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A Monumental Question: A Comparison Between the United States' and South Africa's Monument Debates

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A Monumental Question:
A Comparison Between the United States' and South Africa's Monument Debates

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>Chapter One: Theory</u>	3
Monuments	3
National Identity	6
<u>Chapter Two: The United States</u>	11
Keep and Removal	19
Recontextualization	25
Relocation	33
New Monuments	37
National Identity	42
<u>Chapter Three: South Africa</u>	43
Keep and Removal	48
Recontextualization	51
Relocation	57
New Monuments	61
National Identity	66
<u>Conclusion</u>	68
<u>Epilogue</u>	70
<u>Bibliography</u>	72

Introduction

In the summer of 2017, Charlottesville Virginia became the focal point of the United States monument debate. The open racism and violence that transpired sparked the nation to re-evaluate its relationship to Confederate monuments and public spaces. At the time, I was researching how processes of transitional justice were taught in schools to historicize the transitions. I had been focusing on Greensboro North Carolina, where in 1973, at a demonstration for the advancement of economic and social rights of disenfranchised citizens, five participants were killed by Nazi and Ku Klux Klan (KKK) party members. All perpetrators escaped prosecution despite the killings being televised. This culminated in a process of transitional justice. Greensboro's transitional justice final report suggested that the history should be taught in schools. However, I could not find evidence of this transpiring. What I did find was an interview with a survivor of the 1973 Greensboro march comparing the events in Greensboro to those in Charlottesville. Rev. Nelson Johnson felt that in many ways the two cases mirrored each other. At their core, both attacks were racially motivated and resulted in the death of private citizens. Rev. Johnson went on to say that “ dialogue was the only way to get to the root of the problem.”¹ The root of the problem is twofold: who is seen as acceptable in the United States public spaces? Why do we think that way?

Though I was still interested in how teaching conflicts historicizes contentious pasts, public space issues intrigued me as well. In monuments I found the middle ground. Monuments have the unique ability to teach the past while also directly affecting their present environments. Theoretically, they depict citizens histories and teach their national identities by being reminders of what good citizens look like.

The monument landscape in the United States is monolithic. It represents only a fraction of the citizen body. This is because in the 1900's there was a purposeful surge of monument

¹ Myfox8: Greensboro massacre survivor talks about Charlottesville violence.

construction to promote the values of the Confederate south.² Currently, the country is coming to terms with the fact that this is unacceptable. Moving forward, the United States can choose to keep contentious monuments as they are, remove them, recontextualizing them, relocate them or create new ones. Each choice changes the monument landscape to represent national identity in different ways. However, some choices are more successful at responsible diverse representation than others. This is evident because South Africa on the local and governmental level has been attempting to diversify their monument landscape for the last 20 years.

As the United States tackles its monument problem, looking to South Africa's experience with public space could be helpful. This paper compares the fledgling stages of the United States' monument debate with South Africa's. It is a critique of manufactured diversity and aims to highlight that national identity should be formed organically by the people rather than dictated by governments. Monuments help create national identity. Therefore, they should start debates rather than give answers about history, citizenship and national identity. Keeping all of this in mind the question remains: what should be done about monuments?

² "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy." Southern Poverty Law Center. Accessed December 15, 2017.

Chapter One: Theory

Monuments

To understand monument theory one must first understand history and memory theory. They cannot be divorced from each other because monument theory was born of history and memory theory. It is the physical manifestation of our recorded cultural past. This section will be an introduction to the prominent thinkers in the fields and will highlight how the three disciplines memory theory, history and monument theory have been in conversation with and built off each other over time.

Pierre Nora, a premier scholar of cultural memory believes that memory and history are inseparable from each other. He differentiates between the two by explaining memory as always “...in permanent evolution, open to dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, was the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.”³ In other words, history is the recreation of the past while memory is the natural progression of culture.

Nora believes that the scholar Maurice Halbwachs’ ideas align with his own and that the distinction between history and memory is paramount to how cultures record their pasts. Halbwachs formalized the field with the term “la mémoire collective.” He theorizes that groups of people create collective memory by drawing on their own individual experiences and then unconsciously coming to a common consciousness. This means that the final stage of collective memory is a byproduct of individual interpretation.⁴

Building on Nora’s work, the scholar Jan Assmann’s theory of cultural memory takes into account not just community but the broader social and cultural trends that affect memory. Assmann postulated that “cultural memory requires careful induction. It is always dependent on

³ Pierre Nora, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, 8.

⁴ Pierre Nora, 9.

media and politics and can concretize only artificially through institutions, such as museums, archives and monuments.”⁵ When it comes to memory, culture is a recreating entity. Cultural trends and ideas are reinforced through the institutions around groups of people. Since the switch from a predominantly memory based society to history based one the cultural landmarks mentioned earlier have more influence than previously in history.⁶

The South African monument scholar Sabine Marschall makes the connection between Assman’s theory of cultural memory and Nora’s theory of collective memory. She believes that they both can coexist with each other.⁷ This is especially poignant when Pierre Nora’s theory of “lieux de mémoire” is taken into account. “Lieux de mémoire,” or “Sites of Memory” are places that have significance in reconstructing the collective memory of communities.⁸ They are touchstones that bring memory into the present, when no-one in the community personally has memory of the events that the touchstones represent. Monuments are a quintessential example of lieux de mémoire, because they physically contextualize the narrative memory for the public. Marschall believes that collective and cultural memory inform each other, culminating in group identity.⁹

In James E. Young’s reflection on Saul Friedländer’s works of memory and history, Young comes to the conclusion that separating memory and history into what is “remembered of what happened” and “what actually happened” is dangerous.¹⁰ Young believes that to record only the facts and not also the interpretations of events limits future readers’ ability to understand motives and circumstances that lead to historical events taking place. “By returning the victims’ voices and subjectivity to the historical record, Friedlander restores a measure of contingency to history as it unfolds, opening up the possibility of historical causes and effects otherwise lost in

⁵ Sabine Marschall, *Symbols of Reconciliation or Instruments of Division*, 154.

⁶ Sabine Marschall, 155.

⁷ Sabine Marschall, 156.

⁸ Pierre Nora, 11.

⁹ Sabine Marschall, 154.

¹⁰ James E. Young *Between History and Memory: The Uncanny Voices of Historian and Survivor*, 54.

our projection of a hindsight logic to events”.¹¹ Traditionally history is taught as a single narrative. This can be unhelpful when presented as the only viable and true record of the past. Single narratives exclude personal histories. It is important to recognize that memory can be single narrative as well. Young and Friedlander call for a marriage between history and memory rather than a separation of the two. They believe historians should study and present “what happened and how it is passed down.”¹² This allows historians to understand not just “historical fact” but also the myriad of narratives that make those facts real.

This is exemplified in relation to monuments. Young is the premiere scholar of memorials and monuments. The body of his work is comprised of research on the memorialization of World War II and the Jewish people in public spaces.¹³ He believes that monuments should be a starting point for debate on what version of history or memory should be preserved. He calls this concept “counter monuments,” which he explains to be “In the end, the counter monument reminds us that the best German memorial to the fascist era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all, but simply the never-to-be-resolved debate over which kind of memory to perceive, how to do it, in whose name, and to what end.”¹⁴ The continuous debates around monuments can be more helpful representing the past than the monuments themselves. True counter monuments create discourse and “mobilize the historical record.”¹⁵ This bypasses the problem of single narrative.

¹¹ James E. Young, 51.

¹² James E. Young, 57.

¹³ James E Young, *Texture of Memory*, 17.

¹⁴ James E. Young, *Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany*, 3,

¹⁵ James E. Young, 4.

National Identity

The International Center for Transitional Justice's (ICTJ) paper, *Transitional Justice, Culture and Society*, asserts that the public perception of how history works has changed over time. ICTJ explains that currently, in the 21st century, there is an "idea that the past is embedded in the present and that the future depends on grappling with that embedded past. This can be contrasted with a more traditional, early- and mid-twentieth-century, progressive view of history that sees historical stages as building on each other, each ending in turn and replaced by a new one."¹⁶ With the change in how history is interpreted, the public's relationship to monuments changes as well. Where monuments might have once been seen as static historical relics, they currently are interpreted as active parts of our public spaces.

History is a multifaceted entity that can have more than one perspective. Often, the dominant narrative might not be the the most historically accurate. This is because until recently history in the West was predominantly written by white men. They did not record the experiences of people of color or other genders. As the general populous comes to the realization that there are actually multiple perspectives to history, single narrative representations begins to lose their charm. People want to see their own stories represented. Having a monolithic representation of history in public spaces counters the current understanding of history as a multifaceted documentation of the past. Monuments are often guilty of single narratives.

Despite their shortcomings as single narrative representations of history, monuments are still effective at explaining historical stories. Due to their public display, monuments demand viewers interact with them on more than one level. According to *Transitional Justice, Culture and Society*, monuments implore viewers to "generate empathy for victims, transfer facts and information, and ask existential questions."¹⁷ This is teaching through public space. Monuments subvert the narratives of public spaces to suit the ideological and cultural values of those who

¹⁶ Clara Ramirez-Baarat, *Transitional Justice, Culture, And Society: Beyond Outreach*, 500.

¹⁷ Clara Ramirez-Baarat, 495.

erect them. This is the dominant story told by monuments. Mirroring the dominant narrative is one representing those who have been excluded from public space. In the absence of representation a story is told as well. Simultaneously, monuments can be a symbol of accomplishment for one group and a reminder of exclusion for another.

The International Center for Transitional Justice states that monuments teach cultural public and private narratives. Museums and universities exist in public space for public consumption. These institutions are in contrast to institutions belonging to the private sphere, such as cemeteries. Monuments span the private and public domain. People interact with them similarly to how people interact with Museums but the emotional response created by monuments is closer aligned to the emotional response evoked by cemeteries.¹⁸ This is because monuments like cemeteries, tie emotions and history together.¹⁹ Monuments are places where the past and the future have been designed to meet. They are created to represent something from the past explicitly so it will be remembered in the future in a specific way.²⁰

Historically there has been a monopoly on the sanctioning and creation of monuments in public spaces. This monopoly is held by governments and is used as a tool to control the documentation, production and reception of history. The narratives that monuments represent are often the dominant white, colonial, male narratives. They exclude citizens who have been oppressed or subjugated. Where once monuments could have been viewed as simply representing an earlier stage of history, for disenfranchised citizens they are now seen as symbols of an oppressive past historicized in public space and blocking accessibility to a more progressive society. This is because history is now understood as cumulative narratives rather than as independent chapters. Problematic monuments do in fact exist in our public spaces and to ignore them would be irresponsible. Therefore, to move the monument debate forward in an

¹⁸ Clara Ramirez-Baarat, 496.

¹⁹ Clara Ramirez-Baarat, 495.

²⁰ Rebecca Greenfield, *Our First Public Parks: The Forgotten History of Cemeteries*.

intelligent and thoughtful way, it is important to understand why monuments were created in the first place and then how they affect citizen identity and public spaces.

The ICTJ believes that monuments have been used as nation building tools. Pierre Nora corroborates this with his interpretations of lieux de memoire. His ideas of memory and history are framed by the idea of the nation. Therefore, it is impossible to divorce the idea of nation from the objects or sites that create memory. These places are instrumental to the creation of what Benedict Anderson coins “imagined communities.”²¹ National identity is constructed through imagined communities. People of a country might never meet each other or interact but they are connected through the idea of the nation state.²² Lieux de memoire are places where communities are built on an abstract social construct rather than on any tangible human interactions. Monuments are a way to create physical representations of these nationalized imagined communities.

Since Nora writes through the lens of French national memory and identity, the sites of memory he calls upon are irrevocably tied to a history of revolution and war. In “Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory” the history and memory scholar Hue-Tam Ho Tais asserts that Nora leaves out, “the experience of empire in his consideration of how the French nation and national identity are constructed, or its role in French collective memory.”²³ Empire is an integral part of French history and identity. To ignore this excludes major swaths of the population who are citizens because of the colonial past. However, when applied to France’s colonial past there are examples of Nora’s theory of “lieux de memoire.” These colonial lieux de memoire are controversial because they often were constructed when colonialism was idolized.²⁴

Histories of war and revolution are often interpreted as universal national experiences. If not directly lived through, they have been incorporated into the lives of every citizen through

²¹ Clara Ramirez-Baarat, 502.

²² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

²³ Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory, 8.

²⁴ Pierre Nora, 20 .

public space or other public institutions like schools. National “imagined community” narratives represented in public space are powerful pedagogical tools for normalizing and formalizing the concepts of national identity. ICTJ asserts that “memorials esencialize a dominant or hegemonic view of the nation that can create loyalty, patriotism, and pride in the (ostensibly shared) past, and then capture these iconic or archetypal forms in figures of public art.”²⁵ Also that “They are capable of this because they reinforce imagined communities in our increasingly secular and decentralized society.”²⁶ Since governments profit from the imagined community of national identity, monuments are a subtle tool that reinforce government control and government narrative.

When thinking of how monuments function in the present, it is important to keep their histories and relationships to the state in mind. Outdated understandings of history made single narrative representations seem acceptable, but now those single narratives are contentious because of what they project into the present. They reinforce outdated ideas that set back the strides taken to equalize and desegregate the country. History is no longer seen as one narrative. It can have many perspectives. The current monument debates in South Africa and the United States are affected by this differently. National identity is experienced uniquely in both countries. Today, the United States still projects a narrative of a singular American experience onto public space. This is partially a byproduct of both the ideas of American exceptionalism together with the fault of a historical failure to recognize inequality in the American experience. Keeping to the narrative of singular national identity is partly the cause of the frustration surrounding systemic and structural inequality in public space. The United States has changed, but certain citizen’s perception of national identity have not. Therefore, our representation of national identity has not changed. Public spaces still reflect a history that excludes large populations of the American

²⁵ Clara Ramirez-Baarat, 502.

²⁶ Clara Ramirez-Baarat, 502.

people. The United States needs to diversify its public space to reflect the reality of American history and national identity.

In contrast, the current South African monument debate approaches national identity and public space from the completely opposite direction. This is due to the fact that as recently as the 1990's — with the end of Apartheid — South African identity radically changed. Where the United States is calling for a more diverse history and representation of national identity, South Africa has been diversifying for the last 20 years and is struggling with what is appropriate historical national identity to include in public space. Some argue that the country has diversified too much. For 20 years the imagined community of the Rainbow Nation presided over South Africa. The Rainbow Nation was a national identity promoted by the South African government post-apartheid that asserted that South Africa was a non-racial state. Instead of a racial identity the nation had a multicultural one. This “nation” understood, through the lens of human rights, that some histories were too abhorrent to stand ground in public space. However, in an attempt to respect every faction of South African identity they decided to abide certain representations of histories in public space despite how those representations might affect other citizens.

How national identity shapes monument landscapes is unique in the two countries. The United States monument debate argues that public space needs to be more diverse in order to reflect the reality of the country. To not do so, would exclude swaths of the population from public space. The South African monument debate argues that the diversity of the history represented in monuments, perpetuates bygone racist interpretations of the past and excludes parts of the population from public space. These conversations about monuments are the direct byproduct of how the two countries have separately tackled their national histories and how those actions have affected national identity and nationalism in public space.

Chapter Two: The United States

In the United States public space has always been contested space. Monuments are therefore controversial, especially Confederate monuments. Large portions of the population, specifically minorities, find Confederate monuments to be exclusionary and detrimental to their experience as citizens. Confederate monuments perpetuate a narrative of American history that simply was never historically correct. They exemplify and teach a national identity that conflicts with the national identity experienced by the majority of the country today. This is a byproduct of a contested Civil War history. The contested history was in part created because Confederate monuments are adept at preserving and giving longevity to the national identity of white man.

A majority of Confederate monuments were built approximately 20 or more years after the Civil War. In an analysis by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), after the Emanuel A.M.E. Charleston Church shooting, it was found that as of April 2016 there were 1,503 Confederate names, monuments and places across the United States. Out of the 1,503 Confederate homages, 718 were monuments.²⁷ The SPLC revealed that many monuments were built in the 1920's and the 1960's. This time frame coincides with progressive pushes for equality and civil rights, as well as regressive pushes against segregation. The first was in response to the political movement against Jim Crow. Jim Crow Laws were early 1900's state laws that became the foundation for segregation. The second was a direct counter to the Civil Rights movement. As pro-Confederate ideology groups saw the loss of both public and institutional support they reasserted their dominance in public spaces by creating more monuments and naming streets, schools and towns after the key figures of their movement. If white supremacists were to remain influential in the American social political climate their ideologies would have to be reflected in permanent, tangible ways that would be recognized as legitimate by non-radicals. Monuments were the most correct way to do this. In artistically

²⁷ "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy." Southern Poverty Law Center. Accessed December 15, 2017.

mirroring the war monuments and political figures of the mainstream, Confederate figures could be normalized. The aesthetic likenesses were familiar, so the political ideologies seemed less foreign. White supremacist nationalism seeped into the non-Confederate culture and spaces. As this happened, a split narrative of American history took root in the consciousness of the nation. On one side there was the narrative that the Civil War was fought for states' rights and on the other was the history that it was fought for slavery. Even though many of the Confederate monuments were physically in the South, the ideological beliefs they represented spread all over the country. American nationalism was conflated with Confederate nationalism a campaigns to normalize and to reconstruct the ideology of the defeated rebellion that was the Civil War.

Academics in the United States have focused on monuments for many years. At the heart of the United States the monument debate is the question of hate or heritage. Do monuments that depict Confederate generals represent and teach a history and national identity of the heritage of Southerners whose ancestors fought in the Civil War? Are they a glorification of white supremacy and a constant reminder of the systemic discrimination that still exists in our country? To answer these questions it is paramount to understand how the dual narrative of the American Confederacy was created and how only one of those narratives has historically been represented in the public spaces of the United States.

America has a crisis of memory. On one side, there is the historical fact that the Civil War was fought for the preservation of slavery.

“The people of the State of South Carolina, in Convention assembled, on the 26th day of April, A.D., 1852, declared that the frequent violations of the Constitution of the United States, by the Federal Government, and its encroachments upon the reserved rights of the States, fully justified this State in then withdrawing from the Federal Union; but in deference to the opinions and wishes of the other slaveholding States, she forbore at that time to exercise this right. Since that time, these encroachments have continued to increase, and further forbearance ceases to be a virtue.”²⁸

²⁸ Civil War Trust, The Declaration of Causes of Seceding States.

The people on the side of the Confederacy fought for the preservation of a lifestyle and institution that was dependent on the violation of basic human dignity and rights. To memorialize the war is to memorialize the tenants that it was fought in the name of; discrimination and slavery. This fact has been sanitized in the memory of the nation. Due to the uncomfortable nature of the Civil Wars' history there has been an on mass misremembering campaign. As a citizen in the 21st century, it is easier to believe that one's ancestors fought in the name of states' rights and economic freedoms rather than ownership of people. This narrative is reinforced through the normalization of events around the Civil War.²⁹

It is important to remember that despite the South's concession of the Civil War, the ideological beliefs that fueled the war did not simply disappear. Southerners still believed that their cause was just. This resulted in the creation of commemorative touchstones throughout public space. From street signs to schools, the South engraved the physical landscapes of cities and towns with homages to the Civil War. This was a reminder to the population that even though the war was over, the fight was not forgotten. Reconstruction failed to even the playing field. Even though the North had won and slaves were freed, the South had the upper hand in controlling the laws and the physical landscape. This was because there was no radical change in power after the Civil War. The ideological sentiments of southerners did not radically change. White Southerners subjugated African Americans and dictated how the war was remembered. The ability to commemorate the Civil War allowed the South to plant seeds that would grow into the notion that it was something to be proud of.³⁰

As the Southern white population asserted their dominance over the physical landscape of their communities, their version of history was cemented and sanitized. This is problematic because as Sabine Marschall says, "Monuments represent, control and authorize preselected

²⁹ LastWeekTonight, "Confederacy: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO)."

³⁰ Reiko Hillyer, *Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South*.

memories; they aim to create a specific historical consciousness and identity.”³¹ If the controlled and preselected memory is one that valorizes Confederate generals who fought for the preservation of slavery, it excludes ownership of public space for half of the population. Monuments are a constant reminder that minorities “don’t belong.”

Monuments are especially effective at encompassing the split narrative of the Civil War due to the fact that, on one hand, they can represent the physical manifestation of racist ideology and on the other, they can represent history and heritage. Janet Donohoe remarks on the “betweenness” of monuments. She notes that “in experiencing a monument, we are reminded of our own transitoriness in the face of the permanence of the past through the monument and its preservation of that past into the future”.³² Depending on which narrative of the Civil War one believes in, one sees the monuments differently. For people who see Confederate monuments as symbols of hate, the statues become physical embodiments of the racism that permeates our society. The online publication *City Lab* calls them a form of “psychological violence.”³³ Monuments are an omnipresent reminder that racist ideologies still hold power over most public spaces in America.

Confederate monuments are justified by their supporters with the assertion that they embody a narrative of heritage. They bring forward into the present only the bravery of the men who fought in the Civil War; memorializing not valorizing, but *The New York Times* points out in its article, *The Meaning of Our Confederate ‘Monuments’*, that this is not necessarily the case, “the contested works, were originally built in a monumental spirit and are now defended as memorials.”³⁴ Most monuments to the Civil War emulate other valorizing monuments. Artistically they resemble homages to George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, people who

³¹ Sabine Marschall, *Symbols of Reconciliation or Instruments of Division? A Critical Look at New Monuments in South Africa*, 155.

³² Janet Donohoe, *The Betweenness of Monuments*.

³³ Reuben Rose-Redwood, *Confederate Memorials and the Unjust Geography of Memory*.

³⁴ Gary Shapiro, *The Meaning of Our Confederate ‘Monuments’*.

are remembered for their contributions to history.³⁵ Civil War monument apologists want it both ways. They want monuments to culturally tell a story of commemoration, while visually telling a story of valor.

Another interesting issue with the heritage narrative is that Confederate soldier Robert E Lee himself was against memorializing the Civil War. After the Northern triumph in 1869, he is quoted as saying, “I think it wiser 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.”³⁶ Though monuments in the United States are for the living more than for the dead, some argue that Lee’s words should be honored. The country should focus on reconciliation rather than continue to perpetuate the conflict through memorializing it.³⁷

Despite these points against the heritage debate, many individuals in the country, including President Trump, believe that the removal of monuments erases history.³⁸ The country must ask itself, what to do when one group of people sees monuments as historical preservation and the other sees them as oppressive and racist? How does the country reconcile these opposing narratives? Currently, the debate is playing out in real time. All across the United States communities are addressing their pasts by asking the question: should monuments stay or go?

These opposing narratives have to be reconciled because one is the reality of history and the other is a constructed story created to perpetuate racist ideologies that consolidate and preserve power for a small section of the United States. To ignore them would perpetuate inequality within the country. Therefore, the monument landscape of the United States must change. What should be done about monuments can be broken down into categories; keep, remove, recontextualize and relocate.

³⁵ Gary Shapiro,

³⁶ Lisa Desjardins, Robert E. Lee opposed Confederate monuments, 2.

³⁷ Lisa Desjardins, 1.

³⁸ Eve Peyser, A Timeline of Trump's Post-Charlottesville Fuckups.

The first solution would be that all Confederate monuments be removed. They represent a regressive history that has no place in public life. This has been exemplified in the decisions of protestors.³⁹ The second opinion is that monuments should be relocated. That they do not deserve to be in public space but they do represent the reality of America's past and should either be put in museums or Civil War heritage sites. This allows people to decide if they want to interact with them or not. Citizens who find Confederate monuments offensive are no longer subjected to their narratives on a day to day basis.⁴⁰ The third suggestion is that the monuments be left where they are but recontextualized. For those who see monuments as heritage, this placates their fears that history is being erased. Recontextualization reframes the monument in whatever socially acceptable light the public wants.⁴¹ The final opinion is that monuments should be left alone. Groups such as the Sons of Confederate Veterans believe that “The citizen-soldiers who fought for the Confederacy personified the best qualities of America. The preservation of liberty and freedom was the motivating factor in the South’s decision to fight the Second American Revolution.”⁴² As a result, those soldiers should be commemorated. Other groups, such as the KKK and Neo Nazi’s believe that the Confederate soldiers fought for a good cause: white supremacy.

Another argument, as exemplified by President Donald Trump in his post Charlottesville tweets, is that if Confederate monuments are removed when will it stop? If it is a Robert E. Lee statue removed today, will George Washington be removed tomorrow? In the eyes of those who believe this, the history of the United States is not unproblematic. History has complicated figures who can simultaneously have done great and terrible things. To remove monuments is a slippery slope that could lead to the erasure of our history. That would be a disservice to the

³⁹ Karen L. Cox, Why Confederate Monuments Must Fall.

⁴⁰ Emanuella Grinberg, Where Confederate monuments end up.

⁴¹ Michael Murphy, Architecture that's built to heal.

⁴² Sons of Confederate Veterans, <http://www.scv.org/new/what-is-the-scv/>.

country. However, this ignores the fact that confederate monuments depict people who are remembered in history only because of their terrible actions.⁴³

For those who believe Confederate monuments are a good thing monuments can be whatever people want them to be. They could be teaching tools that help educate the public. Monuments could be reminders of a fraught past, preserved visibly so it can never be repeated. One *Washington Post* contributor, Lawrence A Kuznar, a Professor of Anthropology at Indiana University, went so far as to say that removing Confederate monuments is akin to whitewashing history. In his op-ed he wrote, “When racists revere these monuments, those of us who oppose racism should double our efforts to use these moments as tools for education. Auschwitz and Dachau stand as mute testimonials to a past that Europeans would never want to forget or repeat. Why not our Confederate monuments?”⁴⁴ Monuments can be used for education; but this view is undercut by the fact that Germany has no statues of Hitler in front of their city halls or parks.

This myriad of opinions has divided the country along ideological lines. The politicization of monuments has stalled any discourse. The accessibility of public space should not be controversial. However, as a nation, we are faced with this question of: how do you depoliticize public space, an innately political realm, to create productive discourse? The nation has been reminded that our past has never been addressed in a comprehensive way. As a byproduct, racist institutions and structures have never been confronted.

Each of the four plans for monuments teach national identity differently. Each represents the reality of the American experience in a unique way. Some encompass the narratives of hate more than heritage, and vice versa. Some are more capable than others at adapting as a county’s perception of national identity changes over time. Since the definition of national identity is in continuous flux, monuments that are not static but are instead adaptable are adept at depicting the

⁴³ Eve Peyser, A Timeline of Trump's Post-Charlottesville Fuckups.

⁴⁴ Lawrence A. Kuznar, I detest our Confederate monuments. But they should remain.

reality of identity. How can one make public art ask questions rather than tell answers? Looking deeper into the four options of the monument debate lends some insight.

Keep and Removal

In the United States, accessibility to public space has been a paramount issue for many years. Racial segregation was inherently about who was allowed to be in what spaces and what they were allowed to do there. Monuments have been integral to the conversation of making public space more accessible. However, it was not until the summer of 2017 with the events that transpired in Charlottesville Virginia that monuments become true focal points in public space discourse. Charlottesville was a catalyst for conversation that has led to the removal of Confederate monuments all over the country.

When pro-Confederate activists lobby to keep monuments as they are, nothing is done to alleviate social tensions that existed in result of the monument being in public space. Monuments continue be controversial, and anti-Confederate activists will still work to remove them as long as they stand. Advocating for their continued tenure in public space is simply a bandaid fix to a greater problem: the systemic racism of American culture.

It can be argued that the history of keeping monuments in public space is in fact the United States' monument history. For years monuments were allowed to remain. Until a high profile monument case shook the status quo; arguments for keeping Confederate monuments in place suddenly did not hold the weight that they used to.

In early 2017, activists within the city of Charlottesville spoke their disdain for keeping in public parks the statues of slave-owning Confederate Generals, Lee and Jackson. Activist argued that memorializing Confederate generals normalized white supremacy.⁴⁵ The city council put the removal of the status to a vote and after several meetings they decided that the monuments would either be removed or recontextualized. To recontextualize them, additional information would be added to better place the monument in history. The city council's choice sparked pro-Confederate monument groups such as The Monument Fund, FRIENDS OF

⁴⁵ Fortin, Jacey. "The Statue at the Center of Charlottesville's Storm."

C'VILLE MONUMENTS and Sons of Confederate Veterans to file a counter lawsuit against the decision.⁴⁶ The countersuit was on the grounds that removal of the monuments violated [Va. Code §15.2-1812](#). This code states, “If such are erected, it shall be unlawful for the authorities of the locality, or any other person or persons, to disturb or interfere with any monuments or memorials so erected, or to prevent its citizens from taking proper measures and exercising proper means for the protection, preservation and care of same.”⁴⁷ As the lawsuits played out, the struggle between pro-monument activists and the city picked up traction online.



Robert Edward Lee Sculpture⁴⁸

In May, Alt-Right white supremacist Richard Spencer organized a protest against removing the statue. In June, at Emancipation park, once called Robert E. Lee park where the Statue of Lee was housed, the KKK, held a rally. By August, the fight in Charlottesville had

⁴⁶ Fortin, Jacey. "The Statue at the Center of Charlottesville's Storm."

⁴⁷ Title 15.2. Counties, Cities and Towns." § 15.2-1812. Memorials for war veterans.

⁴⁸ Cville dog, Robert Edward Lee Sculpture, 10 January 2006, 14:03:04, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lee_Park,_Charlottesville,_VA.jpg.

become the focal point of the national monument debate. On the weekend of the 12th, due to organization efforts on the far right by Jason Kessler, Richard Spencer and groups such as the Daily Stormer, the National Policy Institute, Proud Boys and the KKK a “Unite the Right” rally was set to take place. On the evening of August 11, tiki torch wielding protesters marched through the University of Virginia chanting “white lives matter”, “you will not replace us” and “blood and soil”. This brought the “Unite the Right” rally into the spotlight of the nation and the world. The debate surrounding the monuments in Charlottesville was suddenly no longer singularly about monuments in public space. Instead, it had been thrust into the role of a larger cultural reckoning for the country. It forced Americans to collectively recognize that the racism of the past and culture wars were not as closed as we once might have thought. Over the course of the weekend, tensions between pro and anti-monument protesters erupted.⁴⁹

On the afternoon of August 12, an Ohio man rammed his car into a crowd of anti-white nationalist demonstrators. At least 19 people were injured and one woman, Heather Heyer, was killed. The social political atmosphere around the United States monument debate was heightened by a polarized political climate and a controversial presidential administration that exacerbated the ideological divide.⁵⁰ President Trump’s comments via twitter united not just anti-white supremacist activists but also anti-Trump political organizers. The President tweeted “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! Also the beauty that is being taken out of our cities, towns and parks will be greatly missed and never able to be comparably replaced!”⁵¹ The resulting debate expanded from one that existed in the private social sphere to one in the political sphere.

⁴⁹ Joe Heim, How a rally of white nationalists and supremacists at the University of Virginia turned into a “tragic, tragic weekend.”

⁵⁰ Astor, Maggie, Christina Caron, and Daniel Victor. "A Guide to the Charlottesville Aftermath."

⁵¹ Eve Peyser, A Timeline of Trump's Post-Charlottesville Fuckups.

In October 2017, the President's Chief of Staff, John Kelly, doubled down on the administration's views of history and the Civil War. The *New York Times* quoted Kelly as saying that Robert E. Lee was, “an honorable man who gave up his country to fight for his state,” and that the Civil War was fought by “men and women of good faith on both sides made their stand where their conscience had them make their stand.” He further stated that “the lack of an ability to compromise led to the Civil War.” This cemented America’s monument debate down ideological lines.⁵²

Monuments, because of their cultural significance, physically historicize and value certain historical narratives.⁵³ The choice to let monuments remain brings those histories into the limelight. Even though Charlottesville was still fresh, the conversation surrounding Confederate monuments was still developing. The nation at every level, from the President to school teachers, grappled with public space issues. What did monuments stand for: hate or heritage? Should they remain in place or be removed? Who dictates the dominant cultural narrative? What do Confederate monuments in post-Charlottesville United States look like?

The escalation of the monument debate in the United States makes it impossible for Confederate monuments to stay in public spaces and not be heightened political places. The polarization of the United States means that monuments have become vessels for other political issues. For activist groups like Black Lives Matter, monuments are physical manifestations of the devaluation of minority groups. Yet fringe white supremacists see the removal of monuments as proof of discrimination against white people. In a conflict that on the surface is cleanly divided, it is easy for a spectrum of political and ideological opinions to fall into one camp or the other: remove or keep. However, in reality there are more options than just the two. On the cultural level this nuance has been lost in favor of exacerbating an already contentious political climate.

⁵² Maggie Astor, *John Kelly Pins Civil War on a ‘Lack of Ability to Compromise’*.

⁵³ Sabine Marschall, *Symbols of Reconciliation or Instruments of Division*.

Leaving monuments up simply perpetuates the conflicts they create. It pushes the inevitable off to a later date. Removing monuments does the exact opposite. It opens up space to memorialize new histories in public spaces. This has been exemplified by the monument referendum in New Orleans. The mayor of New Orleans, Mitch Landrieu, gave a speech on May 23, 2017 regarding the removal of four Confederate monuments from the city. He started by explaining the “Cult of the Lost Cause” that was the Confederacy. He stated that “This 'cult' had one goal — through monuments and through other means — to rewrite history to hide the truth, which is that the Confederacy was on the wrong side of humanity.”⁵⁴ He criticized Confederate monuments:

“These monuments purposefully celebrate a fictional, sanitized Confederacy; ignoring the death, ignoring the enslavement, and the terror that it actually stood for. After the Civil War, these statues were a part of that terrorism as much as a burning cross on someone's lawn; they were erected purposefully to send a strong message to all who walked in their shadows about who was still in charge in this city.”⁵⁵

He went on to remind the citizens about New Orleans’ most recent history, declaring that there were other, better stories to be told, stories that all citizens could relate to and take part in.

Stories about Katrina and the BP oil spill were just as much a part of New Orleans history and deserved to be recognized. Mayor Landrieu finished the speech by asserting that,

“We have not erased history; we are becoming part of the city's history by righting the wrong image these monuments represent and crafting a better, more complete future for all our children and for future generations. And unlike when these Confederate monuments were first erected as symbols of white supremacy, we now have a chance to create not only new symbols, but to do it together, as one people.”⁵⁶

Whereas leaving monuments up perpetuates conflict, removing them allows new conversations to be started about who the citizens of New Orleans are, and by proxy, who Americans are.

When the conversations about what should replace Confederate monuments begins, everyone

⁵⁴ Nola Mayor. "Mayor Mitch Landrieu's Address on Removal of Four Confederate Statues."

⁵⁵ Nola Mayor. "Mayor Mitch Landrieu's Address on Removal of Four Confederate Statues."

⁵⁶ Nola Mayor. "Mayor Mitch Landrieu's Address on Removal of Four Confederate Statues."

can have a seat at the table. What our monuments teach can be decided in a democratic manner as it should have been from the beginning.



Removal of New Orleans Confederate Monument ⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Matt Stone/The Courier-Journal, Image One, Nov. 19, 2016, Courier Journal, <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2016/11/19/confederate-monument-dismantled-saturday/94067894/>

Recontextualization

One way to change the narrative of Confederate monuments is through recontextualization. Recontextualization can take many forms. Put simply, it can be the creation of new art which contrasts with existing art, or it can be the manipulation of existing art. In mainstream media, it is often depicted as creating a plaque or inscription that directly places the monument in a historical context decided upon by those who control public spaces. The problem with this course of action is that for the casual viewer of a Confederate monument, the message has not changed. The story the monument relays visually has not been challenged. A plaque would do nothing to counter the reality that the physical form of Confederate monuments were originally designed to valorize the Confederate soldiers. The visual message is privileged over the linguistic one, because a casual viewer of the monument would only interact with the visual. An American citizen would still read the cultural context clues exhibited by the design of the monument as honor rather than shame. If a plaque is constructed that tells a more inclusive version of history, viewers would have to go out of their way to learn the intended meaning of the monument because what the monument teaches visually would be in conflict with what it taught through the written word.

There are other types of recontextualization, one is using new art to change the narrative of existing art. One of the most famous cases of using public art to recontextualize pre-existing art is the Fearless Girl statue facing off against the charging bull on Wall Street. Though gender and race relations are two very different issues, this case exemplifies how new art can shift the narrative of old art. With the placement of the Fearless Girl the entire nature of the bull statue is changed. Where once the bull represented a healthy economy, the Fearless Girl shifts the bull's meaning to the gender disparity on Wall Street. This was the intent of the artist, Kristen Visbal.⁵⁸ Although not uncontroversial, the recontextualization of the Charging Bull statue did start a

⁵⁸ Bourree Lam, "Why People Are So Upset About Wall Street's 'Fearless Girl'.

conversation.⁵⁹ The Fearless Girl was a timely example of how public art contrasting with other art can change narratives. Could the juxtaposition of new art with Confederate monuments bypass the problems that emerge with constructing a plaque or sign? The recontextualization of public spaces has to not just challenge the cultural story around a monument but also the visual story they tell.



The “Fearless Girl” statue in the Financial District.

The visual artist, Titus Kaphar, changes narratives in his work with sculptures and paintings. In his *Ted Talk*, “How Can We Address Centuries of Racism In Art?”, Kaphar explains how refocusing the visual emphasis of art and sculptures changes the way that viewers interact with them. He discusses being inspired for his work by the statue in front of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.⁶⁰ In the monument, Roosevelt sits on a horse, on one side stands a Native American, on the other an African American. Kaphar’s children remarked on why only one man got to ride. Reflecting on it he felt that it unfair that a

⁵⁹ Bourree Lam, "Why People Are So Upset About Wall Street's 'Fearless Girl'.

⁶⁰ NPR/Ted, Titus Kaphar: How Can We Address Centuries of Racism In Art?

monument that depicts inequality is housed in front of one of New York City's most prestigious museums. The sculpture exemplifies how, historically, art in America's public spaces has not been inclusive to all groups in America. This inspired Kaphar to find a way to change public spaces. However, for him it was important to accomplish this in the tradition of American exceptionalism. Kaphar believes that aspects of the United States history have value and should be in public spaces. ⁶¹One of the aspects is the Constitution. It is an imperfect document that has been amended over time. The amendments do not erase the history of imperfection; they show progress. Kaphar wants to do this with his art. Through artistic amendments and purposeful manipulation he refocuses the narratives of art or monuments to be more inclusive. This takes the form of painting over white figures to highlight black subjects or creating new sculptures in the negative space of old icons.



American Museum of Natural History Monument ⁶²



Work by Titus Kaphar ⁶³

⁶¹ Ted/NPR.

⁶² Joel Gordon, Theodore Roosevelt- GOR-90714-12. 2012 Joel Gordon Photography, <https://joelgordon.photoshelter.com/image/I0000NXGed.XMpE0>

⁶³ Titus Kaphar. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/11/10/562836477/titus-kaphar-how-can-we-address-centuries-of-racism-in-art>



Titus Kaphar Ted Talk ⁶⁴

In these manipulations new art is created and new narratives are highlighted. In the post Charlottesville United States, Kaphar had been frustrated with the binary narrative of keeping and removing statues. He states “My proposal, the new line of thinking I am trying to insert into the narrative and dialogue, is that rather than just taking these things down, we can engage contemporary artists to make work that actually pushes back against these public monuments.”⁶⁵ This does not just engage both sides of the debate but it also creates opportunities for artists to showcase their work in places they might have previously been excluded from.

This view of public space not only engages with past and present interpretations of history but also engages with past art with present art. This engagement of art could be a catalyst for discourse surrounding who had a voice in the past and who has a voice in the present. The stark comparison highlights how far the nation has come and what work still has to be done.

⁶⁴ Titus Kaphar. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, 2017,

⁶⁵ NPR/TED, Titus Kaphar: How Can We Address Centuries of Racism In Art?.

Through art, the problematic aspects of Confederate statues can be taught next to progressive histories. The arguments of why monuments are single narrative bodies of work can be highlighted by contrasting them with second and possibly multiple other narratives. This is not the only way to recontextualize monuments visually. However, it might be the most palatable to the general public.

In “Re-appropriating Public Memory: Racism, Resistance and Erasure of the Confederate Defenders of Charleston Monument”, Kristen R. Moore and James Chase Sanchez argue that the defacement and destruction of monuments are powerful tools in changing the narratives of public space. If one believes that Confederate monuments teach an unrealistic past, then defacement of monuments is an act of agency. Destruction suddenly becomes a tool to reclaim public space. This is especially the case when those trying to do the reclaiming have been excluded from the formal channels of action.



Confederate Defenders of Charleston statue at The Battery vandalized with #BlackLivesMatter⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Philip Weiss, Unknown, 21 Jun 2015, Hyperallergic, <https://twitter.com/PhilipTSW/status/612641079440068608>



Monument Covered in Tarp⁶⁷

The example given by Sanchez and Moore is the defacement of Confederate monuments in the Charleston area. In these cases the monuments were altered with spray paint graffiti reading “Black Lives Matter” and “This is the problem #Racist.” Sanchez and Moore argue that the spray paint creates a “new cultural memory” surrounding the monument.⁶⁸ The authors come to this conclusion by using James E. Young’s idea that monuments create understanding of history.⁶⁹ They take it a step further by asserting that the act of defacement, and then the State’s act of removing the defacement by covering the monuments with a black trash bag, altered the entire cultural memory of the monument. Where once it was simply a Confederate monument, now it represents “the black struggle for humanization and the need for contesting injustice.”⁷⁰ Sanchez and Moore argue that altering the statue with graffiti makes the two narratives of America’s history come into conflict with one another. When the State covers the vandalism it is

⁶⁷ BRIAN SNYDER/REUTERS, Unknown, 2015, Newsweek, <http://www.newsweek.com/black-lives-matter-painted-confederate-monument-south-carolina-345851>.

⁶⁸ Kristen R. Moore and James Chase Sanchez in their article Reappropriating Public Memory: Racism, Resistance and Erasure of the Confederate Defenders of Charleston Monument, 3.

⁶⁹ Kristen R. Moore and James Chase Sanchez, 3.

⁷⁰ Kristen R. Moore and James Chase Sanchez, 6.

repressing just the Black Lives Matter narrative and not the Confederate one. In doing this, the State is valuing the Confederate narrative more, and the choice of white supremacy is what remains in public space. The State puts its white supremacist tendencies on display. “Acts of vandalism and activism alter the perception of history, contesting our past and present and illustrate that systemic racism pervades American culture.”⁷¹ Recontextualization in the form of defacement forces the narrative of monuments away from the political divide of pro and anti-monument and onto the states lackluster response to integrating once segregated spaces.

The defacement of public property is illegal and this can be seen as undercutting Sanchez and Moore’s argument. The State is expected to remove and control illegal activity, and therefore it would cover up any defacement to public property. However, Sanchez and Moore believe that having white supremacist icons in public space, that were erected for the purposes of preserving a segregated system, creates an urgency for change in those spaces. If Confederate monuments teach a white nationalist identity, then defacement teaches its rejection. This is a textbook case of “contesting injustice.” Even though “vandalism” of Confederate monuments breaks the law, it also highlights the injustice of the American system. In doing so, it shows other pathways to a less discriminatory society.

Recontextualization of Confederate monuments can take many different forms. Each form changes the narrative of public space with varying degrees of success. The question remains: does manipulating a Confederate monument do enough to disrupt the narratives prescribed to them at its conception? Theoretically this is done by bringing the past into direct conflict with the present, and putting two narratives next to each other allows viewer interpretation. By doing this, static narratives are incorporated to create a fluid story of how history changes over time. However, this would be a story of the past and the present. Scholars

⁷¹ Kristen R. Moore and James Chase Sanchez, 6.

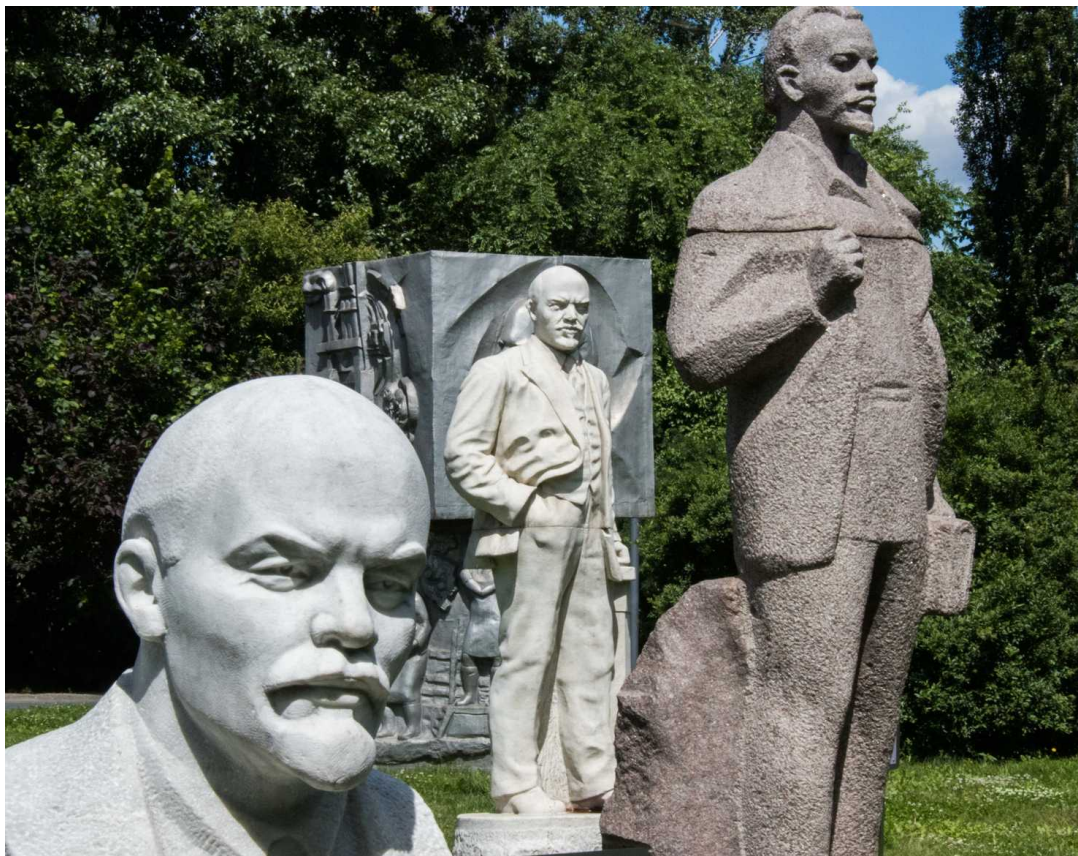
like James E. Young believe that monuments should take the future into account as well. They should be adaptable in the present and not just retroactively.

Relocation

For pro-Confederate monument activists removing Confederate monuments erases history and art. The counter argument is that Confederate monuments are symbols of terrorism that reinforce the systemic problems left in our country after the eradication of the institution of slavery. Which is more important remembering the past or making the present an accepting place? These two arguments fall into a binary way of thinking. Removal of Confederate monuments from their original locations does not necessarily mean their eradication from all public places. There is a third option. Following the lead of post-Soviet countries, Confederate monuments could be relocated. Relocation of monuments to designated museums or historic spaces solves the problem of erasure of history and psychological trauma. The statues themselves are preserved and citizens can choose when and if they want to interact with them.

In Russia, the answer to the Soviet monument problem was to create monument parks. Monument parks are designated spaces where the iconography of the Soviet Union is preserved while the nation as a whole moves forward. The most famous monument park is Muzeon Park of Arts, formerly the Fallen Monument Park. Housed in Moscow, it is a place where citizens come to remember the past. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, one park goer explained its importance by stating, "If you try to forget your history, you will forget who you are and where you came from. And if you forget who you are and where you came from, it will be easy for them to just forget you!"⁷² This exemplifies the belief that our histories are integral to our identities, and that to forget one would be an erasure of the other. Memory and identity are formed in a communal way. If physical representations of both are destroyed, then the longevity of both are weakened.

⁷² Russia Had Its Own Version of the Confederate Monument Problem. The Solution: A Sculpture Park in Moscow.



Fallen Monument Park, Moscow⁷³

The relocation of monuments changes how they are perceived by viewers. “This new context (monument gardens) works because it blunts the statues’ force. They are far removed from sites of political power—demonstrating the lack of esteem with which their ideas are now held.”⁷⁴ The removal of the statues from their original political contexts not only dilutes the political prowess of the figures depicted but also diminishes the power of these objects to trigger psychological trauma. Thinking beyond binary: remain or remove monuments, we can see that relocation is a plausible option to consider.

Monument parks are not limited to Russia. Other post-Soviet countries have adopted the same practice. Is this the answer to the United States Confederate monument problem? One place where the answer may be yes is New York City. The blog “Hypoallergenic” reported that

⁷³ Radley Balko, Muzeon Park or Fallen Monument Park in Moscow, The Washington Post, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2017/06/26/we-should-treat-confederate-monuments-the-way-moscow-and-budapest-have-treated-communist-statutes/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.8329fddc7375

⁷⁴ T.A., How Lithuania Dealt with Its Soviet Statues.

over 120 prominent artists and scholars have called on the city of New York to take down racist monuments.⁷⁵ Although the monuments in question are not Confederate, they do represent unsavory aspects of American history. However, the scholars do not just call for the removal of monuments, they implore that,

“In calling upon the Commission to recommend the removal of the aforementioned monuments, we also endorse any forward-looking post-removal initiative to advance understanding of these histories and make creative use of the vacated city property. These statues could be placed in dedicated museum spaces or memorial gardens, as has happened in Germany, India, South Africa and across Eastern Europe.”⁷⁶

Should these monuments should be kept in the New York City area or should they be put in places that don't subject the general population to encountering them all the time? Many locations have been floated as appropriate final resting places for controversial monuments. Museums typically are the first places that come to mind because they house homages to all kinds of histories. Sculpture gardens are a more complicated option. First, who decides what public spaces can be allocated to contentious histories? Is it appropriate for town parks or national parks to become monument gardens?

When it comes to the placement of Confederate monuments spaces that are impossible to divorce from the Confederacy have been floated. What places are inherently tied to the Confederacy? Civil War battlefields derive their value from the preservation of both pro- and anti-Confederate histories. Visitors come to these sites to remember what transpired in the past. Relocating Confederate monuments to Civil War battlefields allows visitors to simultaneously remember the history of the emancipation of African Americans in the United States but also the retroactive sanitation of history that transpired and how it lead to the allowance of Confederate monuments in public spaces. Gettysburg park already houses some monuments. To add more monuments would preserve the status while also respecting the fact that not all portions of the

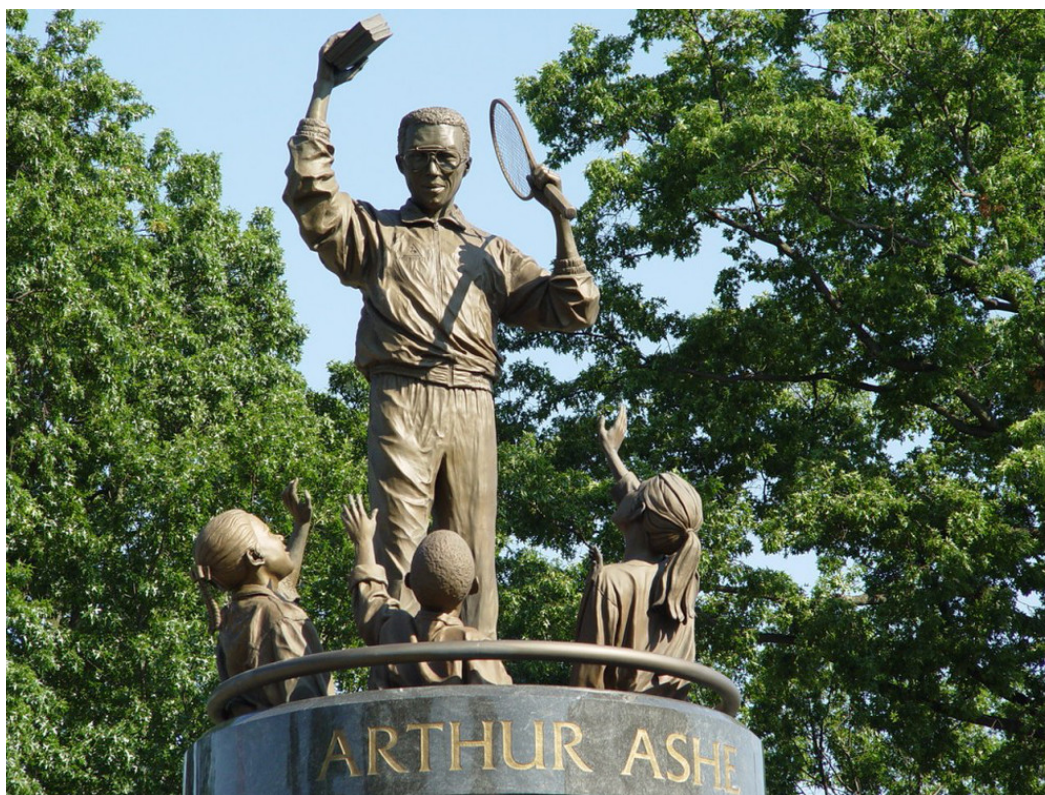
⁷⁵ Benjamin Sutton, Over 120 Prominent Artists and Scholars Call on NYC to Take Down Racist Monuments.

⁷⁶ Letter From Scholars to the Mayor's Commission on Monuments, Letter From Scholars to the Mayor's Commission on Monuments.

public want to interact with them. Confederate Battlefields are places of history. The general public would have the agency to choose when to interact with the sculptures or not.

New Monuments

In the Confederate monument debate, many voices call for the creation of new monuments that represent minorities' histories to be placed next to pre-existing Confederate ones. Theoretically, this is a compromise that illustrates equal representation and is therefore not problematic. However, the creation of new monuments may not address the pre-existing problems presented by Confederate monuments. Therefore, it should be done with caution. A notable example of how this plan of action has failed was the placement of a statue of Arthur Ashe, the famous African American tennis player, on Monument Avenue in Richmond Virginia. The Avenue is a tribute to Confederate generals and soldiers. Ashe was added to the avenue in 1995 as an attempt to tone down the homages to Confederate leaders.



Arthur Ashe Monument on Monument Avenue⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Museum District Association, Unknown, 2017, Museum District Association, <http://www.museumdistrict.org/>

At the opening ceremony the mayor Leonidas B. Young II said “A city has been healed. I hear voices crying from graves, and I feel the spirit of people who have never properly been recognized.”⁷⁸ Controversial at the time, these words have only grown more so in the years that have followed. Today’s activists see the addition of Ashe’s statue as a bandaid on the undeniable fact that Monument Avenue glorifies figures from the Civil War and therefore glorifies the war itself. Despite these reservations, there are responsible ways to create new monuments. The difference between recontextualization and the creation of new monuments should be noted. Recontextualization is the purposeful manipulation of monument narrative through art or new monuments. There is a purposeful interaction. New monuments are not supposed to be in conversation with other monuments in the area. Therefore, when new monuments are erected it should be done in their own right rather than tacked onto pre-existing projects. Having minority identities represented as a second thought in public space does little for the advancement of accessibility and inclusivity of history.

With the passing of time, Confederate monuments have become tone-deaf cultural touchstones. This is only magnified by the fact that there are no other memorials to that time in history. There are no monuments to those who suffered during the Civil War and its aftermath. The American monument landscape depicts the subjugator but not the subjugated. One way to solve this problem is to build more historically accurate monuments. The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) plans to build more diverse monuments. In Montgomery Alabama, EJI’s new monument The National Memorial for Peace and Justice’s goal is to honor victims of lynching and racial terrorism in the United States. EJI quotes academic Sherrilyn A. Ifill in order to illustrate the importance of diversity in the monument landscape, “Public spaces have yet to become part of the formal reparation or racial reconciliation process for Black Americans.”⁷⁹ Their hope is that the memorial will highlight a more honest and inclusive version of history. This would be

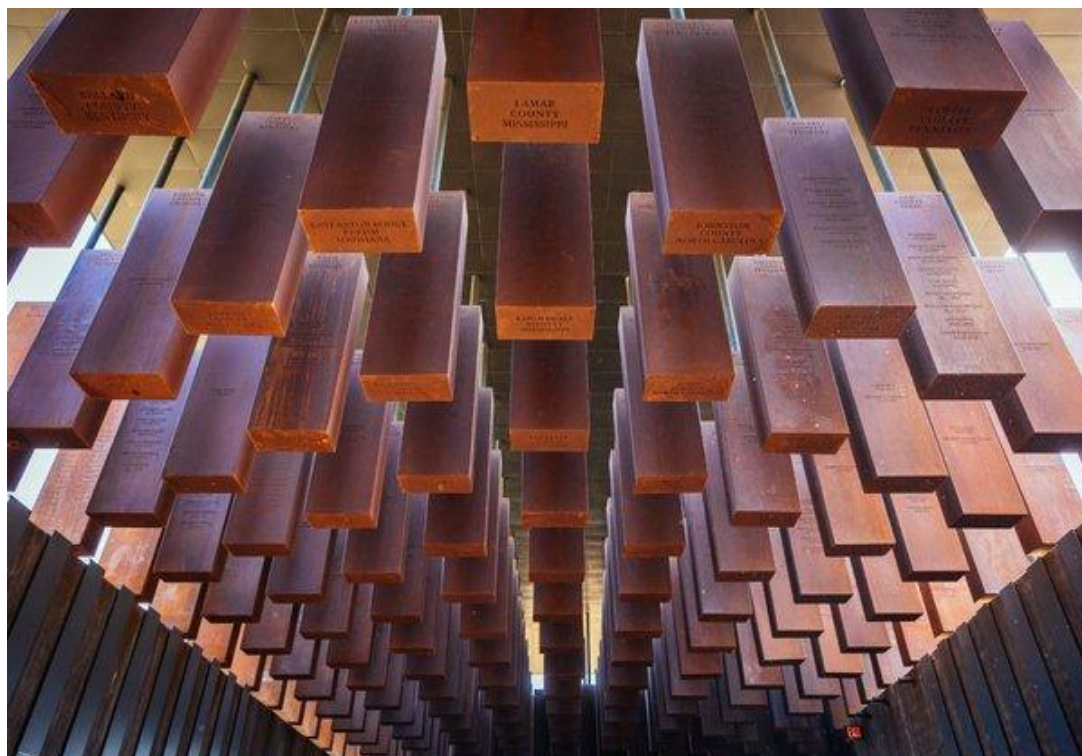
⁷⁸ The New York Times, Richmond Approves Monument to Ashe.

⁷⁹ Equal Justice Initiative, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

accomplished by historicizing the reality of many generations' cultural memory in the form of symbolic art in public space.



Rendering of The National Memorial for Peace and Justice ⁸⁰



The National Memorial for Peace and Justices ⁸¹

⁸⁰ EJI, Rendering, 2018, The Atlantic, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/11/a-national-monument-to-americas-known-victims-of-lynching/540663/>.

⁸¹ Audra Melton, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, 2018, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/25/us/lynching-memorial-alabama.html>

Its design would incorporate the nation's relationship to history as it changes making it a non-static memorial. The design is inspired by and is evocative of the peace and reconciliation monuments that were created post atrocities in South Africa, Germany and Rwanda.⁸² The hope is that the monument would be a catalyst for viewers to go through their own personal reckoning with the past. After interacting with it, one should question dominant historical narratives and be inspired to think about alternative narratives. The design of the monument allows this to happen.

EJI describes it as:

“The memorial will consist of 800 columns - one for each county where EJI documented racial terror lynchings. When visitors enter the memorial, the ground drops and perception shifts as visitors realize that the columns that appeared to be holding up the structure are actually monuments suspended from above, which evoke the lynchings that took place in the public square. Over 4000 names of lynching victims will be inscribed on these monuments. Just outside the main memorial structure will be a field of identical columns, one for each county where a lynching has been documented. EJI will be inviting each of these counties to retrieve their county's monument and place it back in the county where the terror lynchings took place.”⁸³

This monument is a quintessential example of James E. Young's counter monuments. The public space the monument effects is not limited to the site that it exists on. The effects go beyond the territorial boundaries that it is limited to. By having the individual counties take their own section of the monuments, the processes of reflection is spread throughout the United States. Each county then is obligated to make a concerted effort to reconcile their personal pasts. Also, if they choose not to participate then there is a physical manifestation in the form of their remaining monument section of their willingness to turn a blind eye to the reality of their histories. Historically, human rights have been enforced in processes of naming and shaming. Guilt and shame have been weapons to spur action. In many ways what the National Memorial for Peace and Justice acts in similar ways. Counties who do not remove their pillars and do not recognize the history of lynchings will be shamed by those who do. Their failure to think

⁸² Equal Justice Initiative, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

⁸³ Equal Justice Initiative

critically about the past will be memorialized in public space which serves as reminders of the reality of today's fraught identity relations.

In the case of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, national identity is represented in a bitterly truthful way. It depicts the beginnings of critical thinking about public space in the United States. Some argue that it only represents the history of a small subset of the population, but perhaps this is a false conclusion. This history did not happen in a vacuum. The crimes and racial terrors of the United States are perpetrated by its citizens. The history belongs to both the perpetrator and the victim. The monument teaches about the historical reality of the past while also depicting present efforts to acknowledge this tragic history. It is purposeful with its message and more powerful than something added as an afterthought. More diverse monuments tacked on as bandaids over unsavory monuments in public space perpetuates the reality that as a nation, few steps have been taken to dismantle the systemic discrimination problem. New monuments begin to take steps towards the truth.

National Identity

Today, the national identity in the United States should not be dictated by the Monument landscape. As a result, monuments that directly isolate sections of the population have become contentious symbols in public space. Activists and civilians alike argue that the histories that Confederate monuments bring into the future are no longer compatible with the reality of the American experience. The question is now: how does society manipulate the monument landscape to reflect a more diverse America? Communities are grappling with this question in their own unique way. Removal, relocation, recontextualization and replacement are the common answers. Each changes how monuments teach national identity and nationalism. Keeping the monuments perpetuates the ideological divide. Removing the monuments creates a clean slate for everyone to have a voice in public spaces. Relocation preserves history while also alleviating non-consensual psychological trauma inflicted by the sculptures. Recontextualization brings a past narrative of history directly in contrast with a the current interpretation. It highlights how far the United States has come and how far it has to go.

At the center of the debate is the question of how much of an allowance Americans in the 21st century can make for racist iconography? Even with the steps taken to be more palatable, Confederate monuments were built with the purpose of perpetuating white supremacy. The fact that white supremacy is still rampant in the country means that symbols of it cannot be confined to history. Their presence in public spaces have ramifications in today's society. While there are still citizens marching in the streets calling for white power, keeping their icons in public spaces would seem to legitimize their claims. Until this racism is a symptom of the past, it would be irresponsible to allow Confederate monuments to remain. The United States needs to consider what future citizens will think of the present when it becomes history. Will the 21st century be a time of deconstructing racism in the country or a time of perpetuating it? What steps can be taken to begin the process of deconstruction? Would looking beyond the United States yield possible solutions to our monument problem?

Chapter Three: South Africa

Since the United States' monument debate is still in its fledgling stages, it brings into question if there is somewhere else in the world where there is a similar but more mature monument discourse? Historically, there have been many cases of iconoclasm. Iconoclasm is “the action of attacking or assertively rejecting cherished beliefs and institutions or established values and practices.”⁸⁴ It involves the defacement of art, statues or other icons. Historically, the destruction has been more often than not politically motivated. Famous examples in recent history have been the removal of Nazi memorabilia after World War II,⁸⁵ the Taliban's destruction of the Buddhas in Bamiyan, Afghanistan⁸⁶ and the toppling of a statue of Saddam Hussein, staged by the United States military, in Baghdad after the Battle of Baghdad.⁸⁷ These examples of iconoclasm were either direct counter attacks against ruling elites or byproducts of transitioning governments. None of these cases exemplify the political problem that plagues the United States; a stable government with a public space landscape that does not mirror the population's perception of national identity. South Africa is one of the few nations whose in-country debate surrounding past conflicts that are represented in monuments mirrors the United States' monument debate. Therefore, it can be used as an example of how the United States should move forward when addressing its monuments.

To understand South Africa's monument debate, it is vital to understand its political landscape. In the 1990's, after years of apartheid — a system of strategic political, legal, economic oppression and violence — South Africa had a reckoning. The country went through a process of transitional justice.⁸⁸ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) confronted the country's racist past. Archbishop Desmond Tutu chaired the Commission. The process was split

⁸⁴ Iconoclasm | Definition of Iconoclasm in English by Oxford Dictionaries.

⁸⁵ Thomas Stubblefield, Do Disappearing Monuments Simply Disappear? The Counter-Monument in Revision.

⁸⁶ Barry Finbar Flood, Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum.

⁸⁷ Max Fisher, The Truth About Iconic 2003 Saddam Statue-Toppling.

⁸⁸ ITCJ: South Africa and Transitional Justice - Regions and Countries.

into three parts: The Human Rights Violations Committee, The Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, and the Amnesty Committee. The notion behind the Commission was that truth telling was healing and therefore knowing the history of what transpired was more important than prosecutions. To do this, the Human Rights and Amnesty Committees focused on collecting stories from the apartheid era.⁸⁹

In the Truth Commission, victims came forward and presented their stories for the record. Additionally, perpetrators were allowed to confess their crimes in exchange for amnesty. This process is called Restorative Justice. This was deemed more responsible because it negates the problem of victor's justice. Victors justice is when a subjugated party comes in control of the judiciary and unfairly prosecuted their subjugator.⁹⁰ Unlike prosecution, forgiveness can be far more conducive to unity in a conflicted country. When South Africa created the Commission, it hoped to avoid internal conflict and move forward toward a cohesive future with attention to human rights. In the end, the TRC created a report chronicling the abuses of apartheid and suggesting actions for the future.⁹¹ With regards to monuments, the TRC final report recommended that the country “facilitate the building of monuments, memorials and the development of museums to commemorate events of the past.”⁹²

In 1999, the National Heritage Resource Act was passed. It protected all monuments that already stood except for those that depicted apartheid leaders. However, colonial figures could remain so that the white minority would be represented in public spaces. This was negotiated as part of the transition government.⁹³ The debate around monuments seemed to fall down racial lines. The Black majority wanted all of the monuments removed, while the white minority wanted them to stay. The Heritage Resource Act did allow for the removal of monuments on a

⁸⁹ ITCJ: South Africa and Transitional Justice - Regions and Countries.

⁹⁰ Gary J. Bass, Why Not Victor's Justice?

⁹¹ ITCJ: South Africa and Transitional Justice - Regions and Countries.

⁹² South Africa. 1999. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa report*.

⁹³ Sabine Marschall, What South Africa's Monument Debate Taught Us About Our History, And Ourselves.

case by case basis.⁹⁴ The removed apartheid-era monuments were given to private organizations or museums.⁹⁵ *The Washington Post* reporter, Carolyn E. Holmes, broke down the process of determining which monuments were allowed to stay and which ones had to go in her article, “Should Confederate Monuments Come Down? Here’s What South Africa Did After Apartheid”:

“Two factors appear to have been critical: 1) how close a relationship the figure in the monument had to the apartheid and colonial governments; 2) who supported the statues. Depictions of apartheid-era leaders, especially those associated with the most repressive periods of apartheid, were quickly removed — but statues of leaders before apartheid were often left standing. The idea was that the latter did not represent the political and moral hazards of apartheid, but a more distant and more complicated period of South African history.”⁹⁶

In South Africa it is impossible to divorce the history of apartheid from public spaces. This is because public spaces don’t just represent histories but also current social political agendas.

According to Kim Gurney, a research associate at the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Center at University of Johannesburg, apartheid was innately about the control of public spaces.⁹⁷ She says “the grand plan of apartheid was about power but the subtext was about space and spatial segregation.”⁹⁸ Who controlled spaces, more specifically, who was allowed in spaces was the physical representation of a discriminatory system. In the post-apartheid period, the physical control of human bodies was alleviated. Citizens could go where they pleased. However, that landscape of segregation was never deconstructed.

When this public space shortcoming is brought into the spotlight of discourse, monuments are always on the front line. This is because unlike neighborhoods, monuments are fairly easy to remove. The international history of iconoclasm has cemented the idea that the removal of monuments is a symbol of closure. When a monument comes down change is

⁹⁴ South Africa: National Heritage Resources Act 1999.

⁹⁵ Carolyn E. Holmes, *Should Confederate Monuments Come Down? Here’s What South Africa Did After Apartheid*.

⁹⁶ Carolyn E. Holmes.

⁹⁷ Kim Gurney, *Performing The Present: The Second Life Of Zombie Monuments*, 3.

⁹⁸ Kim Gurney, 3.

happening, a chapter is closed. Public space is controlled by a different party. Monuments have the immediate power of representing a specific image while simultaneously representing a larger history with culturally-coded power.

The Heritage Resource Act not only sanctioned the removal of some monuments; it also put into motion the creation of new post-apartheid monuments that taught certain cultural narratives. Sabine Marschall categorizes these new monuments as “commemorative art promoted as “heritage” and invested with a specific symbolic meaning linked to officially endorsed public memory discourses and sociopolitical goals such as reconciliation and nation building.”⁹⁹ The goals of reconciliation and nation building were promoted post-apartheid under the umbrella term of the Rainbow Nation. The thought behind the Rainbow Nation was that everyone was represented. The national identity would be “non-racial or multicultural.”¹⁰⁰ The government hoped that the multiculturalism of South Africa could be used to create Benedict Anderson’s “Imagined Communities.”¹⁰¹ Part of the reason for this was because the new government was afraid that if they were too harsh on the white majority “white flight” would happen. “The new government had to be cognizant of the need to prevent foreign investors, both current and future, from fearing a government bent on retribution. In addition, the government was cautious about “white flight” the fear that many white South Africans, in whose hands enormous economic power lay, would flee the country.”¹⁰² If this was to happen there could be widespread economic depression or collapse. However, the imagined community of the Rainbow Nation did nothing to deconstruct the already existing landscape that represented the predecessor societal systems that lead to apartheid. Apartheid did not happen in a vacuum. Colonialism preceded apartheid, to

⁹⁹ Sabine Marschall, *Articulating Cultural Pluralism through Public Art as Heritage in South Africa*, 78.

¹⁰⁰ Sabine Marschall, 78.

¹⁰¹ Sabine Marschall, 92.

¹⁰² Patricia J. Campbell, *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): Human Rights and State Transitions--The South Africa Model*.

revert to colonial landscapes would do nothing to prevent colonialism giving form to a new apartheid like system.

The Rainbow Nation was the first manifestation of South African national identity post-apartheid. In the past 20 years there was a shift from a national identity of multiculturalism to one of African Nationalism. However, no such shift happened in public space. The monuments of South Africa currently pedal a narrative of multiculturalism. This partially led to the failure of the Rainbow Nation because of the problematic nature of labeling a large diverse group of people as a single community.¹⁰³ In the 2011 South African National Census, out of the 41,000,938 people surveyed 79.6% of the population was black, 9.0% were colored, 2.5% were Indian/Asian and 8.9% were white.¹⁰⁴ These are diverse groups of people. Each of these populations have a different relationship to government, authority and to each other. After experiencing the monocultural representation and accessibility of the colonial and apartheid periods, racial groups that were disenfranchised during those periods felt the need to reject a national identity that did nothing to address the larger socio-economic issues that led to their oppression. The Rainbow Nation was just another government sanctioned national identity that skated over the larger societal problems.

¹⁰³ Sabine Marschall, *Articulating Cultural Pluralism through Public Art as Heritage in South Africa*, 90.

¹⁰⁴ Statistics South Africa.

Keep and Removal

Since 1934, a statue of Cecil Rhodes stood on the grounds of University of Cape Town. Rhodes was a leader of British colonialism in South Africa. Since the 1950's, students of the university have called for the statue's removal. In the spring of 2015, student activists once again rallied to get the statue removed as part of a larger campaign to decolonize the South African education system. The students believed that Rhodes represented a racist ideology and perpetuated the inequality on the university campus.¹⁰⁵



Cecil Rhodes Statue¹⁰⁶

Through social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, the protests picked up traction with #RHODES MUST FALL.¹⁰⁷ Demonstrators occupied the grounds surrounding the statue, offices and other university spaces. They burned art and graffitied the buildings and halls named after colonial figures. The protest came to a crescendo when a student dowsed the Rhodes statue

¹⁰⁵ Alex Waygood, Aidan Chivers, Rhodes Must Fall: a Timeline.

¹⁰⁶ News24, Unknown, 2015, Ocean 2vibe News, <http://www.2oceansvibe.com/2015/03/20/rhodes-must-fall-has-hit-international-headlines/>

¹⁰⁷ #RhodesMustFall: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/RhodesMustFall?src=hash>.

in human feces. Over the next year, multiple protests and dialogues took place. The story was picked up politically and reached international audiences. It sparked protests to decolonize education at Oxford and U.C. Berkeley as well as other universities around the world.¹⁰⁸ In April 2015, the Cape Town University board voted to remove the Rhodes statue for the statues protection and to placate the protestors.¹⁰⁹

Though the statue was removed the movement did not end. It was a wakeup call to the White South Africans that the idea of the Rainbow Nation was not as effective as they might have thought. The institutional racism of the past had not been fully dismantled. Rhodes Must Fall and the movement of the same name highlight the fact that “institutional racism is a resurrection of the colonial order, which is by no means managed exclusively by racist individuals, but also by people who believe that the skewed system was normal.”¹¹⁰ Activists assert that part of dismantling this institutional racism involves the removal of colonial memorabilia from public spaces. Historically, there has been backlash to this viewpoint. In South Africa, like in the United States, the arguments of heritage and history were predominant. However, protesters and counter monument activists were proactive at calling out colonialist figures true roles in history. The language of human rights was utilized to undercut heritage and history arguments. On the South African news program SABC News the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) national Spokesperson and parliament member Mbuyiseni NDlozi underscores this viewpoint.

“Statues represent the celebration of the commemoration and the meaning of specific systems and governments. They represent the pride of the identity that particular governments or the people to whom those public spaces have been cleared and therefore Paul Kruger, Cecil Rhodes, Jan van Riebeeck are by both by our law, United Nations Law, people who have presided over crimes against humanity. To that extent they are guilty under our law and under international law. They shouldn’t have to be in public spaces.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Amit Chaudhuri, The real meaning of Rhodes Must Fall.

¹⁰⁹ Alex Waygood, Aidan Chivers, Rhodes Must Fall: a Timeline.

¹¹⁰ Amit Chaudhuri, The real meaning of Rhodes Must Fall.

¹¹¹ Citizen Newspaper. "SABC news anchor loses cool on EFF's Ndlozi.

The use of international law discourse changed the framing of the argument. Instead of being based in national politics the discourse was forcibly brought to the standard of international human rights. One could postulate that because of the formalized transition that occurred in South Africa there was a normalization of such vocabularies and ideals.

South African politicians take a number of views on the monument subject. Some believe that colonialist monuments should be removed and donated, like the apartheid monuments. Others believe that the monuments should stay. Mbuyiseni NDlozi, the EFF spokesperson mentioned earlier, called for the removal of all colonial monuments on the parliament floor.¹¹² Overall, the public space debate is happening in South Africa. Most citizens and politicians recognize that something has to be done. This is a byproduct of a formalized transition and reckoning of the past.

¹¹² EFF's Ndlozi – Demand All Apartheid Statues Must Fall

Recontextualization

The idea of the Rainbow Nation in South Africa was pushed by the government as an attempt to reunite the country and pacify the white minority. This cautiousness on the part of the government was problematic when it came to public space. Only the white minority was represented. Some steps had been taken to remove the most odious monuments, but many still remained. As a result, South African communities took steps to make public spaces more accessible. One of the ways they did this was through recontextualization of monuments. South Africa was faced with the question of if monuments could be rehabilitated. Could their original stories be changed through amendments?

The most famous case of attempted recontextualization is the Voortrekker Monument. It was built in 1938 with funds primarily from the South African government. Designed by Gerard Moerdijk, it depicts the history of the Boer or Afrikaans people, the descendants of Dutch settlers. The monument itself depicts the struggle of the Afrikaans, specifically during the Great Trek. The Great Trek was the migration of Boer people away from the British Colonial rule. Most importantly, according to Annie E. Coombes in *Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, this monument depicts the myth of the creation of the white South African tribe. The Voortrekker Monument shows the legitimation of white South Africa and, therefore, the roots of apartheid. During the apartheid era, the monument was a physical reminder of white dominance. Post-apartheid it has politically and culturally become a rallying point for the white minority.



Voortrekker Monument¹¹³



¹¹³ Robert Beziaud, Voortrekker Monument, 2017, <http://www.vtm.org.za/>.

In the early 1990's, with the impending election of the African National Congress (ANC), the Voortrekker Monument became a rallying cry for far right Afrikaan supporters. The monument was a perfect vessel for the reactionary narrative that the ANC's politics would erase Afrikaan history and heritage. Creating the narrative that this monument was threatened by the ANC was powerful because Voortrekker symbolized and taught the legitimization and creation myth of the Afrikaans. In the early 1990's, one far right group was quoted as saying:

“The destruction of a nation's cultural history is symptomatic of the current revolution. Revolutions force culture back to the year dot. The ANC wants history to be rewritten. They want Verwoerdburg to be Mandelaville and they want the Voortrekker Monument to become an ANC armed struggle museum in keeping with developments in the rest of Africa where Communists took over. Already twenty years ago the National Party started to rewrite our history to murder it, right in keeping with ANC ideas.”¹¹⁵

This was the Right using monuments to represent the ideological views of their party. Voortrekker became a platform for national identity. A pamphlet image originally created for the purpose of raising awareness of monuments was used to show the Right saving the Voortrekker. This is an example of the in-betweenness of monuments their ability to be read by viewers in different ways. This ambiguity makes them even better candidates for contested spaces.¹¹⁶

The Voortrekker monument was also used as a primary staging ground for early recontextualization efforts in the post-apartheid era. Originally, it was proposed that the monument would be physically altered to represent the new South Africa. However, this plan quickly fell through on several fronts. The new united government thought the alteration of a prized Afrikaan monument would be too divisive in an already charged political climate. The priority of the government was to create unity within politics, the social sphere and public space. Also, a new monument was to be created in conversation with Voortrekker where a huge golden

¹¹⁴ Rob Atherton, Voortrekker Monument Heritage Site, Pretoria, <https://www.wheretostay.co.za/topic/652-voortrekker-monument-heritage-site>

¹¹⁵ Annie Coombes, *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, 33.

¹¹⁶ Annie Coombes, 21.

arm would break through prison bars. This would represent Mandela breaking out of prison and therefore South Africa breaking out of apartheid. This was symbolically supposed to represent Mandela raising his arms and freeing the African majority from the Afrikaan minority. However, the backers of the project were controversial figures within the country. They had acquired their wealth by promoting skin whitening products. Due to this unsavory connection to white supremacy, any monument amendment funded by them would seem symbolic of how the changes to South Africa were only on a surface level and not to deeper systemic issues.



Maquette for projected statue of President Mandela's fist¹¹⁷

Since the government did not want to physically change the Voortrekker monument it remained in limbo for some time. Eventually, a new option of recontextualization emerged. The artist Tokyo Sexwale suggested that Voortrekker should be “translated”. Translating a monument means that the way the monument is read changes. In this particular case, since the monument stylistically was inspired by Egyptian architecture, Sexwale suggested that it be re-appropriated back to Africa. It could simultaneously be read as African and Afrikaan. It would fit the new government agenda of unity with in the Rainbow Nation. Of course, this was controversial. For many, the translation of the monument did nothing for the overall problem of only white heritage

¹¹⁷ Coombes, Annie E. *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*. Durham N.D.: Duke Univ. Press, 2005. Rapport, 31 August 1996, Photograph, page 24.

in public space. Leaving Voortrekker ignored the systemic inequality that remained. One might be able to read the monument as African, but it doesn't negate the fact that there are no spaces for African artists work to be displayed in the public sphere. "Translating" the monument solves only one of the plethora of problems of public space.

The South African government was not the only faction of the country that embraced the recontextualization of monuments. Activists have used recontextualization as a tool to highlight not just their problems with the monuments but also their wider social issues. In the article, "Zombie Monument: Public Art and Performing the Present," Kim Gurney uses Homi Bhabha's idea of Third Space to highlight the recontextualization of apartheid and colonial era monuments. The monuments that Gurney refers to are those that have been defaced or removed. Third Space is a post colonial theory that refers to the manipulation or amendment of spaces into hybrid [third] spaces. Gurey quotes the scholar Margaret Crawford "Third Space is neither the material space we experience nor a representation of it but "a space of representation... bearing the possibility of new meanings, a space activated through social action and social imagination [where] unexpected intersections pose liberatory potential." ¹¹⁸ A new narrative is created by the manipulation of space. How that narrative is extrapolated out to the broader culture makes it a Third Space. An example of Third Space is an empty monument podium. It no longer has the cultural narrative of the monument but one of its own that reflects the wider social political reasons why the monument was removed. Though Kim Gurney agrees with idea of Third Space, she highlights the creation of Third Space is more in the performance of defacement than in the final product of where the defacement leads. In the case of Rhodes Must Fall, the defacement of the monument happened in a way that exemplified the larger inequality of the University and the overall social system in South Africa. The activist Chumani Maxwele's choice to throw feces at the Rhodes statue was in response to a sewage crisis that the government had not dealt with in a

¹¹⁸ Kim Gurney, 4.

neighborhood close to the university. It drew a connection between the problems at the university and the problems plaguing society at large. Later, once the monument was removed the empty pillar became a site of art installations. An empty chair on the pillar represented the removal of a dominant colonial history and a question of what would take its place. Through the manipulation the space, where the monument once stood was no longer static. It was a hybrid representation of the history of the Rhodes statue but also one of decolonization. Gurney quotes an artist's statement at the Iziko South African National Gallery from a photo exhibit on Rhodes Must Fall "This moment captures a process of identity construction, self-assertion and reclamation of space within an African locale that continues to be in flux is was never about a statue."¹¹⁹ This form of recontextualization allows for James Young's idea of counter monuments to be exemplified. The monument changes with the public but also starts conversation about the past. The history of contested space and why that space was contested in the first place is not forgotten.

¹¹⁹ Kim Gurney, 5.

Relocation

Similarly to the United States, South Africa has considered relocating monuments. However, the preservation of any apartheid or colonial era monument continues to raise the questions of public space accessibility and the legacies of colonialism. Like the United States, some colonial monuments have been relocated to museums or private collections. Many still remain in public spaces or have been moved to historic sites. On the surface this seems to be a favorable outcome. However, in reality it comes with its own set of problems. In South Africa, monuments cannot be divorced from tourism and the economic sector as a whole. Post-apartheid, the western world began to view South Africa as a favorable place for tourism. Partially because it was “undiscovered” and therefore exotic and partially because it was perceived as a unique example of democracy post transitional justice.

The new ANC government recognized that it was necessary to tie the new national image of the country to tourism because then it would have an economic benefits as well as a social ones. Monuments were a perfect way to do this because they are monetizable history. Sabine Marschall explains this agenda,

“The state promotes heritage as a vehicle for nation building and directs the establishment of symbolic makers in order to reshape the nation’s identity and control the presentation of a contested past, but monuments and heritage sites are also very consciously built as tourist attractions and perceived as mechanisms for community and economic development. Through monuments a new identity is portrayed to the outside world, and increasingly to the touring nation itself.”¹²⁰

In the case of post-apartheid South Africa, this new identity was the Rainbow Nation. Both the white minority’s and the black majority’s heritage were to be represented in public space equally. However, due to a segregated history of the country the white minority had more monuments established in public space from the start of the Rainbow Nation. This is because the white minority had previously held government and controlled public space.

¹²⁰ Sabine Marschall, 308.

This becomes problematic when the tourist monuments in question are tied to apartheid. First, the heritage that is preserved for international tourism purposes historically has been primarily colonial heritage. In part, this is because the white minority government preserved their personal histories. In the previous segregated white administration it was the only history that mattered. Secondly, the international tourists coming to South Africa are primarily from countries that historically were African colonizers. People are interested in seeing their own histories. They want to feel connected to the places they travel to. In many cases when visiting foreign countries colonial history becomes the fastest way to feel a connection to the host country.¹²¹

This colonial history has been economically valuable to South Africa and therefore prioritized. White international tourism has taken over the heritage debate and makes economic value the deciding factor for the worth of history. Sabine Marschall comments on the danger of this,

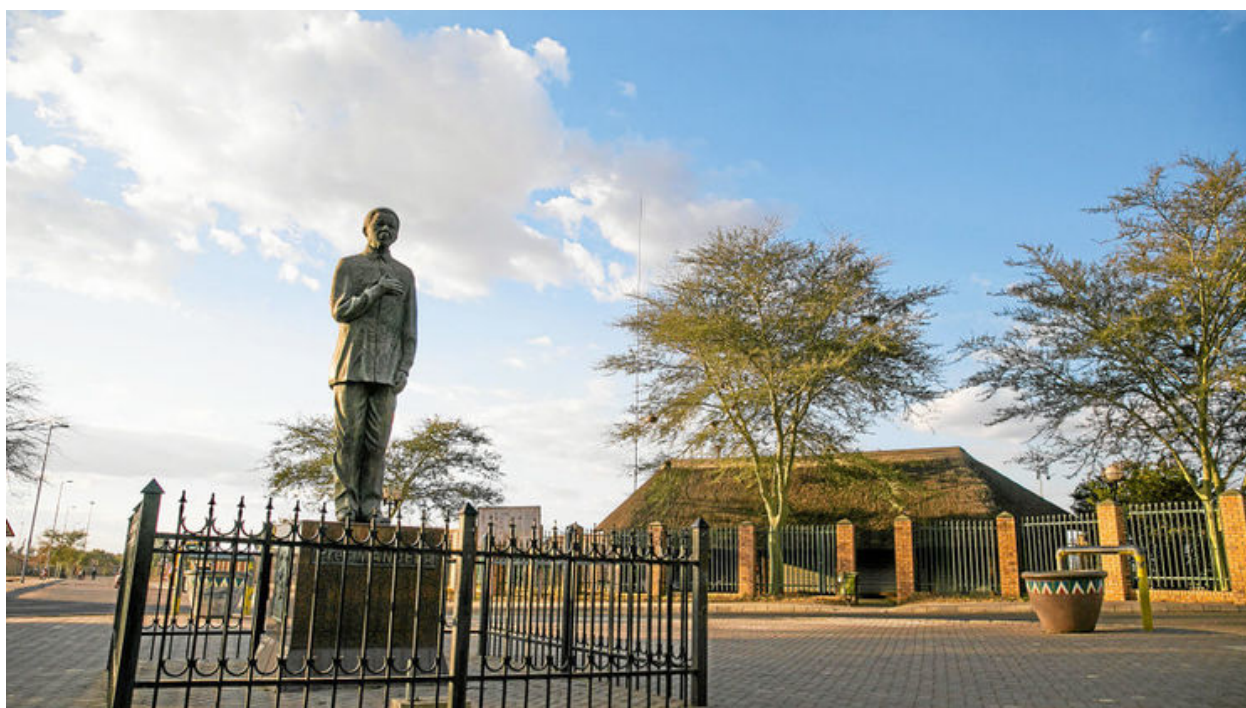
“Monuments have the ability to become tourist attractions, to serve as focal points of historical circumstances and personalities through transformation into recognizable icons, to assist in branding of destinations, to create memorable and reproducible visitor experiences along with sale of merchandise but also to create visual imaginaries of the past of the nation, that gain authority through tourist consumption.”¹²²

In giving these colonial and apartheid sites “cultural capital” from an international lens, the colonial historical narrative suddenly has dominance over the liberation and emancipation histories of the South African black majority. Relocation of apartheid era monuments also subverts tourism and therefore economic advantage from the majority black history and tourist destinations. This economic disadvantage of non-apartheid monuments reinforces the systemic economic disadvantages that still exist in South Africa. In the case of the Voortrekker Monument, Albert M. Grundligh a professor at Stellenbosch University in South Africa says “Its status as a tourist site not only sanitizes the monument but also places it outside the arena of

¹²¹ Annie Coombes, 308.

¹²² Sabine Marschall, 306.

contested history, in effect, space has been opened up for the monument's reinvention as heritage."¹²³ This heritage debate undermines the psychological trauma experienced by black South African viewers of the monument. Economic incentive trumps politically correct contested spaces. As Leo van Schalkwyk from the KMC said "if it pays it stays."¹²⁴ For an already controversial monument, the added legitimization of tourism is a slap in the face to those who believe that colonial and apartheid era monuments have no place in public space. It also further reinforces the racial divides that the South African government was trying to avoid in the first place.



The Madiba statue in Mandela Village, Hammanskraal¹²⁵

Logically, there are monuments in South Africa that were not built during apartheid. Some, like the statue of Nelson Mandela in Mandela square in Hammanskraal, have become tourist attractions in their own right.¹²⁶ These monuments have been criticized for being blatant rebranding for economic purposes. According to research done by Annie E. Coombes these

¹²³ Albert Grundlingh, A Cultural Conundrum? Old Monuments and New Regimes, 108.

¹²⁴ Annie Coombes, 108.

¹²⁵ Clarissa Sosin, The Madiba statue in Mandela Village, Hammanskraal, 2013, Bhekisisa, <http://bhekisisa.org/article/2013-07-19-00-madibaville-isnt-always-paradise>

¹²⁶ Annie Coombes, 22.

monuments were erected for tourism purposes only, not to commemorate Mandela.¹²⁷ However, the question remains: can new heritage monuments can have the same tourist draw that the old heritage monuments have? If the old monuments are removed, will the new ones be seen as holding as much historical clout and therefore be as economically successful? Sabine Marschall calls monuments the intersection between economics and social political agendas.¹²⁸ Is South Africa's politics willing to risk the tourism and the economic benefits that these controversial monuments bring to better represent the national identity of the country in public space?

¹²⁷ Annie Coombes, 98.

¹²⁸ Sabine Marschall, *Landscape of Memory: Commemorative Monuments, Memorials and Public Statuary in Post-Apartheid South-Africa*, 307.

New Monuments

As we have seen thus far navigating the creation of new monuments in South Africa is not an easy feat. Parties with interests in public space break down into two categories. First, there is the government. The government is invested in creating new monuments that further the narrative of the Rainbow Nation. This narrative is one of liberation, reconciliation and unity. However, this is not what historically all people of South Africa wanted in their public spaces. The second part is the citizens. Many wanted their towns, and families' personal stories represented. There had to be a balance between government interest and personal interest. At times these two parties were in direct conflict. Some commemorations, like the memorial for the Gugulethu Seven, were more divisive than helpful.



The Gugulethu Seven Memorial ¹²⁹

The Gugulethu Seven Memorial depicts the silhouettes of a group of young activists being shot and killed by the police. The initial inspiration for the monument was that the

¹²⁹ Nkansahrexford, The Gugulethu Seven Memorial, 4 September 2014, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gugulethu_Seven_Memorial_02.jpg

violence and lack of justice during apartheid. However, the families of the victims found it traumatizing to have their loved ones preserved mid-death in public space.¹³⁰ This attempt by the government to memorialize the past backfired because it was done without the input of the community. It was conceived through the lens of the government and not through the lens of the citizens. It was not part of the natural reconciliation and memorialization process. Instead, it was constructed by the government.

The easiest type of new monument to erect in public space is in relation to the democratization process. This is because all parties and sections of society can be proud of it. Clear examples of these types of monuments are those honoring Mandela. Nelson Mandela is a figure that has come to represent both processes of minority liberation and South African democratization. Nationally and internationally, he remains someone people can rally behind. Therefore, it was uncontroversial to create memorials to him. From the Mandela Capture Monument, displayed at the site of his 1962 arrest,¹³¹ to the Statue of Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg, erected after South Africa's 10th democratic election, both private and public groups have come together to commemorate their former leader.¹³² This kind of monument is less contentious than those depicting private citizens because Mandela is part of a wider international narrative rather than a local community based one. The greater population feels that they own Mandela's story whereas local stories have local ownership

¹³⁰ Sabine Marschall, 317.

¹³¹ HuH Magazine, Nelson Mandela Sculpture.

¹³² Tammy Patterson, The World's Greatest Nelson Mandela Monuments.



Nelson Mandela Capture Site¹³³



Nelson Mandela Monument at Nelson Mandela Square, Johannesburg, South Africa¹³⁴

¹³³ FREDRICK NGUGI, Nelson Mandela Capture Site. Battlefields Route, 2017, Face to Face Africa, <https://face2faceafrica.com/article/south-african-monuments>

¹³⁴ Anagoria, Nelson Mandela Monument at Nelson Mandela Square, Johannesburg, South Africa, 20 November 2014, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2014-11-20_Johannesburg_Nelson_Mandela_Square_03_anagoria.JPG.

Up until this point the monuments discussed have been statues and sculptures. However, it can be argued that the definition of monument is larger than this. South Africa, like many countries that have experienced a violent history, has sites of great emotional pain that cannot be ignored. In many cases rather than simply pushing these dark episodes of history under the rug, countries opt to turn these places of tragedy into commemorative and educational sites. Beyond our conventional understanding of the monument as a purposefully constructed object, there are retroactive monuments as well.



Entrance to Robben Island Prison¹³⁵

In South Africa there is Robben Island. Robben Island is the prison that held Nelson Mandela for 18 years. It gained international fame for its brutality and the unjustness. Currently, it is a World Heritage Site. In the mid-1990's when it was time to shut down the prison, the government decided that though atrocities did happen there “the history of Robben Island showed that human beings had the capacity to, individually and collectively, overcome huge obstacles.”¹³⁶ Therefore the State would preserve the island in commemorate the endurance of the human spirit rather than as a place where hardship took place. The focus would be on the perseverance of those like Mandela rather than the atrocities that transpired. However, like so

¹³⁵ Robben Island Museum, Entrance to Robben Island Prison, photograph, https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/_/uAHCTutRx2xg_g

¹³⁶ Annie Coombes, 58.

many other conversations in South Africa, this choice was controversial. There is a disconnect between how to memorialize the island. Some felt “that the more recent history of the liberation struggle should be a priority in the historical narratives represented on and by the island, while others felt that this more recent history was just one thread in a longer and more diverse historical account.”¹³⁷ Creating new monuments out of historical sites is not apolitical. These sites do not suddenly become monuments. How they are curated changes what type of memory site they end up being and what narratives they teach. Robben Island is primarily a destination for international tourists. Many of the tour guides are former prisoners and a percentage of the proceeds go to a fund for ex-political prisoners.¹³⁸ Despite this, the government has been focused more on the tourism incentive than the reconciliation side because the government thinks that “the island has international symbolic value for human rights similar to sites like Hiroshima and Auschwitz.”¹³⁹ This makes it more desirable to preserve. There has been a much larger focus on the commodification of human rights value to strengthen the overall human rights image of South Africa than on actual reconciliation of the events that transpired on Robben Island.

Calling sites like Robben Island monuments allows them to be more malleable in public space. The narratives that they project are easier to control. “Memorial museums assume the positive functions of memory, and in them, we see both the expressivist belief that remembering is the good and correct thing to do as well as the consequentialist obligation to remember in order to prevent future violence and reinforce a culture that respects human rights. In this sense, memory is linked to democracy.”¹⁴⁰ Making sites of trauma memorials post transitional justice is the easiest way to pacify the power of spaces while also furthering a unified post transitional government.

¹³⁷ Annie Coombes, 60.

¹³⁸ Annie Coombes, 64.

¹³⁹ Annie Coombes, 84.

¹⁴⁰ Amy Sodaro, *MEMORIAL MUSEUMS: The Emergence of a New Form*, 17.

National Identity

The human rights discourse in South Africa might have changed how monuments are talked about, but it has not solved the problem of what should be done with colonial and apartheid statues. Public space will always be contested space. South Africa took a step farther than the United States in their monument discourse. The country recognized that all monuments could not stay. However, in their attempts at removal, relocation, recontextualization and creation they found new problems. The South African government was invested in creating a specific national identity in public space. This purposeful manipulation of monuments to embody inclusivity was dramatically undercut by reality which is; the citizens of South Africa did not feel that they experienced an inclusive national identity experience. The Rainbow Nation identity was a performative identity.

The creation of monuments for the specific purpose of cultivating a national identity in South Africa was unsuccessful on more than one front. First, the steps taken by the government to make public space “rainbow,” exacerbated the reality that manufactured political narratives in public spaces are destined to fail. The manipulation and creation of new monuments does not compel citizens to believe in the identity projected by the government because it is not reflected in other sectors of the society. Second, monuments are an ineffective way to represent national identity because they are a static mediums while national identity is always in flux. Monuments are read in specific cultural ways. Their design, placement and form tell a story just as much as their plaques or prescribed meanings. Even when “translated” this cultural coding cannot be ignored. If a colonial figure is on a pedestal in a park that will be culturally read as honoring. National identity changes with time. It is a mixture of current and past politics interpreted through a lens of personal identity and bias. Monuments tell one story while national identity can be many stories.

In researching the monuments of South Africa, it became clear that more often than not they are an ineffective way to depict history in public space. Their inability to adapt as citizen’s

relationship to history and national identity changes dictates that they will always be contentious. When countries come to terms with the abuses in their pasts monuments are part of that process. Making public space safe and accessible is a priority. However, unless citizens fundamentally change how monuments are constructed, public space will always be controversial. Monuments must be created as Counter Monuments. They must adapt the narratives they teach as the country's relationship to history changes.

Conclusion

Confederate monuments were built to preserve a culture of white supremacy. The United States is taking steps to dismantle this monolithic monument landscape. While doing so, the South African experience should be kept in mind. South Africa struggled with what is appropriate diversity and what diversity is harmful for many years. What values monuments bring into the present and project into the future should always be evaluated on the bases of if those values are parts of the culture that should be preserved. South Africa created monuments to be diverse rather than to tell the story of the country. This exacerbated an already fraught monument debate.

It cannot be ignored that historically monuments have been one of the mediums that culturally the West has coded as representing the imagined community of the nation.¹⁴¹ Both South Africa and the United States will always have monuments in public space. Is there a way to responsibly represent history in public space? If a monument is what James Young calls a Counter Monument, and the narrative it teaches changes as the nation's relationship to history evolves, then that monument could be responsible. The narratives of monuments constructed in the future should not be static. The monuments of the past should be critically re-evaluated with regards to if they represent the stories of a diverse people. Do the monuments that exist make public space accessible? Do they represent the values of modern society? If not, do they deserve to be on display? Monuments should ask questions rather than give answers about the identity of a nation.

Up until this point, this paper has analyzed monuments as a byproduct of reckoning with the historical abuses of the pasts. However, this is not the only way of looking at them. Monuments can inform our understanding of transitional justice as well. In processes of transitional justice, a formal history of in-country abuse is compiled in a final report. This final

¹⁴¹ Clara Ramirez-Baarat, *Transitional Justice, Culture, And Society: Beyond Outreach*, 500.

report is the conclusive understanding of what transpired. It makes suggestions for the next steps the country should take. The final report is perceived as closing the door to the past and laying a map for the future. However this is an irresponsible way of thinking about the past and the future. The general perception of monuments is that they settle the debate of history. However, effective monuments start debates. Transitional Justice final reports should be similar. They should start vigorous debates about the national identities of countries rather than prescribing ones that are destined to fail. Much like monuments transitional justice reports cannot control the future, they can only start conversations.

Epilogue

Over the course of researching monuments, the debate in the United States has not died down. Monuments and public space have become places of discourse. The conversations have been equally nuanced and reactionary. Undeniably, Confederate monuments are being removed from public space. Their time on pedestals within our communities has come to an end. Currently, the histories they teach are too repugnant to remain where they stand. However, like South Africa, the United States is poised to have an increasingly difficult conversation. What should be done about grayer figures in history. Currently, in my hometown Arcata, California the city council has voted to remove a statue of President William McKinley.



Statue of President McKinley in Arcata, California¹⁴²

This is one if not the first removal of a monument of a United States president. The reasons given were because of his anti Native American history. For years, local Native American activists have sighted McKinley's "settler colonialism" and asked for the removal of

¹⁴² KIMBERLY WEAR, Now everybody seems to be talking about McKinley. APR 3, 2018. <https://www.northcoastjournal.com/NewsBlog/archives/2018/04/03/mckinley-statue-debate-making-the-media-rounds>

the statue.¹⁴³ I believe this is the appropriate step. McKinley had no personal history with the town. Arcata has a fraught racial history and the racial tensions of the present are often ignored by the towns white majority. The removal of the statue creates space for a larger dialogue. Moving forward, Arcata and the United States need to reconcile the reality that our public space and racial past has never been dealt with on a national scale. Dialogues surrounding monuments are a way to start this process.

¹⁴³ Jaweed Kaleem, First It Was Confederate Monuments. Now Statues Offensive to Native Americans Are Poised to Topple across the U.S.

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Chapter 8: Symbols of Reconciliation or Instruments of Division? A Critical Look at New Monuments in South Africa - Sabine Marschall

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