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### Confederate Monuments:

#### Contextualism, Virtue, and the Preservation of History

The Civil War is no doubt an unforgettable and well-known event in American history. Like many children, I was taught of the heroics and bravery of Union soldiers such as Ulysses S. Grant and the infallible morals of Lincoln, while being indirectly taught to portray the Confederacy as the “bad guys” during this time in history. To me, the Civil War was just another story with heroes and villains: good against evil. However, as I grew, I came to realize that this was not the case. While such a deep-rooted belief in the ideas of good versus bad during this time in America’s history dominate the mind of America’s general public, the division is not always so clear. Such is evident in the dispute concerning the Confederate monuments of modern day. Due to the tragic events of the Charlottesville protests, racism and hatred have risen to the spotlight, using Confederate monuments as anchors and symbols of their beliefs in a white-ruled America. Many argue for the removal of these monuments, claiming that they are sources of hate and symbols of an oppressive past and a resurging present. Others argue that Confederate monuments serve the same purpose as any other monument, and that they should remain as a reminder of the past and a memorial to those fallen defending their freedom. Still, others argue that they would like to see monuments removed and placed elsewhere. It is apparent the decision to be made is not a clear one. The questions that arise call attention to what America as a nation values, including such concerns as whether removing Confederate monuments might be

reparation for a dark time of history or a protection of history itself. However, despite the apparent presence of hatred and racism that stem from the use of Confederate monuments as a symbol, in my research, I came to the realization that an answer may not be as easy as choosing one or the other and I found this a little frightening, as history should consist of discernable facts on which we can draw reasonable conclusions. I falsely needed there to be two clearly drawn sides, as I was drawn into the fallacy of the false dilemma. With this embarrassment admitted, in this paper I will work to fix that error in thinking by sharing my investigation into the cause of the disputes over the removal of Confederate monuments, sharing my research of multiple perspectives, and finally, proposing a solution to this controversial subject.

To make a virtuous judgement on the removal of the monuments, it is necessary to understand why this issue even arose. While my opinions on the Civil War had been informed by my primary and secondary history teachers, and honestly not considered since then, my first thought was that Confederate monuments have been present for centuries without inflammatory protest, so why is everyone making such a big deal now? Could my teachers have been wrong to give only two sides—one bad and one good? Is it that simple? Although there have been highly problematic issues of white supremacy and Confederate symbolism in the past, especially during the Civil Rights Movement, the most recent and extreme conflict arose during August of 2017, during the Charlottesville protest. This incident incited me to consider whether it was wise to have left my understanding of the Civil War in the past, and to have not worked to learn more about it as a young adult. They say that if we do not learn from the past, we will repeat it.

The protest began in August of 2017 when white nationalists created “gathered for a [“Unite the Right”] rally over plans to remove a Confederate statue were met by counter-protesters” (Katz). While the event may have begun as a rally not uncommon to modern-day

democratic protest, the conflict erupted into violence as counter-protestors came to oppose the white nationalists. The nationalists gathered in Robert E. Lee Park, shouting remarks such as “Blood and Soil,” translated from the Nazi philosophy “Blut und Boden” (Wagner, par. 2). Reporter Meg Wanger from CNN explains “[t]he ideology stressed that ethnic identity is based on only blood descent and the territory in which an individual lives—and it celebrated rural farmers and peasants as virtuous Germans” (par. 2) and that both “Blood and Soil” and “Blut und Boden” are listed by the Anti-Defamation League as hate slogans (par. 11). Eventually, the chanting, far right-wing, white nationalists were confronted and opposed by counter-protesters of different races, as well as Antifa, a left-wing anti-fascist group. The confrontation led to injuries and one death. James Alex Fields Jr., a self-proclaimed neo-Nazi was indicted for driving his car into a crowd of peaceful protesters, tragically killing Heather Heyer and injuring many others. Consequently, Fields has been indicted for murder and attempted murder with the special circumstances of a Hate Crime.

All of this began over Charlottesville’s Robert E. Lee Park being renamed Emancipation Park, and thus began the advocacy to remove Confederate monuments and symbols. Upon review, it becomes clear that Confederate monuments, despite being argued as memorials for the fallen, are held as symbols of power by white supremacists, and as a result, bring about the question for the removal of such symbols in order to diminish the hate. Moreover, it should be added that President Trump’s perspective in response to this incident and the issue of removing the monuments was to call the statues “beautiful” and to declare that “I think both sides are to blame...that [you] had a group on one side that was bad and you had a group on the other side that was also very violent” (qtd in Parks, par. 7). With the President of the United States seeing some good in the side of the white supremacists and neo-Nazis, I found myself quite confused. In

addition, black citizens who have to walk by these statues are reminded of slavery and the current issues around race in this country. Will it help them? Do they find the statues “beautiful”? Upon reviewing this event and the violence and injury that came with it, many, including myself, despite President Trump’s stance, might be inclined to support such a decision in order to prevent future tragedies, but is it too extreme of an action? With that said, I wanted to not to be so swayed by a single, but nonetheless powerful, event. One question that kept running through my mind was: *After Charlottesville, are all people in favor of keeping these Confederate monuments, Nazis and white supremacists?* In order to prevent myself from succumbing to such a single-sided argument, I decided it was necessary to explore research further, no matter how powerful and graphic the message of just one may be.

After researching the Charlottesville incident and the arguments for the removal of Confederate monuments that arose from it, I turned to sources arguing the opposite in order to gain a better understanding of the various perspectives. In Arthur Hurman’s article “Confederate Statues Honor Timeless Virtues – Let Them Stay,” Hurman argues for the protection of Confederate monuments as memorials embodying the admirable values of bravery and sacrifice. Hurman begins by clarifying that his stance on white supremacy, condemning them as individuals “who have no honest or rational views on the matter,” and removes the Confederate labeling from the monuments. In Hurman, I found someone who was against the removal of the monument but also against white supremacy. Hurman takes a humanistic approach to the issue, recognizing the monuments as memorials to the fallen first and Confederate second. He sees all of this as part of what made the United States of America. He goes on to emphasize that the monuments “were dedicated to memorialize the courage and sacrifice that these Southern men and, in some cases, women” embodied and that “in the final analysis, they are monuments to

timeless virtues, not to individuals” (Hurman). His use of “Timeless Virtues” shocked me, as I thought that all virtue was on the side of the Union North—the ones who fought to end slavery. It is clear that from Hurman’s perspective, these monuments are more than political structures, but rather, they are pillars of virtues of sacrifice, courage, and conviction. Although it should be noted of his personal familial connection to the Union cause, Hurman holds sentimental value in those monuments, not just that of the Confederacy. He goes on to further describe the history of many of those memorials, arguing that the Union as well as Lincoln, sought to heal the nation from the aftermath of such bloodshed, quoting Lincoln, “charity to all and malice towards none” (qtd. in Hurman). The author goes on to further defend the monuments, attacking Left activists such as Black Lives Matter and Antifa, who ignore the virtues embodied in the monuments in favor of the racism and oppression the Confederacy once represented, seeking to destroy history and the virtues it teaches. Hurman concludes with a strong appeal to reason, a historical argument, asserting that “America is a country where the process of conflict and reconciliation... brings out and embeds the qualities that make the United States one people and one community,” and that the Civil War and the monuments that come with it are a part of that process. For Hurman, the issue is not racism or politics, but virtue and history.

Hurman is not alone in his views. In Laura Anastasia’s article “Monumental Battle: Why a push to remove Confederate monuments has sparked violence, protests, and heated debate,” Pierre McGraw, a descendent of Confederate soldiers, claims “the statues honor the bravery of Southerners who fought in the Civil War,” and do so “without any mention of slavery” (qtd. in Anastasia 7). Furthermore, he makes a historical claim, like Author Hurman, emphasizing that removal of the monuments is akin to “ripping out chapters of a history book” (qtd. in Anastasia 7). The arguments against the removal of Confederate monuments focus not on the racial

message they may deliver, but on the emotional and historical values they hold. Bringing in the issue of morality and virtue, the case for the removal of the monuments becomes more difficult, and the issue of history leaves questions as to whether removal is equal to censorship. It is difficult to make a moral judgement when there are moral virtues at stake, and even more difficult for me to discern whether the appeasement for activists is worth the historical erasure. While my primary education taught me that the North were “good guys,” it did not teach me that our dark and shameful history should be erased—it was all part of the forming of this nation. To resolve my dilemma, I further researched into the issue, to see whether there can be any doubt in the virtues of the monuments and to reveal whether removing the statues would result in historical censorship.

While there may be some emotional value in Confederate monuments, some argue that the removal of Confederate monuments does not equate to erasing history. According to the American History Association (AHA), “To remove a monument, or to change the name of a school or street, is not to erase history, but rather to alter or call attention to a previous interpretation of history” (110). For contemporary scholars of history, the act of removing historical monuments does not mean erasing that part of history, but rather, changing how people interpret such events. History is largely based on interpretation and perspective, just as today’s dispute over the Confederate monuments. The memorials commemorate an aspect of history, an aspect of a time when it was acceptable to enslave, separate from their family, and torture people of color (AHA112). From this statement, perhaps removing Confederate monuments from their place of origin into places of more suitable context may be necessary. Because the removal does not equate to the erasure of history, it is maybe time to find a better way to approach Confederate monuments. Like many others, the AHA proposes the preservation of the monuments with added

context in order to retain historical value and argues they should be moved to more suitable locations such as museums only after being “photographed and measured in their original contexts” (113). From the American History Association’s stance on the issue, one can deduce that, as their name suggests, they intend to focus on the historical preservation of the monuments, rather than their emotional or political aspect as Hurman and McGraw do. As I investigated different sources, many shared this compromise between preservation and removal, choosing to put the monuments in their appropriate contexts or moving them to better locations. Clearly, a third possibility, and perspective, arose. However, there are still those that argue strongly for the removal for the monuments, denouncing the Confederacy’s cause while still acknowledging history.

Upon examining F. Sheffield Hale’s article, “Finding Meaning in Monuments: Atlanta History Center Enters Dialogue on Confederate Symbols,” I found perspectives contrasting with Herman and McGraw’s emotional arguments for the monuments, asserting that Confederate monuments were devices to promote Confederate identity and its main cause: slavery. Despite bearing inscriptions honoring the sacrifices of Confederate soldiers, Hale holds that although they contain truth, they ignore the fact that “the Constitution of the Confederate States of America explicitly protected African American slavery, and by logical extension, a traditional vision of the American Dream meant only for white men” (Hale 20). Despite explicitly honoring the fallen soldiers, the Confederate monuments innately depict the Confederate cause by virtue of being a Confederate monument. In addition, Hale goes even further by revealing that “their inscriptions are usually focused more on justifying the Confederate cause than mourning its dead” (Hale 20). This conflicts the previous perspectives I’d encountered, including my own. Taking such a critical stance on Confederate monuments, Hale emphasizes that no matter how

much Confederate monuments seem to serve as a memorial for the deceased, the inescapable fact is that they also serve to justify and remember the Confederate's racist purpose. However, Hale believes, as I had, that those monuments connect the present day to the past, in order to remember the tragic history that America suffered in order to form today's national identity. Despite being a "vehicle to celebrate the Confederacy during the time of Jim Crow segregation," they serve to remind us of the events of America's history and to never make the same mistakes, even if that reminder may bring us back to an era of racism. With that said, does the "reminder" work the same way for African Americans? How might they anticipate the "reminder"? With these questions, I knew my search for an informed perspective was not concluded.

Further arguments against the virtuous qualities embodied in the monuments can be found in Paul Gilbert's article, "A Monumental Decision: What to do with Confederate Monuments?" Gilbert calls for the removal of Confederate monuments, as they were created for the purpose of obscuring slavery. He asserts that although there are monuments that serve as a memorial to those fallen on the battlefield, the monuments in question today are those that were erected during a period in order to obscure the Confederacy's purpose and defeat. This period, known as the "Lost Cause," attempts to warp the purpose of the Confederacy's opposition and painted slave owners in a benevolent light. After the Civil War, while the south was destroyed, they were not eager to change their ways. Gilbert argues, "This movement attempted to erase or obscure the fact that the South had broken away from the Union, primarily to continue slavery." According to Gilbert, arguments for the preservation of the Confederate monuments draw attention to the emotional and historical aspect, rather than the morality and truth of the monuments, which represent nothing close to virtue. The Confederate monuments do not serve

to honor the Confederate dead, but instead were originally erected in order to usher in segregation and discrimination of people of color. He wants them destroyed.

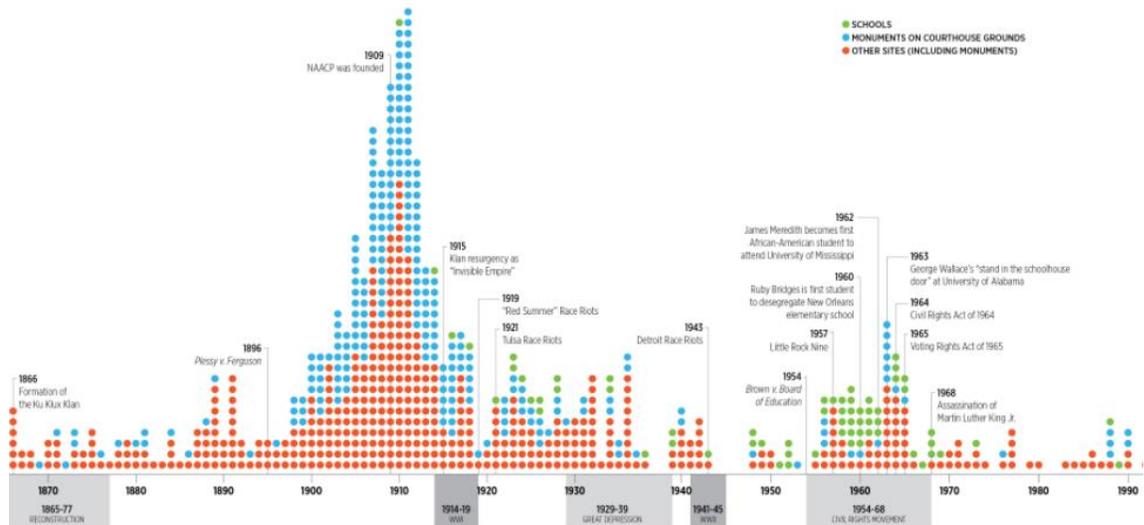
Believing in a more moderate approach, Christopher Heathcote further analyzes the potential dangers of Confederate monuments, but also acknowledges the threat to liberty by removing and censoring monuments and memorials associated with the Confederacy and slavery. In his article, “Gone with the Wind? America’s Struggle with Confederate Statues,” Heathcote begins by analyzing a monument of significant historical value that has also been the symbol and anchor of white supremacy for several years. The *Battle of Liberty Place* monument was dedicated to renegades of the White League who staged a coup as a result of Louisiana’s post-Civil War elections, killing over a hundred police and state militia. The monument was erected after the Civil War as an affirmation of white supremacy and a symbol to provoke fear in African Americans, and it has stood for that ever since. According to Heathcote, *The Battle of Liberty Place* monument, as well as other Confederate monuments, “were designed to cause trouble” and “aim[ed] to stir bitterness in their communities, nurturing resentment against the victors” (Heathcote 69). As a result, removals proceeded, despite the protests and obstacles posed by white supremacists and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (Parks, par. 3).

However, despite his initial stance to remove the statues, the overwhelming number of removals and alterations that have been done to monuments, street names, park names, and other institutions causes Heathcote to draw attention to a different issue, his belief that “Social Justice Warriors have advocated, not only for the removal of Confederate monuments, but also for the alteration of anything or anyone associated with slavery or racism” (70). While the pejorative use of “Social Justice Warriors” does not help his credibility, his perspective still deserves consideration, as one cannot help but wonder if this is being taken too far. According to

Heathcote, “Anything which bears the name of an individual associated with the Confederacy, or who owned slaves, is fair game for condemnation, fury, protest, then erasure” (Heathcote 72). In the Social Justice Warriors’ eyes, anything that can be linked to slavery or racism was to be struck down, including memorials dedicated to individuals who were not directly associated with slavery, “ignoring all other positive contributions individuals made to their communities” (Heathcote 73). For Heathcote, this reckless and indiscriminate passing of judgment upon memorials poses a threat to history and reveals a severe presence of ignorance among America’s advocates. He further asserts that “This ignorance of history and the destructive alteration of historical monuments serves to not only jeopardize national identity, but also sets a dangerous precedent of striking down historical figures who contributed so much more to America than just slavery and racism” (Heathcote 73). Heathcote’s change in perspective, made me think of Thomas Jefferson and the fact that he owned slaves and had sexual relationships with them, but he was also a patriot and a father of this country. Historian Jonathan Blackmon, a fellow at the University of Virginia’s Miller Center, insists that there is a difference between a monument to the founder of our nation, and a monument to a key figure in an effort to break apart the nation” (qtd. in Heathcote 71). This is an important distinction that I kept in mind as I continued my research.

Intrigued by the “Lost Cause” period, I wanted to know if other monuments were built for reasons other than to commemorate the brave fallen and our nation’s struggle to become one. Armed with the fact that the history I was taught was too one dimensional, I decided to look into something my good friend had told me, that a majority of the Confederate monuments were built during the Civil Rights Movement of the 60’s to oppress black Americans. This new “truth” led me to discover a recent, comprehensive study of Confederate statues and monuments across the

country published by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a U.S. non-profit organization that monitors the activities of domestic hate groups and other extremists. In the graph on the next page, I encountered a set of numbers from the SPLC that shocked me:



As

clearly illustrated, the majority of schools, courthouse grounds, and other sites (including monuments) dedicating something to the Confederate side, in one way or another, happened not after the Civil War to honor the dead, but during the tragic, “separate but equal” time of Jim Crow Laws of the early 1900s and during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s—times when African Americans were encountering a new form of oppression and then subsequently fighting against it, under the lead of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks. In Miles Parks’ 2017 article, “Confederate Status Were Built to Further A White Supremist Future,” published on *NPR*, many historians are quoted to support the claim made in the title. To illustrate, Jane Dailey, an Associate Professor of History at the University of Chicago claims, “Most of the people who were involved in erecting the monuments were not necessarily erecting a monument to the past, but were rather, erecting them toward a white supremacist future” (qtd. in Parks, par. 6). In addition, James Grossman, the executive director of the American Historical Association,

asserts, "These statues were meant to create legitimate garb for white supremacy," Grossman said. "Why would you put a statue of Robert E. Lee or Stonewall Jackson in 1948 in Baltimore?" (qtd. in Parks, par. 10). These facts and historians sent me into an intellectual tailspin.

Due to the new information encountered in Parks' article and the research of the Southern Poverty Law Center, I found myself in a dilemma. There were not two sides to this issue, but many; in addition, most of them seemed to have some merit for me to consider, with the exception of the white supremacists and neo-Nazis. My primary and secondary history teachers may have been right to simplify history for me, and I am thinking it is my duty as an adult, an American Citizen, to take a college course or read more history to develop and inform my worldview, as I done in this research on the removal of Confederate monuments. Hurman and McGraw's emotional arguments to keep the monuments were persuasive as I read them, but due to their reliance solely on the appeal to emotions such as virtue and honoring the brave dead, they did not resonate with me. These dead, after all, were fighting to keep humans enslaved. The American History Association (AHA) made a compelling argument that stayed with me throughout my research. To take pictures of them in their original location and then move the statues to a museum, where they are truthfully contextualized, including who erected them, when and why, seems to be a more accurate and comprehensive depiction of history. Isn't truth a virtue and vital to the future? In addition, Sheffield's first reasonable argument and Hale's agreeance in favor of their removal, combined will with the AHA position, seemed to make a strong cases. Gilbert's argument about how the monuments were used to support segregation and discrimination directly conflicted early sources, and while Heathcote's agrees with Gilbert, his warning that the about history being erased is powerful, despite his ad hominin attack on "Social Justice Warriors." Like Heathcote, Gilbert, and eventually Blockmon and the research by the

Southern Poverty Law Firm, the case for removal grew stronger. *Historians Daily* and *Grossmont* seemed to add to the growing case for removal.

For some, removal of Confederate monuments has had an unintended effect of removing all connections to the past involving racism or slavery, so I dove deeper into the account of a mayor who has directly attempted to remove Confederate monuments, in order to see whether removing Confederate monuments is really worth the sanitization of history. In his article, “What I learned from my fight to remove Confederate monuments,” Mitch Landrieu, the Mayor of New Orleans, describes his attempts to remove Confederate statues as he was met with opposition and aggression. He emphasizes the difficulty in finding contractors to remove the monuments, describing that the few who responded, “were immediately attacked on social media, got threaten-ing calls at work and at home, and were, in general, harassed” (Landrieu). The opposition even went so far as to firebomb the car of the contractor who accepted, making the removal of the monuments difficult and dangerous. In the face of such aggression and harassment, Landrieu acknowledges the dangerous power of the monuments, describing them “as political weapons, part of an effort to hide the truth, which is that the Confederacy was on the wrong side of not just of history, but of humanity” (Landrieu). To Landrieu, a victim of the opposition, the monuments represent a “misuse of history” that only serves to fuel the anger from white supremacists and neo-Nazis (Landrieu). Upon researching and learning of the history, Landrieu saw his convictions to remove the monuments as a way of reparation; to “mak-[e] straight what was crooked, making right what was wrong” (Landrieu). However, being a victim of the aggression brought about from the removal of the monuments, I am inclined to believe Landrieu’s perspective may be too extreme, brought about as a result of the injuries brought about by the opposition. Still, I had so many unanswered questions.

I was lost, pulled in different directions, doing general Google searches, when I stumbled into a creative primary source, a poem responding directly to the questions I asked earlier in my research: Are black citizens helped by these statues? Do they find the statues “beautiful,” like President Trump? The poem was written by Markus Amaker, who is African American and Charleston, South Carolina’s first poet laureate. His poem “Stagnation (a letter 2 America),” written in August of 2017, is about the monuments and the issues surrounding it. While I wanted to excerpt it to illustrate how it made me feel, it was too hard, as the poem is just too powerful, so I have included it below.

Stagnation (a letter 2 America)

America has built  
 too many monuments to war.  
 Man-made maladies  
 mounted on Mother Earth.  
 I’ve seen scars on the skin  
 of our country’s landscape –  
 blood-stained band aids  
 covering exposed bones;  
 a pain that has not healed.

We hold hatred high  
 on pedestals  
 in the name of history.  
 Birds are perched  
 on the shoulders of ghosts  
 overlooking  
 God’s perfect, clear byline  
 as endless skylines of smoke  
 and division  
 get played out on television.

this. is. real.

America,  
 your fetish for warfare  
 has erected stagnant symbols  
 of oppression.

Some of your people  
are just now awakening  
to the discomfort  
of the disenfranchised.  
Your body has been  
blemished by Southern battlegrounds,  
bound to a history of violence.

this. is. real.

No statue's spirit  
will wake up to apologize,  
but you can.  
No system rooted  
in racism  
will ever empathize,  
but you can.  
History cannot  
re-write itself,  
but you can.

Simply tell us the truth.

Carve out stones  
for freedom fighters,  
do more to preserve and promote  
the feminine.

Rip off the bandages  
without ignoring your bondage.

It's going to hurt.

Comparing the removal of the monuments to “bandages” we need to “rip off” (line 48) is an image I could not shake. For the African American poet and many who responded to the poem, these monuments are an ugly “scar” (line 5), an untruthful reminder of the past and a blemish on our country—not history. They are white supremacy made visible. By practicing empathy with this young poet, I was able to better understand what African Americans who were kidnapped,

sold like animals, tortured and separated from their families, might truly feel: it deeply horrified and saddened me.

Here, I am presented with a dilemma because I began to empathize with many of my sources. Those who call for preservation on the basis of honoring the fallen soldiers seemed to care deeply about loss. Regardless of their cause, they deeply felt the dead deserve to be honored and respected. Removing them would cause disrespect that no one deceased or related to the deceased should suffer, as well as detract from the historical value and impact the Civil War and other figures involved in racism have had on modern society. On the other hand, there is no doubt that Confederate monuments serve as symbols of hate and oppression from racist groups in America. Many, including myself, believed we were past this type of ugliness, but we are not African American. White supremacists use these monuments as devices to rally their cause and to bring about a society in which whites are dominant and blacks are either subjugated or removed—a society that many, including myself, do not want to be seen. Given these perspectives, it is clear that I cannot simply choose to remove or not to remove, and like many controversial issues presented in today's politics, there needs to be compromise in order to ensure the most effective route to peace and prosperity.

Synthesizing all these perspectives, it is clear that an overwhelming number of sources I investigated denounce the intrinsic virtues of Confederate monuments, asserting that despite serving as memorials to the fallen, Confederate monuments undeniably serve to further represent the Confederate cause or to maintain white power. However, despite seeing these trends, I became hesitant in outright calling for the removal of the monuments, as sources such as the Heathcote and Hale advocate for their preservation in order to protect the historical value of all monuments, not just Confederate monuments. The historical value of Confederate monuments

cannot be ignored, and it cannot be censored. Much like the Social Justice Warriors of Heathcote's article, the only compromise that exists is to educate and inform the general public of the true nature of the Confederate monuments and anything related to slavery and racism, and this should happen in the education system. In fact, I had come full circle with my dilemma, as I had started with the limitations of my primary and secondary education. High school curriculum must be changed to reflect the dark truth of our history, as it will help them to understand that this is not a post-racial America, that the problems of the past affect African American citizens into the present. Equality is still an issue in this country. In addition, all citizens in this country should be required to watch a short video on our true history before they can renew their driver's license—there could be a different one for each time someone renews. This would help to get the truth to citizens who did not learn all of history, those who learned the version out down by whites concerned about their legacy or keeping people of color in "place." The final part of the solution I came to in the end is not an entirely a unique one, as many of the sources, including the American History Association, propose this solution in order to preserve history, honor the fallen, and to minimize the message of oppression the monuments deliver. The solution is contextualism, and it seems to be the only way of resolving this issue without surrendering the historical and emotional values these monuments serve to portray: place the monuments in a museum, not in a public space where people who do not want to see *them have to see them*, and share all knowable information about them with the public.

My conclusion, as are many others, is influenced and brought about by my values and beliefs. Because of my value of history, I believe that we should preserve any and all parts of it, including the unsettling and gruesome. Because I have lost people close to me in war, I believe that all people, no matter their color, gender, or beliefs, should be honored in death. I do not want

to see violence and hatred stemming from racism and supremacy, and contextualism seems to be the only way to satisfy all aspects of this issue. Museums and cemeteries will serve as appropriate locations to not only educate the present, but to remember the past. Inscription and contextualizing these monuments will allow us to not only acknowledge the messages the monuments embody, but to also quell the hatred from both sides through extended education and information. In fact, in a museum, a plethora of information can be added. This issue was not an easy one, and most issues worth debating rarely are. According to the AHA, “these decisions require not only attention to historical facts, including the circumstances under which monuments were built and spaces named, but also an understanding of what history is and why it matters to public culture” (112). At the end of the day, the necessary prerequisite for this issue and all other issues is knowledge and research. Before making judgements and actions, one must research, study, and provide evidence and reasoning for their conclusion. They must admit to themselves that they may be ignorant on an issue. Ignorance is not bad—it is an opportunity to learn if handled correctly. Critical thinking is essential in order to ensure peace and to preserve history, and it is paramount in order to ensure that the tragedies of the our past never resurface in our future.

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