, and Davis, who led the Confederacy, be honored over Louis Armstrong, Fats Domino, Tennessee Williams, and many others who were actually from New Orleans and made direct contributions to the wellbeing of the city and nation?¹¹⁶

Multiple African American celebrities, including Kerry Washinton, Usher, and Common responded to the controversy and Landrieu’s speech by calling for new monuments honoring black heroes and icons to replace those being removed. This particularly ties into the second theme of his speech, which stressed the need to help promote the “untold history” of African Americans in the South. The official goal, according to reporter Zak Cheney-Rice, is to “repurpose our nation’s Confederate-centric memory of the Civil War as a chance to celebrate black heroes, well and lesser known, instead of the white supremacists who would see them locked in chains,”¹¹⁷ This national project was titled the Black Monuments Project and consisted of individuals including Kerry Washington, Common, Usher, and Yada Shahidi. By creating new monuments, it would honor black individuals while also combatting some of the Lost Cause narrative.

One of the major cultural issues that was directly related to Black Lives Matter and fed off of the controversy during the statue debate was the National Football League (NFL) kneeling protests during the National Anthem. These protests originated with San Francisco 49ers Quarterback Colin Kaepernick. It began in August of 2016, when Kaepernick decided to sit on

¹¹⁶ Landrieu, Mitch. Pg 176

¹¹⁷ Alexander, Princess-India. “Celebs Call For Monuments Honoring Black History Makers In New Project.” *The Huffington Post*, TheHuffingtonPost.com, 2 Feb. 2018, www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/black-history-legends-honored-in-black-monuments-project_us_5a746ff7e4b0905433b38269.

the bench during the anthem to protest treatment of people of color within the United States and police brutality.¹¹⁸ While the protests did not initially garner much attention during the first two weeks, it quickly set off a firestorm throughout the league and the political world, as for many it was disrespectful to the American flag and the US Armed Forces. When asked why he sat after the game, Kaepernick replied, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color." The following game, Kaepernick decided to switch to taking a knee after a conversation with former Green Beret Nate Boyer, as he wanted to still show respect for the military, but still show that "there are issues that still need to be addressed." He would be joined by his teammate Eric Reid and he also pledged to donate one million dollars to charities that focus on racial issues. Other players, in the NFL, high school, and other sports leagues would follow suit and express solidarity through taking knees, raising a fist, or by choosing to link arms.

However, not everyone was supportive of the protests. These were perceived by many as disrespectful to the flag and as unpatriotic. Public opinion polls on the stance were polarized, with a slight majority ranging from 50 to 55 percent opposing the protests, and 38 to 43 percent supporting them.¹¹⁹ While most supported the athletes' right to protest, most also felt that protesting the anthem and the flag were not the proper way to do so. On the campaign trail, Donald Trump was very critical of those who did not stand for the anthem, and his dissent continued during his tenure as President. During a speech at a 2017 rally in Alabama, Trump

¹¹⁸ Sandritter, Mark. "All the Athletes Who Joined Kaepernick's National Anthem Protest." *SBNation.com*, *SBNation.com*, 11 Sept. 2016, www.sbnation.com/2016/9/11/12869726/colin-kaepernick-national-anthem-protest-seahawks-brandon-marshall-nfl.

¹¹⁹ Casteel, Kathryn. "How Do Americans Feel About The NFL Protests? It Depends On How You Ask." *FiveThirtyEight*, *FiveThirtyEight*, 9 Oct. 2017, fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-do-americans-feel-about-the-nfl-protests-it-depends-on-how-you-ask/.

called the protests “a total disrespect of our heritage. That's a total disrespect of everything that we stand for.”¹²⁰ Continuing, he called for NFL owners to take action against players who sat. “Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, you'd say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now. Out! He's fired.’” In response to his comments, 30 of the NFL teams protested in some fashion, whether by kneeling, linking arms, or by issuing public statements condemning his statements as well as affirming the right of their players to protest.¹²¹ The focus of the debate also shifted away from the issue of police brutality to arguments about free speech and the 1st amendment, causing the initial purpose of Kaepernick’s protest to become muddled.

The national anthem protests matter because they align with the debate regarding the role of civil war statues. The symbolism of the American flag and the National Anthem represents a foil to the role of these statues. While both sides do not see eye to eye on what should be done regarding these symbols, they do agree that these symbols truly matter. Writing for the American Conservative, Pat Buchanan lamented that the NFL was now experiencing the same culture wars that he had advocated so strongly for. Arguing that the current situation was unsustainable, Buchanan wrote, “Do players, before games, have a right, as a form of protest, to dishonor and disrespect the flag of the United States and the republic for which it stands? Or is that intolerable conduct that the NFL will punish?”¹²² Additionally, Buchanan argued that while Trump had

¹²⁰ Press, Associated, et al. “Trump Says NFL Should Fire Players Who Kneel during National Anthem.” *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 22 Sept. 2017, www.latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-na-trump-nfl-anthem-20170922-story.html.

¹²¹ Clarke, Liz, and Abby Phillip. “In Showings of Protest and Solidarity, NFL Teams Respond to Trump's Criticisms.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 25 Sept. 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/sports/nfl-players-kneel-during-national-anthem-following-further-

¹²² Buchanan, Patrick J. “NFL Conflict Mirrors the Country's Divide.” *The American Conservative*, 27 Sept. 2017, www.theamericanconservative.com/buchanan/nfl-conflict-mirrors-the-countrys-divide/.

exacerbated the issue, he did not start the issue, finding fault with Kaepernick as he was the one that had initially protested, bringing the issue to the general public. The kneeling issue would also affect Louisiana at the local level. In September 2017, in Shreveport, LA, amid protests over the status of a Confederate monument outside of the parish's courthouse, there were discussions of a kneeling protest during a High School football game.¹²³ In response, the Superintendent of the parish sent a letter home to students detailing that there is an expectation for students to stand for the anthem. That week, during a game involving Green Oaks, a local high school, the players, while not taking a knee, chose to link arms to show solidarity.¹²⁴ None were suspended, and three months later, plans to remove the statue were approved by the city council.

Those who oppose kneeling often argue that they wish to keep politics out of sports. In their view, sports represent an escape from the political arena and the culture wars that appear. Additionally, they argue that while peaceful protest under the 1st Amendment is a right afforded to everyone in the United States, that does not completely prohibit employers from firing individuals for expressing their views within the workplace. However, others would argue that the National Football League and other sports enterprises have not been as apolitical as many perceive. The simple act of playing the national anthem can be seen as a political act, even if the vast majority of the country agrees with it. Under early NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle, during the Vietnam War, players' behavior during the anthem was heavily policed, with players expected to respectfully stand upright, with helmets under their arms.¹²⁵ When one player, Dave

¹²³ McDonald, Brent. "Taking a Knee and Taking Down a Monument." The New York Times, The New York Times, 3 Feb. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/02/03/us/taking-down-a-confederate-monument.html.

¹²⁴ Lang, Roy. "Updated: Punishment for Protest during Anthem Outlined in Bossier." Shreveporttimes.com, Shreveport Times, 28 Sept. 2017, www.shreveporttimes.com/story/sports/high-school/football/2017/09/27/bossier-city-national-anthem-punishment-protests-running-suspension/106050614/.

¹²⁵ Levin, Justin. "Perspective | National Anthem Protests Aren't Politicizing the NFL - It Was Already Political." The Washington Post, WP Company, 26 Sept. 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-

Meggysey, simply stepped out of line and held his helmet in front of him to dissent, he was benched halfway through the season and never played a down of professional football again. In the view of Justin Levin, politics have always been a part of football, except as part of a culturally conservative agenda, buoyed by giant flags, the national anthem, and flyovers. Finally, from 2012 to 2015, the US Department of Defense paid out \$10.4 million annually to various teams and sports leagues to boost patriotic displays through events such as color guards, enlistment ceremonies, flag details, and featured singers of the national anthem.¹²⁶ While in 2015, Commissioner Roger Goodell of the NFL announced that they would no longer accept money from the DOD, many of these events would still continue, funded by the teams themselves. These events are popular, but they are still inherently political in their nature.

The issues that Kaepernick wished to draw attention to, systemic racism and misuse of power by the police, were overshadowed by the debate on freedom of speech and whether the players had “a right to kneel”. However, these issues also directly intersect with the statue debate. One can look at past treatment by police towards African American protestors of the monument in previous years and the monuments themselves represent a stark reminder of the injustices that African Americans faced and still continue to face within the United States. The most recent manifestation of the response to these injustices was the birth and growth of the Black Lives Matter movement. This movement garnered nationwide attention before the national statue debate and was a significant part of organizing support for statue removal. In many ways, the calls to remove the statues became a part of this movement. Likewise, many of those that

[history/wp/2017/09/26/national-anthem-protests-arent-politicizing-the-nfl-it-was-already-political/?utm_term=.b62ea4991a02](https://www.history.com/news/national-anthem-protests-arent-politicizing-the-nfl-it-was-already-political/?utm_term=.b62ea4991a02).

¹²⁶ Hogg, Dave. “Military Paid Sports Teams \$10.4M for Tributes.” SBNation.com, SBNation.com, 4 Nov. 2015, www.sbnation.com/2015/11/4/9670302/nfl-paid-patriotism-troops-mcain-flake-report-million.

opposed the BLM movement found similar support among those that wanted to keep the statues in place. This represented yet another example of how the statue debate coincided with and helped exacerbate the already existing fault lines within the United States.

Those who supported tearing down the statues found common cause in supporting Colin Kaepernick and Black Lives Matter. One Facebook poster argued,

Once again, the exact same people who hate Colin Kaepernick are the same ones yelling "those statues are a part of history" and "stop being so sensitive, they're just statues, what's next, statues of George Washington?"... Those statues, monuments, and the confederate flag represent nothing more than a bunch of traitors who committed treason by killing thousands of people in an unnecessary civil war. If that happened today they'd be on death row for treason, so why are they celebrated?¹²⁷

Another poster argued, "Colin Kaepernick has been vilified for leading a peaceful protest while Robert E Lee is celebrated for leading a violent protest."¹²⁸

Likewise, those who wanted to keep the statues could find common cause in opposing those movements. One poster on Facebook cited the slippery slope argument. "First the rebel flag was an issue, Then Civil War Statues, Then the National Anthem & Flag, What's the next symbolism of America that is going to offend someone, our Money? Nothing was accomplished by taking down rebel flags, statues or Colin Kaepernick kneeling."¹²⁹ Another poster argued, along similar lines, that those protesting were being disrespectful to America,

¹²⁷Are', Temidayo. Facebook, Facebook, 28 Aug. 2017, www.facebook.com/temidayo.are/posts/10155356993799733.

¹²⁸ Bratcher, Terrell. Facebook, Facebook, 23 May 2018, www.facebook.com/terrell.bratcher/posts/10100886615348153.

¹²⁹ Hart, Christopher. "Things That Make You Go Hmm." Facebook, Facebook, 29 Sept. 2017, www.facebook.com/christopherhart5/posts/10214264778722865.

“It seems that the LEFT WING ZEALOTS now find racism in every facet of the US. And every thing is "OFFENSIVE" and needs to be removed. They found all civil war confederate statues offensive and the morons that bowed to these CRETINS removed many of them... Now it is the Anthem and the creeps at the NAACP see it as racist: IDIOTS ONE AND ALL AND THAT INCLUDES COLIN KAEPERNICK, THE ANTI AMERICAN POSTER BOY.

However, one post by a man posing with a portrait of Donald Trump, best summarizes the feeling of shock on the political right that they are living in a country that they do not recognize, Just sitting here with “Not My President”. 2017 all I can say is WOW... What the hell happened? Nobody knew what gender they were. People were kneeling for the National Anthem, burning Flags and only white people are racist. We have taken down historical monuments because they were “offensive” and Colin Kaepernick was the Citizen of The Year. Was there literally no one else to choose from? Our country has never been more divided since the Civil War. ¹³⁰

A separate poster offered his reply, on the issue of player protests.

So called American's and Patriots refuse to talk about the systemic racism in our country. Do you see how quickly they took over with their talking points about the real reason for the protest started by Kaepernick? They went full out to flood the airwaves with bullshit and accused us of being anti cop and anti military. The two institutions that inforce their oppressive views. AMERICA does not want to move forward as seen by the Robert E.

¹³⁰Calhoun, Adam. “Adam Calhoun.” Facebook, Facebook, 1 Jan. 2018, www.facebook.com/ADAMCALHOUN13/photos/a.472909312895920.1073741830.458414127678772/789701814550000/?type=3.

Lee protest. They tell us to forget about slavery it was so long ago but wanna protect a convicted felons statue as their heritage.¹³¹

While these posts are just a sample of public opinions related to the statue debate, it is clear that the arguments being made are not simply confined to the realm of statues, but larger political issues that dominate the American political and cultural landscape. Race and identity, in particular dominate the conversation, as both sides try to define what America used to be and what it should become.

On the political right, there would also be new movements that would attempt to capture the country's political soul. A key argument for Trump's success in the 2016 election was the "economically anxious" voter. These voters, particularly those who were white working class males, represented almost two thirds of the electorate and felt that they had been left behind by recent economic developments, namely the Great Recession, globalization, outsourcing, mechanization, and bleak economic prospects.¹³² Pundits reasoned that Trump was able to more effectively appeal to these voters by talking about issues such as trade as well as using his status as a businessman to argue that he could create jobs and improve their economic opportunities. While Trump did focus on economic issues and travel to areas that had been left behind, others argued that his success was derived from his desire to discuss cultural issues. It Several studies have been published disputing the economic anxiety claim, as far as the primary driver of his support. One study, published by the Public Religion Research Institute, found that white working-class voters who were afraid of being "culturally displaced" were 3.5 times more likely

¹³¹King, Makato. Facebook, Facebook, 27 Sept. 2017, www.facebook.com/makato.king?hc_ref=ARSUuVLJ78sh6_idMENG99ZeJKOrvirVjbb6kMhAz-z7iaD-EcXn0ogcUp0y0Di0cJo&fref=nf.

¹³² Staff, Marketplace. "Key for Trump Voters? Economic Anxiety." *Marketplace*, Marketplace, 11 Nov. 2016, www.marketplace.org/2016/11/10/elections/economic-anxiety-key-some-trump-voters.

to vote from Trump than Clinton, and that those who supported deporting illegal immigrants were 3.3 times more likely to support Trump.¹³³ There was no such correlation for white working-class voters who described their economic condition as fair or poor. In fact, these voters were 1.7 times more likely to vote for Clinton than Trump, a marginally significant factor. Other important statistics were that 65 percent of white working-class voters believed that “American culture and way of life has deteriorated since the 1950s, with 68 percent believing that America was in danger of losing its identity, and 48 percent feeling like “strangers in their own country”. In a similar study the author, Diana C. Mutz, argued that these voters saw these changes as “a threat to their group’s dominance in our country over all.”¹³⁴ These voters were wary and fearful of losing their place within the existing hierarchy, and were more likely to believe that whites, Christians, and men faced more discrimination than other demographic groups. It is very likely that these cultural and economic issues were intertwined and helped feed off of one another. Trump helped provide convenient scapegoats for economic anxiety, and his use of cultural issues to rally his supporters has continued throughout his time as president. The statue debate represents an effective way to engage his supporters in the type of “identity politics” that was useful to his campaign.

These feelings and fears have been manifested in the Alt-Right political movement, the same political movement that was largely responsible for the protests and violence at Charlottesville Virginia, as part of the “Unite the Right Rally”, with the Robert E. Lee statue

¹³³ Cox, Daniel. “Beyond Economics: Fears of Cultural Displacement Pushed the White Working Class to Trump | PRRI/The Atlantic Report.” *PRRI*, Public Religion Research Institute, 9 May 2017, www.prrri.org/research/white-working-class-attitudes-economy-trade-immigration-election-donald-trump/.

¹³⁴ Chokshi, Niraj. “Trump Voters Driven by Fear of Losing Status, Not Economic Anxiety, Study Finds.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 24 Apr. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/04/24/us/politics/trump-economic-anxiety.html.

becoming the centerpiece of the violence. Pat Buchanan himself has become a figure within the movement, but other individuals, notably Richard Spencer of the National Policy Institute have also taken center stage. One of the key concerns of this movement is the idea of “white genocide”, a notion that uses one of the secondary definitions of genocide as its basis, which is defined as “Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.”¹³⁵ Members within this movement argue that Western nations will disintegrate “white culture” through policies such as allowing immigration, adopting secondary languages, changing religious and economic institutions, and allowing foreign groups to assimilate. These groups want to keep the United States and other European countries ethnically homogenous and are fearful of demographic changes, such as the increase in Americans who are Latino, reduced birth rates by white people, and the long-term prospect of white people becoming a minority within “their” own country. The case study that these groups often use is the former nation of Rhodesia, the same case study justified by Dylan Roof in his manifesto prior to the Charleston Church shooting.

The choice of Rhodesia by the alt-right is in many ways their own version of the “Lost Cause” and when examining its history, it is not difficult to see why. Rhodesia was a white minority nation, formerly a British colony, led by a white government, that adopted many of the apartheid laws that its neighbor, South Africa also utilized. During the 1960s, as the United Kingdom de-colonized and pulled away from Africa, one of its requirements was that its former states must adopt majority rule and democratize.¹³⁶ Rhodesia’s whites, fearful of losing their

¹³⁵ “What Is ‘White Genocide’ – A Thorough Explanation.” *This Is Europa*, This Is Europa, 13 Dec. 2017, thisiseuropa.net/whatiswhitegenocide/.

¹³⁶ Beckhusen, Robert. “Why White Supremacists Identify With Rhodesia – War Is Boring – Medium.” *Medium*, Augmenting Humanity, 19 June 2015, medium.com/war-is-boring/why-white-supremacists-identify-with-rhodesia-480b37f3131f.

status, refused and declared independence unilaterally in 1965. This resulted in civil war almost immediately after, with black resistance movements fighting both the government and each other as they vied for control. The regime would collapse in 1979, ceding power to Robert Mugabe, the leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union. The country and region, known as the “breadbasket of Africa” would have bright prospects initially, but due to Mugabe’s mismanagement, as well as his decision to seize farms from white farmers, the country experienced mass food shortages, starvation, hyper-inflation, and Mugabe became increasingly tyrannical.¹³⁷ For the alt-right, this made it all too easy for them to argue that things were better when there was all white rule, and Rhodesia quickly became the cautionary tale for other states with white majorities.

Mayor Landrieu recognized that the country was divided due to cultural divisions, and believed that it still had not completely reunified, at least culturally, from the Civil War Era. It was his hope that by tearing down the statues in New Orleans and throughout the country, it would cause people to confront the past, while setting the groundwork for future reconciliation. In his view, the very presence of these statues prevented the city of New Orleans from healing and coming together. Landrieu questioned the logic that these statues were to celebrate unity, “By asking African Americans — or anyone else — to drive by property that they own; occupied by reverential statues of men who fought to destroy the country and deny that person’s humanity seems perverse and absurd. Centuries old wounds are still raw because they never healed right in the first place.”¹³⁸ For African Americans within New Orleans, every time they would walk by

¹³⁷ Power, Samantha. “How To Kill A Country.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 15 Nov. 2017, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2003/12/how-to-kill-a-country/302845/.

¹³⁸ Mitch Landrieu's Speech on the Removal of Confederate Monuments in New Orleans.”

theses statues, it would serve as a reminder of their time under enslavement and oppression.¹³⁹

The monuments were placed in locations that were highly visible and typically close to neighborhoods with high African American populations. In Charlottesville, Virginia, which would witness the climax of this controversy in the summer of 2017, the statue of Stonewall Jackson had been placed within a majority black neighborhood known as McKee Row.¹⁴⁰ The statue of Lee was placed above the old location of the city's jail. As such, when African Americans feel that they are constantly being reminded of their time under oppression, it allows oppression to continue.¹⁴¹ And as these statues feed into a false narrative about the Civil War and the time period after, it makes agreement and unity almost impossible. Thus, in Landrieu's view, while the idea of the Lost Cause may remain, it should not be perpetuated and given a visible and constant voice within public spaces.

Landrieu's initial hope for unity was quickly fading. In response, on May 21st, 2017, just a few days after the successful removal of all four statues, a Mississippi state lawmaker, Karl Oliver, wrote on his Facebook page on that,

The destruction of these monuments, erected in the loving memory of our family and fellow Southern Americans, is both heinous and horrific. If the, and I use this term extremely loosely, 'leadership' of Louisiana wishes to, in a Nazi-ish fashion, burn books or destroy historical monuments of OUR HISTORY, they should be LYNCHED! Let it be known, I will do all in my power to prevent this from happening in our State.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Mitch Landrieu's Speech...

¹⁴⁰ Gardner, Sarah E. "What We Talk About When We Talk About Confederate Monuments." *Origins: Current Events In Historical Perspective*, Ohio State University, Feb. 2018, origins.osu.edu/article/what-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-confederate-monuments.

¹⁴¹ Mitch Landrieu's Speech...

¹⁴² Goldgeier, Kathy. "State Lawmaker: Sorry For Saying Confederate Statue Removers 'Should Be Lynched'." *NPR*, NPR, 22 May 2017, www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/05/22/529528951/sorry-for-saying-confederate-statue-removers-should-be-lynched-state-lawmaker.

The post was also “liked” by two of his fellow lawmakers before it was quickly removed. The following day, having made a change of heart, Oliver apologized,

In an effort to express my passion for preserving all historical monuments, the word 'lynched' was wrong. I am very sorry. It is in no way, ever, an appropriate term. I deeply regret that I chose this word, and I do not condone the actions I referenced, nor do I believe them in my heart. I freely admit my choice of words was horribly wrong, and I humbly ask your forgiveness.

The post was also formally condemned by Governor Phil Bryant and Speaker of the House Philip Gunn of Mississippi, both Republicans. However, it was clear that while Landrieu had created the conversation that he deemed necessary, that true reconciliation seemed a long way away.

The reconciliation argument would also be criticized on the left. One writer, Megan Kate Nelson, takes the view that since the struggle by African Americans and other minorities against systemic racism has not ended, fully removing and cleaning up these memorials allows people to forget about the struggle.¹⁴³ As a result, she feels that we should be reminded of it every day in order to achieve true reconciliation. She advocated two proposals. The first, which she calls the “Ozymandias Project,” would be a local government sponsored project that would invite citizens of any race or background to physically destroy a memorial, using sledgehammers and other tools, while leaving its ruins as a permanent reminder that these statues once existed, but that the entire community was able to overcome them and destroy them. The goal would be to help people “think about the differences between then and now, and how they came to be.” Her second proposal, titled Artistic Upcycling would allow African American artists to modify the

¹⁴³ Nelson, Megan Kate. “Transforming White Supremacist Memorials: Two Proposals.” *HISTORISTA*, 17 Aug. 2017, www.megankatenelson.com/transforming-white-supremacist-memorials-two-proposals/.

memorial however they so choose, offering direct engagement against the ideas that these statues promote.

Lost Cause arguments were also used as a way of pushing back against the reconciliation argument. Even when authors were not overt proponents of the theory, some still fell victim to some of its most common talking points. In an Op-Ed in the *Charlotte Observer*, Barry Wood likened the decision to remove the Lee statue as a “slap in the face to the millions of Americans who hold the Confederate general in highest esteem.”¹⁴⁴ Continuing, Wood argued that Lee helped encourage reconciliation and that people were racist in both the North and the South at the time. Additionally, he makes the point that what Landrieu was doing was presentism or using current standards to judge the past and that what he is doing is sanitizing history. The ultimate consequence is the exact opposite of Landrieu’s goal of reconciliation, and he is instead alienating more people instead of bringing them together. He also attacks the media, citing that it “labels voices favoring a traditional view of the Civil War era as white supremacist or racist.” However, he also cites a civil war scholar, Christy Coleman, arguing that it would be better to leave these monuments up alongside new ones erected to honor black people and women who were oppressed. While Wood makes interesting points about using presentism, he downplays both Lee’s faults and the racist history of the Confederacy.

Other arguments revolved around the idea that the statue debate was a distraction, and took airtime away from more pertinent problems. Peter Carmichael, director of the Civil War Institute subscribes to this view. He argues that there are larger and more pressing issues that

¹⁴⁴ Barry D. Wood. “New Orleans Monument Removal Is a Disgrace.” *Charlotteobserver*, *Charlotte Observer*, 3 June 2017, www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/op-ed/article154118164.html.

have been ignored by the media and political left's desire to frame the debate around statues.¹⁴⁵ He believes that it is necessary to re-shift focus back onto social issues, as "what we have now is a failure now to understand and recognize the source of discrimination in housing, the denial of black political rights, the inhumane treatment of young black American men in our prison system." He argues that these issues get forgotten and ignored by those on both sides of the aisle because of the debate on statues. People who may have been more receptive to hearing about systemic racism are now no longer willing to discuss the issue because of the divisiveness of the statue debate.

Carmichael also argues that the underlying assumption that those monuments are celebratory misses the hard fact that people bring very different collective memories to those monuments. That wide range of perceptions, of understandings, is rooted often in a very personal history. It is a falsehood to insist that these monuments are simply monuments to white supremacy." In his view, while the war may have been about slavery, individuals have such different perceptions of the conflict and their history, that the monuments can mean something different to individuals. Even though the Lost Cause view may be false, because it resonates with so many, one pushes back against the Lost Cause and symbols such as flags and statues, it only further breathes new life into the idea, as people seek to defend something that they see as part of their identity.

The existence of statues in public and the glorification of figures such as Lee represents one history. Trying to remove the monuments and challenge the myth of the Lost Cause represents a different perspective on history. Dan McLaughlin, writing for the National Review,

¹⁴⁵ Rozsa, Matthew. "Civil War Historian Peter Carmichael: Keep the Statues, Focus on Racial Injustice." *Salon*, Salon.com, 27 Aug. 2017, www.salon.com/2017/08/27/civil-war-historian-peter-carmichael-keep-the-statues-focus-on-racial-injustice/.

offers the following perspective, “In each case (referring to the anthem protests and statues), the original push to pick a fight came from the Left and was followed by a reaction from the Right. Symbols evoke powerful emotions, yet controversies around them tend to generate a lot of division without accomplishing anything tangible.”¹⁴⁶ McLaughlin, pointing to the opinion polls that demonstrate the popularity of his view, argued that the tactic of confronting people and trying to get them to change their views about the South’s history is very ineffective at actually getting anything accomplished, because the statues have so many different meanings to people. However, he does note that to so many African Americans, it is almost impossible to separate these monuments from their history and close association with slavery and the men that supported the institution, as well as those that would still oppose integration and fought to continue the period of Jim Crow.

In his view, while we should not erect new monuments, we should not pick at the scars that still linger. He believes that local municipalities should have the final say, as since the monuments exist within a public space, the general public should get to decide as to what should be done with them. This echoes a sentiment very similar to Steven Douglas’s “popular sovereignty”, letting the voters decide, on the question of whether slavery should be extended to new states joining the Union during the 1850s. And if the public was given the opportunity to decide, there are very few situations where the statues would be removed. An NPR poll conducted in August 2017 found that 62 percent of Americans supported the statues remaining, with 86 percent of Republicans and 44 percent of Democrats agreeing.¹⁴⁷ This trend continued

¹⁴⁶ McLaughlin, Dan. “Flag Protests and the Power of Symbols.” *National Review*, National Review, 11 Oct. 2017, www.nationalreview.com/2017/10/national-anthem-confederate-flag-besieged-symbols-unserious-time/.

¹⁴⁷ Clare Malone. “Lots Of Americans Aren't Sure If We Should Take Down Confederate Statues.” *FiveThirtyEight*, FiveThirtyEight, 18 Aug. 2017, fivethirtyeight.com/features/lots-of-americans-arent-sure-if-we-should-take-down-confederate-statues/.

among African Americans, with 44 percent of them wanting them to remain, with 40 percent wanting them removed. A month later, on the status of national anthem protests, support was more balanced, but more strongly divided by party and race. Forty three percent of Americans supported the protests, while 49 percent opposed the protests. Almost 75 percent of Democrats supported the protests, with 82 percent of African Americans agreeing and 87 percent of Republicans believing it was “the wrong thing to do.”¹⁴⁸ While support to remove statues is diminished compared to support for protests, it is clear that there is some correlation between the two issues.

Landrieu would still have his defenders, who agreed that there needed to be radical change in order for there to be a true shift in thinking. In a letter to the *New Orleans Advocate*, Richard Westmoreland, a retired US Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel and prominent community leader, spoke out strongly in favor of removal.

“It’s not just the flag. While it is amazing that in the year 2015 we still have Confederate flags flying on government property in the South, removing them isn’t enough. We need to go further. The flags indeed need to go; right along with the statues, monuments, and streets named after Confederate leaders... There is no arguing that fact that the Civil War was fought over slavery. It is completely understandable why the citizens of New Orleans in the 1880s thought erecting monuments to Confederate leaders was an acceptable idea. But why do we tolerate them in 2015? Robert E. Lee may well have been a great general for the Confederacy just as Erwin Rommel was also a great general for the Third Reich during WWII. They were both on the wrong side of history. Yet

¹⁴⁸ Agiesta, Jennifer. “CNN Poll: Americans Split on Anthem Protests.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 30 Sept. 2017, www.cnn.com/2017/09/29/politics/national-anthem-nfl-cnn-poll/index.html.

you'll find no monuments to Rommel in Berlin or Munich. The Germans are ashamed. Which begs the question, why aren't we?"¹⁴⁹

Only time will tell if Landrieu's hopes were well placed. While statues throughout the country have been taken down, the cultural gap on issues such as race has only seemed to widen in the past few years. The statue debate has been indicative of that divide and in some cases has likely helped contribute to it. However, sometimes it is necessary to confront and address an ugly truth, rather than continuing to allow it to perpetuate itself and grow. While the Lost Cause remains as an ideology, and likely will remain for the foreseeable future, other symbols, most notably the Confederate flag, have been gradually phased out. The true extent of the effect of removing these statues likely won't be seen for several more years, as people forget about them. When doing research on the debate itself, there were very few calls by people to bring the statues back. There was almost a tacit acknowledgement that once the statues were taken down, they were gone for good.

¹⁴⁹ Westmoreland, Richard. "Letters: It's Time to Wave Good Bye to the Confederate Flag." *The Advocate*, The Advocate, 25 June 2015, www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/opinion/letters/article_7a5fd2ef-c6c4-567d-ab0c-301a747802ec.html.

Conclusion: Moving Forward

One does not need to examine the statue debate to understand that there are multiple fundamental divisions within the United States. However, in order to fully understand the statue debate, it is important to understand this cultural divide. The American Civil War is still a difficult topic for many Americans to discuss with each other, and it seems clear that the country has not been able to heal. And it continues to remain unlikely that the United States will ever completely mend the wounds of the conflict. But in order for there to be healing, there must first be recognition of the scars that do exist. It is crucial that the barbarity of slavery and the longstanding persecution of African Americans be fully acknowledged and not trivialized. While some Confederate figures may have been honorable and fought for differing reasons, they still fought to preserve and perpetuate the suffering of African Americans. To lionize and celebrate these figures marginalizes the pain that so many went through and prevents true healing. The civil war's memory only represents one such issue at play. But it seeps into the many conflicts and debates that exist within the United States.

Mayor Landrieu took a bold step when he chose to push for and to remove the four statues in New Orleans. Instead of allowing the false history of the Lost Cause to continue to remain in a public space, he chose instead to bring the issue out into the open and confront it. This decision sparked anger, resentment, and picked at the divides that already exist. However, it also created the opportunity to have difficult conversations, not just about the Civil War or Robert E. Lee, but about police brutality, the continued marginalization of minorities, and racism. It may have escalated tension on these issues, but it brought greater acknowledgement and allowed more people to become aware of them, which is how lasting change happens. The country may never fully heal on the Civil War, and there will never be one sole perspective on

the conflict. But the decision to remove the statues was a step in the right direction, and in the long run, the country will be stronger for it.

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