

Next Generation Commemoration

Philanthropy’s Past, Present and Future Roles

By Katharine Elder and Susan Eaton

On a muggy Friday morning in May, 2017, police cars formed a tight circle around a 16-foot bronze statue of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee perching imposingly on a 60-foot white column near downtown New Orleans.

News reporters stood across the street. Onlookers sang and swayed to the 70’s pop ditty, “Hey, Hey, Hey, Good Bye.” Then a crane lifted the statue, cradled in blue canvas, and brought it to the ground.¹ This would be the fourth and, at least in the near future, the last of the Confederate monuments removed in New Orleans following anguished public debate and death threats against activists, public officials and city workers who supported or carried out the removal of statues.² The three earlier removals had occurred under the dark of night in order to protect crane operators whose lives had been threatened. General Lee’s ouster – which took place in the light of day amid song, dance, and television cameras – at least seemed like a triumphant resolution. A year later in 2018, the city’s former mayor, Mitch Landrieu, who had advocated for and overseen the removals, released a book entitled, *In the Shadow of Statues: A White Southerner Confronts History*. The *New York Times* called it a “masterpiece.”³ Landrieu’s lyrical, **lauded 2017 speech** advocating for removal has been viewed on YouTube nearly 200,000 times.



This defaced statue of Robert E. Lee on Richmond, Virginia’s storied Monument Avenue, was removed in 2021. Credit: @mylove4art via Twenty20

Less triumphant and less well-publicized, though, is that as of 2021, the city of New Orleans was still home to at least eight Confederate or white supremacist monuments and symbols, as well as more than a dozen street

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names, schools, and even a hospital named for known slaveholders, white supremacists or Confederates.⁴

“Every day that these symbols remain is another day that violence is exacted upon people who live here,” said Flozell Daniels, President and CEO of the Foundation for Louisiana, which since its founding in 2005 has prioritized funding for racial justice. In 2017, the Foundation created a **pass-through fund** that distributed money for removal of Confederate statues in New Orleans.

“We have had mostly Black people on the front lines of this work for a very long time who’ve put themselves at great risk,” Daniels said. “I do not see philanthropy always being very willing to stand up and support them and fund the repair that’s needed before you can start calling yourself a welcoming community.”⁵

A similar narrative has unfolded in other communities as publicity around statue removal and commemoration fades but unfunded and underfunded activists and local government officials persist in this often long-term, energy-intensive and costly component of racial justice work. For its 2021 **“National Monument Audit,”** the Philadelphia-based **Monument Lab** spent a year examining nearly a

half a million records of government-maintained historic properties as well as tribal and institutional records and public sources. It found that the nation’s “monument landscape”⁶ is “overwhelmingly white and male,” and that “the most common features of American monuments reflect war and conquest” that “misrepresents” our history.⁷ “Where inequalities and injustices exist, monuments often perpetuate them,”⁸ the Monument Lab report states. In a **survey** updated in 2020, the Southern Poverty Law Center identified 1,747 Confederate monuments, place names and other symbols in public spaces. This figure includes 780 monuments – more than 300 of which are in Georgia, Virginia or North Carolina – as well as 103 public K-12 schools and three colleges named for Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis or other Confederate icons.⁹

To remove or not, to relocate and preserve or to destroy or to contextualize objectionable monuments and other types of commemorations, remains a matter of intense controversy mainly, but not only, in the American South.¹⁰ This cultural, deeply civic work enjoyed a brief time in the national media spotlight, with images of toppled and graffitied statues trending on Twitter and Instagram. The work has been largely overshadowed, though, by other racial justice concerns, such as policing, electoral politics, voting rights and the disproportionate **harms** that the Coronavirus pandemic has exacted upon communities of color. All the while, work related to commemoration continues in local communities where it is understood as only one part in a larger struggle to dismantle systemic racism.

Even after the question of what should *not* be commemorated seems resolved, communities and institutions confront obvious next questions: What, then, *should* be commemorated, exalted, venerated and celebrated? What stories should be told or have not been told enough? Who should decide? How should they decide? And not least of all, who should pay for it all?



Mural celebrating Black musicians. Denver, Colorado. Credit: @OPeels via Twenty20

Removal & Reimagining

Lessons From the Field

This brief offers historical context, lessons from the field and examples of current practice in order to encourage and inform grantmaker support for the growing, multidimensional civic work related to commemoration.

We conceive of commemoration broadly, including objects such as memorials, monuments and markers; museums; storytelling settings such as walking tours or historic home and site preservation; murals and temporary exhibits and performances; even recognized holidays that revisit rituals of commemoration.

Our observations and recommendations are informed by a) an informal scan of philanthropic engagement in commemoration, including interviews with funders and other actors who have supported commemoration and/or the removal, relocation or contextualization of memorials or monuments; b) exploration of activists' and elected leaders' roles in commemoration-related action in four communities¹¹ through media scans and interviews with civic leaders and activists; c) an extensive review of scholarly work from historians, art historians, sociologists, linguists, social psychologists and others working in the multidisciplinary field of memory studies.

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Credit: @JenSosa via Twenty20

Our observations and recommendations follow:

1. African Americans and other historically marginalized groups have a long history of publicly objecting to a well-funded deliberate movement to advance white supremacy, one component of which was the proliferation of Confederate monuments and other commemorations.

Historians have long documented early African American dissent over symbols that advanced white supremacy. The dissenters, which included well-known activists and intellectuals, ordinary citizens and African American journalists, saw the installments of such monuments as efforts to advance white supremacy. Their objections were generally ignored at the time.

The historian Ashleigh Lawrence-Sanders, is working on a book about African American historical memory of the Civil War and post-Civil War periods.¹² Her research illuminates African Americans' understanding of the dangers of the so-termed "Lost Cause" mythology, propagated by white southerners that the Civil War was a noble cause about states' rights and was not related to defending slavery. An assistant professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder, Sanders-Lawrence is a historian of African American history and Civil War memory.

In her research, Lawrence-Sanders, for example, tells of an eye-witness account of John Mitchell, editor of the black newspaper, *The Richmond (Virginia) Planet*. Mitchell watched as a statue of Robert E. Lee was erected in

the city in 1890. He wrote: “This glorification of States’ Rights Doctrine, the right of secession, and the honoring of men who represented that cause ... will ultimately result in handing down to generations unborn a legacy of treason and blood.”¹³ Lawrence-Sanders writes that “Mitchell knew what these monuments and the Lost Cause meant for African Americans, and he knew what this legacy looked like in his own time.”¹⁴ The Lost Cause, then, was about more than nostalgia. It was about power.

In 1870, Frederick Douglass wrote that “monuments to the ‘lost cause’ will prove monuments of folly. . .in the memories of a wicked rebellion which they must necessarily perpetuate. . .”¹⁵ And in 1931, W.E.B. Du Bois further criticized Confederate statues. “The plain truth of the matter,” Du Bois wrote, “would be an inscription something like this: ‘sacred to the memory of those who fought to Perpetuate Human Slavery.”¹⁶ In her 2021 book, *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice*, historian Karen L. Cox of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, recounts the decades-long protests from African American against Confederate monuments. Cox, for example, recounts the murder of 21-year-old black activist Sammy Younge, Jr. in Tuskegee, Alabama. Protests following his murder and the acquittal by an all-white jury of the accused murderer, centered, in part, on a Confederate monument in a park originally created “for white people.” Protestors splashed the monument with black paint and wrote “Black Power” on the statue.¹⁷ In the 1970s, not long after a new proliferation of Confederate monuments and symbols, African Americans everywhere from North Carolina, to Texas and Mississippi, protested Confederate monuments. Historians note that most of these protests received little official response from authorities at the time.¹⁸

No amount of philanthropy could fully redress the harm done by the lack of public and philanthropic response to African Americans’ longstanding and prophetic objections to Confederate veneration. But as we explore in later sections, grantmaker support for contemporary removals and reimaginations of commemorative landscapes has helped put several communities on a road to civic repair.

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2. A combination of private wealth with government support is responsible for the creation of our commemorative landscape, particularly in the case of Confederate monuments and memorials.

Amid this largely overshadowed, oft-suppressed dissent, monuments, memorials and rituals that venerated the Confederacy were well-funded mostly by individual donations to nonprofit member organizations of Confederate sympathizers – perhaps most notably, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC).

UDC members typically launched the memorialization process by meeting with local and state officials or with university and college officials. They often framed their offering of a monument or memorial as a form of philanthropy, with no cost to a community or institution.¹⁹ In some communities and states, however, taxpayers still contribute to upkeep through what were viewed as donations at the time.²⁰ Historians note that such installations did not typically include any kind of public deliberation or approval process.²¹

“Most Confederate monuments were, in short, the result of private groups colonizing public space,” writes the historian Fitzhugh Brundage, the William B. Umstead Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.²²



The “Keeper of the Plains” is a monument in Wichita, Kansas of a Native American Chief who blessed the area to prevent natural disasters. Credit: @ExposurePhoto.org via Twenty20.

Flush with funding and active volunteers of white women, the UDC went on to commission, install and maintain hundreds of white supremacist monuments in public spaces mainly during three key periods in history.²³ Some early memorials erected soon after the end of the war in 1865 did simply mourn the Confederate dead. But then, Confederate commemoration intensified during the 1880s and 1890s. This was the period in which Reconstruction laws were being violently crushed. The second period was the 1920s, during which Ku Klux Klan activity, Jim Crow segregation and legislation, in addition to racist violence, such as lynching, was on the rise. Lastly, a wave of Confederate symbology reemerged in the 1950s and 1960s as the Civil Rights Movement began winning legal and legislative victories.²⁴

Monuments and memorials to the Confederacy were “intended, in part, to obscure the terrorism required to overthrow Reconstruction, and to intimidate African Americans politically and isolate them from the mainstream of public life,” the American History Association concluded in its 2017 statement.²⁵

Several historians, including Cox and Brundage, have established that the Confederate monuments were one element of a larger mission of the UDC and similar groups to glorify the Confederacy and propagate the myths that the Civil War was not fought to preserve slavery and that slavery was benign. This is often referred to as a “Lost Cause” ideology. These monuments and their public dedications, Brundage writes, helped “promote a degree of white cultural unity that had never existed in the region either before or during the Civil War.”²⁶

Today, a combination of private donations and public taxpayer dollars maintain monuments, shrines and other commemoration sites, such as museums and tours that spread disinformation about the causes of the civil war and/or characterize slavery as a harmless institution. One investigation calculates that as of 2018, American taxpayers have spent at least \$40-million on the upkeep of various sites that honor Confederate-related figures or battles.²⁷

3. Removing, relocating, contextualizing, renaming and other activities associated with commemoration can be extremely costly. Controversy may prevent local and state leaders from using tax revenue for these purposes. This creates a clear, useful role for grantmakers who face comparably fewer roadblocks to securing funding.

As of 2020, the city of Richmond, Virginia had incurred more than \$1.8-million in costs to remove 11 Confederate statues.²⁸ In September, 2021, a new state and privately funded bronze statue of a man, woman and infant recently emancipated from enslavement, went up in Richmond, about two miles where a statue of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee had stood. The cost of the new statue was about \$1.1 million, with more than 70 percent of the funds coming from the state.²⁹ In New Orleans, the city bore the vast majority of the \$2.1-million in expenses related to statue removal.³⁰ In both cases, these high price tags were due in part to increased security to protect workers and others engaged in statue removal. In 2020, officials in Gaston County, North Carolina, estimated the cost of removing just one Confederate statue at up to \$200,000.³¹ Moving a statue of Jefferson Davis from Kentucky's state capitol, in Frankfort, cost \$225,000 and was covered by the state.

In Lexington, Kentucky, local contractors subsidized the cost of two Confederate statue relocations in 2018, with further support from the Blue Grass Community Foundation that raised \$75,000.³² As is true in other communities, the work of “reimagining” began soon after statues were removed in downtown Lexington when activists and civic leaders convened community meetings to create a more inclusive park and area known as “Cheapside,” which had been the center of slave trading in the state before the Civil War. The Knight Foundation and the local Bluegrass Community Foundation supported the “**Reimagining Cheapside**” effort, which resulted in numerous programs to bring community members together, to build relationships and to engage the diverse city reversing and healing from systemic racism.³³ In 2020, Cheapside Park was renamed to honor Henry A. Tandy, a former enslaved person who became a successful local mason and architect.³⁴



Interactive Public Art in San Diego, California. Credit: @TonyTheTigers-Son via Twenty20

In Decatur, Georgia, city and county officials in 2020 removed a Confederate monument that had stood in front of a courthouse.³⁵ But in June, 2021, the Sons of Confederate Veterans filed a lawsuit against the city and county, arguing that the action violated a 2019 state law that prohibits removal of particular statues and monuments.³⁶ As of 2021, legislators in five southern states have passed so-called “heritage protection acts” that strip local communities’ power to decide what kinds of commemorations fill their town and city centers.

Officials in Duval County, Florida estimated the cost of renaming six public schools – originally named for Confederates and/or slaveholders and/or white supremacists – to be about \$825,000.³⁷ In 2021, private donations flowed into the Jacksonville Education Fund, which acted as a conduit for the mostly online donations to a “School Renaming Fund.”³⁸ Deposits to the fund amounted to roughly \$101,000 just one month after the school board’s decision to rename the schools in June, 2021. Nike’s corporate foundation also agreed to absorb the cost of changing names on school uniforms.³⁹

4. In 2021, often at risk to personal safety, mostly unfunded or underfunded activists as well as elected leaders and city and state workers continue to play leading roles in removing, relocating or contextualizing contested monuments and memorials.

The work of activists and the support of elected officials have been central to successful efforts to remove, relocate or contextualize symbols of white supremacy. But as mayors and other elected officials know, their public stances on what should not be venerated invite not merely rancor, but often violence.

Indeed, our interviews and media scans suggest that activists and elected leaders, often at the municipal level, have taken substantial risks as they advocate for the removal, relocation or contextualization of objectionable symbols. In Georgia, for example, despite a 2019 state law that prohibits the removal, defacing or otherwise

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altering Confederate monuments, activists stayed the course, pressuring officials to either contextualize contested monuments or take them down in spite of state law.⁴⁰ Indeed, in 2020, statues came down in Decatur and Kennesaw, Georgia. In 2020, protesters continued to lead chants at the state Capitol in Atlanta to “take down Gordon” in reference to John Brown Gordon, a slaveholding plantation owner, a leader in the Ku Klux Klan and a general in the Confederate Army.⁴¹

Local activists in many states have effectively inspired action but have typically worked either as volunteers or without either dedicated funding or public support from local foundations. It’s important to note some exceptions. This includes, for example, the Foundation for Louisiana, Richmond’s Maggie Walker Land Trust, Macon Georgia’s Community Foundation and the Bluegrass Community Foundation in Lexington, Kentucky. The dual role of these foundations as conduits and fiscal sponsors both demonstrate public support and protect the identities, and thus the safety, of people, organizations and other donors that helped fund the effort. Typically, government funding mechanisms would not be able to achieve this type of arrangement nor act as expeditiously. In some cases, such as the Foundation for Louisiana, grants have also been made directly to activists and to artistic and/or civic organizations creating new forms of commemoration.

“This was a role that was explicitly specified by people on the ground, including potential donors, yes, but also activists and folks within city government,” says Daniels of the Foundation for Louisiana. “It is remarkably easy to accomplish, sends a clear message to the community and it is absolutely our responsibility to be publicly out front and supportive in the ways that communities of color tell us they need.”⁴²



Seasons. © 2020 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Shawn Theodore, 2113 North Corlies Street. Photo: Steve Weinik.

Given the substantial political risks of being out front on the matter of commemoration, it may be in the interests of elected representatives to end their leadership role once decisions about removal have been made. However, as activists understand, pain, division and controversy do not fade as the statues and flags come down. The process of removing or relocating or contextualizing statues is generally seen by the activists we interviewed as just one part of a larger, longer struggle for racial justice, repair and healing. This opens a very large space for philanthropy to act as a partner in work that, as Daniels puts it, “is central to a community members’ sense of belonging, safety and well being.”⁴³

5. Philanthropy at local and state levels is particularly well suited to play useful roles in the growth of a new generation of commemorative work. This work aligns with well established areas of giving and strategies. Major funders and community-informed national-level initiatives provide numerous examples of funding opportunities and strategies for smaller or place-based grantmakers.

This brief spotlights the engagement of several local and national funders in commemoration practice. Commemoration-related work aligns with many common grantmaker priority areas. This includes civic engagement, racial justice, arts, culture and the humanities, education and preservation. We see several useful and necessary roles for many different types of funders in this space.

- **Convener** - Grantmakers are often viewed as neutral forces for good in a community. Thus, they are well-suited to bring people together through sponsored gatherings by providing such resources as physical space, logistical assistance and even funds for food during community forums, deliberations and collaborative decision-making related to removal, relocation, contextualization and creation of new commemorative work.

- **Healing & Repair** - Questions around memorial removal bring strong feelings to the surface, often causing or at least exacerbating longstanding rifts in a community. Our interviews suggest that actors do tend to see removal of racist symbols as one part of a larger racial justice reckoning.

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— Katherine Dennis,
President, Community
Foundation of
Central Georgia

However, neither elected leaders nor the activists who take part in efforts to remove or relocate statues always pursue deliberations or efforts to create new commemorative work that might help to redress harm from decades of venerating racist ideology. Interviews suggest that this is not for lack of desire, but because of limited capacity and monetary resources. One notable example, in Macon, Georgia is the **Harmony Enabled by Appropriate Location (HEAL) Fund**, created by the Community Foundation of Central Georgia. This fund helps defray costs of moving confederate statues out of the downtown area.

“To heal and bring our community together, one thing that we can do is fund an appropriate location for those monuments, so the name HEAL, I can't think of a word that fits it better,” Community Foundation President Katherine Dennis told local news reporters. “That's what we are trying to do.”⁴⁴

Funding of New Community-Informed Commemorations - This may seem to be an obvious role for a funder. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's model on the national level, which identifies relevant on the ground local efforts, can inform smaller local and state or regional grantmaking. (See Spotlight on the Mellon initiative in this brief). This could include new requests for proposals or funded artist competitions. The Mellon-funded Philadelphia-based Monument Lab engages community members in the collaborative process of imagining and

creating new commemorations. This deliberative process could be one part of larger existing racial healing or reconciliation grantmaking, be a stand-alone civic effort or part of a public art revitalization effort. This work is well aligned with many typical grantmaker strategies related not only to racial justice but also to civic engagement and/or arts and humanities. K-12 Education funders may also find a role here, as field trips to new or developing commemorations or hands-on research projects that engage youth have emerged in some communities.

Direct or indirect funding of removal, relocation or contextualization of contested monuments and memorials

- Three years after the Charleston massacre, more than 100 monuments and other symbols of the Confederacy have been removed. However, far more remain. The arguments in favor of removal, relocation or contextualization have only grown in recent years. Recent research also strongly suggests Confederate monuments and symbols can indeed cause tangible psychological harm to African Americans as does the state's protection of such symbols.⁴⁵

- **Conduits** - The Foundation for Louisiana, the Jacksonville (Florida) Education Fund and other local foundations have provided the crucial administrative support for donations that come in from individuals or other organizations for the removal, relocation or contextualization of monuments and memorials. They act as conduits for donations and set up systems for withdrawal and payment to city agencies or others engaged in removal or relocation. Our interviews reveal that this is a much needed service. Death threats and harassment are common to removal-supporters and their families and thus some donors understandably wish to remain anonymous.

- **Support for Legal Costs** - In a few cases, the original donor of a statue or other contested commemoration sues over its removal or relocation. This can lead to unanticipated costs for a municipality or institution. Legal challenges have also been brought in cases where an institution, such as a college or a public school district, wishes to remove the names of a Confederate or a former slave owner or otherwise contested person from buildings or school uniforms. In 2016, Vanderbilt University, for example, returned a \$1.2-million donation that had been made nearly nine



Public awareness and commemoration in Santa Monica, California.
Credit: @TonytheTigersSon via Twenty20

decades before by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. This payment allowed the college to remove the word “Confederate” from a building now called Memorial Hall.⁴⁶ In cash-strapped municipalities or less financially secure social institutions a legal contest against a wealthy donor might crush efforts at removal or renaming. Finally, some states, such as Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama and North Carolina, have recently passed laws designed to protect monuments from removal or relocation. As has occurred in Georgia and Alabama, states can then file lawsuits against the municipalities where officials want to remove or relocate statues and monuments. Foundation funds could thus provide a counterweight in what might otherwise be an uneven monetary match.⁴⁷

6. Engagement in commemorative work offers a way for philanthropists to turn 2020’s pledges of support for racial justice into tangible action. Commemoration and preservation is widely viewed as a component of achieving racial equity.

During and after protests following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, dozens of philanthropic leaders released statements of support for racial justice.⁴⁸ In the months that followed, billions of dollars have flowed to non-profit organizations in support of racial justice and racial equity.⁴⁹ Providing public support and resources to community-based non-profits and other conveners, and directly to creative artists to create new commemorative landscapes, is one way to transform grantmakers’ words into tangible and powerful action. This is especially relevant since private wealth typically enabled the erection of today’s contested monuments and memorials.

Grassroots Action & Funder Support

The Fund to Move the Monuments & The Maggie Walker Land Trust, Richmond, Virginia

Police killings of African Americans have triggered a reckoning with Confederate statues across the South, and Richmond, Virginia is an epicenter of that activism. In September 2021, the state of Virginia removed the massive Robert E. Lee statue that had been installed 130 years ago. That same month, the the state unveiled a new 12-foot bronze statue of a man, woman and infant just emancipated from slavery. The statue site also commemorates residents of Virginia who fought against slavery.

Most protests have aimed at the city's historic Monument Avenue – an old, tree-lined boulevard located in the capital city's center. Construction on Monument Avenue first began in 1890, shortly following the death of Confederate War General Robert E. Lee and in response to the waning league of Confederate veterans more generally. In the decades that followed, more than forty years after the end of the Civil War in 1865, four additional Confederate figures were memorialized along the strip, including J.E.B. Stuart (1909), Jefferson Davis (1909), Stonewall Jackson (1919), and Matthew Fontaine Maury (1929).⁵⁰ Richmond is the former capital of the Confederacy.

Despite early public opposition to the monuments, city officials did not give serious consideration to the option of statue removal prior to 2020, instead attempting to counterbalance the Confederate presence with the addition in 1996 of a statue of Richmond native and Black tennis icon Arthur Ashe. Facing renewed pressure after the Charleston massacre in 2015, the city later appointed the **Monument Avenue Commission** to solicit public input and deliver recommendations on whether and how the district should be reimagined. The final 2018 report fell short of recommending relocation or removal, with the exception of the statue of former Confederate President Jefferson Davis – the only figure not to represent a Richmond native and that was “the most unabashedly Lost Cause in its design and sentiment (pp. 33).”⁵¹ The report also encouraged recontextualization of the remaining memorials through added signage and local exhibitions, and the construction of new monuments that aspired to be more inclusive and representative of Richmond's diversity and its history.

Like other Southern cities, though, the barometer for policy change shifted radically in the wake of George Floyd's death and the ensuing protests of 2020. Community members and organizational leaders have become increasingly proactive in their judgment of statue removal as not only a feasible, but necessary, response to white supremacist violence. During this time, Richmond resident Shannon Harton launched a GoFundMe page to help pay for the removal of the city's Confederate statues. “This is the time, the time to finally take them down,” Harton said.⁵² His “Fund to Move the Monuments” aimed to relieve taxpayer burden for statue removal, both on Monument Avenue and elsewhere. The estimated cost of removal of the statues was \$1.8-million.⁵³

Harton also hoped the Fund would “start a conversation” that included local voices and citizen action into a sphere long dominated by status quo politics and a rote appeal to the sanctity of Confederate statues as history. That conversation ended up being contentious and varied. It included, in Harton's words, the “same ugliness” of white supremacist resistance to statue removal of past years.⁵⁴ However, the general sentiment among community members has steered toward removal or relocation in this latest chapter, marking a sharp turn from the Monument Avenue Commission's more tempered recommendations just three years ago.

The Fund was a pure grassroots effort but Harton partnered with Richmond's Maggie Walker Community Land Trust (MWCLT) to be a transfer agent for the donation site. In the first week alone, the page raised

more than \$30,000 for statue removal – no small amount for a community where recent talks of even adding new, more diverse statuary to Monument Avenue had attracted controversy. MWCLT Chair Laura Lafayette cited the “overwhelming support” of the MWCLT board to house the Fund. As of June, 2021, the Fund had raised more than \$45,000.⁵⁵

The early successes of the Fund to Move the Monuments speak to the power of grassroots action on statue removal – and beyond that, to a collective readiness for change, most powerfully galvanized and articulated by protestors and allies of the Black Lives Matter Movement in Richmond. On May 30, 2020, just five days after the murder of George Floyd and before the Fund’s launch, activists marched down Monument Avenue and masked the five standing Confederate statues in graffiti in their wake. The atmosphere of frustration and impatience mirrors the energy stemming from the Charlottesville massacre of 2015, when stalled action in the South Carolina legislature to remove the Confederate flag from state grounds compelled activist Bree Newsome to mount the flagpole and remove it herself.⁵⁶

Even as Harton and Lafayette worked to launch the Fund to Move the Monuments in June of 2020, actions – both legal and extralegal – were already underway to ensure that the memorials came down. On June 4, 2020, Governor Ralph Northam announced plans to remove the state-owned statue of Robert E. Lee. Just a few days later, protestors toppled the statue of Jefferson Davis. In the weeks that followed, city officials initiated the removal process for the remaining statues of Stuart, Jackson, and Maury.⁵⁷ Harton and Lafayette both observed how the city’s decision to intervene did remove some of the urgency to crowd-source private dollars for removal, resulting in a sharp drop in donations to the Fund in July.

Without dismissing the need for action, Bill Martin of the Valentine Museum – a key voice on how to reimagine Richmond’s relocated statues – has urged community-based dialogue and reflection moving forward: “Maybe the best thing we can do is pause. [That pause] is critical in making sure that the voices are at the table that haven’t been there before – it’s true with foundations, true with museums, true with us as individuals.”⁵⁸

Local Foundation Shows Public Support Amid Reignited Protests

The Historic Wilmington Foundation in Wilmington, North Carolina

In 1898, a mob of white men violently attacked the prosperous African American community in the port city of Wilmington, North Carolina.⁵⁹ What's known today is that the Wilmington Massacre was the culmination of a months-long effort by white supremacists to deny black men of the vote and to remove them from the public offices to which they'd been appointed and elected. During the Reconstruction era, Wilmington had become a leading example of Southern progressivism – home to a thriving Black middle and upper class and growing ranks of political leadership by African Americans. Responding to Black political and economic success, a camp of white supremacists and Confederate sympathizers staged the violent coup, resulting in displacement of numerous African Americans from office, as well as the murder and forced retreat of hundreds more.⁶⁰

The reverberating racial trauma of Wilmington's past is the backdrop in contemporary conversations around Confederate statues in the city, which have centered on two monuments in particular. The first is a statue of former Confederate Attorney General George Davis in downtown Wilmington, commissioned by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) in 1911 and rededicated as recently as 1993 by the Sons of Confederate Veterans.⁶¹ The second is the Wilmington Confederate Monument, or the "Boney Monument" – again erected by the UDC in 1924, but with private funding from local resident and Confederate veteran Gabriel James Boney.⁶²

Public pressure to remove the statues intensified after the violent events of Charlottesville in 2017. However, the protests of 2020 were what most effectively reactivated debate and, ultimately, compelled action on statue removal. In this latest chapter, the Historic Wilmington Foundation (HWF) has been steadfast in its support for removal, characterized by the newest Executive Director Travis Gilbert as "one of the first preservation organizations in the nation, and certainly in the American South," to take a firm position.⁶³ Gilbert, who was an HWF board member at the time of deliberations around statue removal, recalls then-Executive Director Beth Rutledge approaching the board about the urgency of an official statement. Where the Charleston tragedy and Charlottesville protests had begun to stir support for statue removal in Wilmington, a deeper impetus for action took hold after the nine-minute footage of George Floyd's murder became public – what amounted to, in Rutledge's words, "an un-ignorable time of reckoning."⁶⁴ Gilbert reported little internal resistance to the statement from either the board or the wider HWF membership, though its wording was given careful scrutiny and did face some board members objecting to the use of the word "artworks," to refer to the monuments.

HWF's official statement released on June 9, 2020, read, in part: "These artworks do not represent the values of the City of Wilmington or this organization. It is HWF's hope that the monuments will be relocated to a location where they may be preserved, interpreted, contextualized, and used expressly for educational purposes, rather than to continue to serve as visual public reminders of racial injustice."⁶⁵ Beyond the Foundation's long-standing mission to "save local built history,"⁶⁶ Gilbert emphasized that another key aim of this statement was to take a "moral position on the current moment" through proactive opposition to racial hatred and "the glorification of the Confederate landscape."⁶⁷

Despite vocal support from HWF donors and many residents, responses to the statement were not uniformly positive. Indeed, HWF's early entry into the fight for removal meant they were on the front-lines of backlash. HWF's longevity and mission — founded in 1966 to "Preserve and Protect the

Irreplaceable Resources of Wilmington and the Lower Cape Fear Region”— gave added weight to the organization’s statement. Gilbert noted that “some of the angriest and loudest voices” came from outside Wilmington proper, speaking to the ways in which community-led debates around statue removal are at once deeply local and fodder for a wider conflict over national myth and identity.⁶⁸

Nine days after HWF’s message was posted, the National Trust for Historic Preservation issued a similar statement supporting Confederate statue removal across American communities.⁶⁹ From Rutledge’s perspective, this alignment in messaging from a recognized figurehead like the National Trust helped curtail some of HWF’s negative attention and the scale of public pushback. Rutledge also observed that Richmond had meanwhile become “a real flashpoint” and model for change, deepening the sense of momentum and allyship across state-lines.⁷⁰

Comparably, the city’s ultimate decision to remove the statue of George Davis and the Wilmington Confederate Monument, proceeded quietly. During the early morning hours of June 25, 2020, the statues came down without fanfare and were moved to an undisclosed location in the city. In announcing the early decision to remove, officials invoked a legal defense seen in Southern communities elsewhere – that the statues had become a danger to public safety because of threats of vandalism and protest.⁷¹ Since then, the Wilmington City Council has reported that the statues would not be restored to their original location and instead will be permanently housed with a local UDC chapter.⁷²

The events of 2020 have invited deeper attention among HWF’s staff and board about how to best elevate voices of color in community-led change, whether internally or through new initiatives. These efforts have straddled everything from attempts to recruit more people of color to the HWF board to restoring Wilmington’s historic Giblem Lodge, whose founding dates back to 1871 as North Carolina’s second-oldest Black masonic temple.⁷³

“Spatial Justice” & King Boston

A community comes together to promote a vision of a just society

The work and leadership of Martin Luther King is not typically associated with Boston, as it is more often linked to his Southern campaigns against Jim Crow segregation and in support of voting rights. Yet the New England city marks an important chapter in Dr. King’s life. In 1955, he earned his Ph.D. in theology from Boston University. It’s also where he met his future wife, Coretta Scott King. In a new memorial slated for unveiling in the Boston Common in October 2022, activists, artists, city officials, donors and others have come together to memorialize the Kings and their shared vision of a more inclusive, just society.

Commissioned by the privately-funded organization King Boston, with support and oversight from the Boston Foundation, “**The Embrace**” depicts a loving squeeze between Martin and Coretta during the receipt of Dr. King’s Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Duncan Ramage-Healey, Director of Advancement and External Affairs at King Boston, explained that the project emerged from a wider call-out for design proposals. Selected from 126 submissions, The Embrace’s design was co-created by artist Hank Willis Thomas and the MASS Design Group. Final estimates place the total cost of the monument at around \$9.5-million, no small investment in the wider philanthropic landscape of public memory projects.⁷⁴ Ramage-Healey noted that the statue will be one of the first monuments of its scale to be built during the nation’s pandemic recovery period.⁷⁵

King Boston sees the installation as part of a larger political exercise in “spatial justice,” a concept that extends not only to removing historical reminders of racial injustice – as in the case of Confederate monuments – but to what we promote in their place. Here, The Embrace aims to bring deeper reflection to King’s tenets of love and equality, functioning as an “interactive museum of sorts, not just a monument.”⁷⁶ A series of educational placards will surround the statue to guide visitors through the Kings’ story and those of other notable civil rights leaders.

Beyond its symbolic value, though, Ramage-Healey emphasized that the memorial is just one part of a larger rubric of racial equity initiatives led by King Boston. “As a symbol [The Embrace] is important,” Ramage-Healey said, “but the work cannot stop there.”⁷⁷ In that spirit, the foundation is sponsoring two other initiatives. First, they are creating a new research outlet, the Center for Economic Justice, in nearby Roxbury where King once preached.⁷⁸ Second, and in tandem with The Embrace’s unveiling later next year, King Boston will launch a new public conversation series called Embrace Ideas. The festival will focus on ways to promote anti-racist inclusion through the arts and humanities, and is expected to recur annually.

A National Funder's Major Commitment The Mellon Foundation's "Monuments Project"

"Statues are not just bodies in bronze, and monuments are not just stone pillars. They instruct. They lift up the stories of those who are seen, dominate the stories of those who are unseen, and too often propagate menacingly incomplete accounts of our country's past."
—The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, "Monuments Project"

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's 5-year, \$250-million "**Monuments Project**" is the largest initiative in the foundation's history. With an endowment of about \$6.5-billion and annual grantmaking of more than \$300-million, Mellon is one of the nation's largest and most prestigious arts and humanities funders.

Launched in October, 2020, Mellon's effort funds mostly new monuments, memorials or "historic storytelling spaces." With this expanded definition, the effort seeks to grow the public's imagination as to what commemorations look like and to "recalibrate the assumed center of our national narratives to include those who have often been denied historical recognition."⁷⁹

The Monument Project also funds contextualization of existing monuments or memorials. This might include research, community education efforts and new installations that explain why contested figures were erected in the first place and/or include information about, say, a venerated figure's slaveholding past or his white supremacist views. Examples of such contextualization can be found at the University of Mississippi,⁸⁰ Decatur and Atlanta, Georgia and Franklin, Tennessee.⁸¹ The non-profit Atlanta History Center maintains an online database that tracks activity related to Confederate monuments. Notably, in post-apartheid South Africa, government leaders and cultural authorities chose contextualization of existing monuments and memorials to white supremacist figures as opposed to removal or large-scale relocation.

Mellon's first major grant under this initiative went to the Philadelphia-based Monument Lab, which was created in 2012. In the Lab's first years, staff focused on supporting Philadelphia's active public art scene. Staff went on to support collaborative collective memory work in several cities, including Newark, New Jersey, San Francisco and St. Louis.⁸²

With the Mellon grant, the Monument Lab staffed 10 field offices. The organization also conducted the first-ever audit of the monument and memorial landscape in the United States. The audit, previously cited in this brief, was released in September, 2021. It offers a full picture of what causes, events and people are currently venerated by the nation's existing monuments. It also includes data on protests related to monuments and a guide for educators.

In February, 2021, the Mellon Foundation announced five new Monument Project grantees. The grantees include Emmett Till Interpretive Center in Sumner, Mississippi; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); Boston-based MASS Design Group; Prospect New Orleans, and the Social and Public Art Resource Center in Los Angeles. The grant to the Emmett Till Interpretive Center will support "racial healing" building preservation and coordination and preservation of the Mamie and Emmett Till story in Mississippi and Chicago. The grant to LACMA will support development and presentation of augmented reality exhibitions and the inclusion of more artists in community-informed commemoration work.

Prospect New Orleans will support “commissions for a citywide art exhibition that explores monuments’ power to create and complicate history.”⁸³ The grant to the MASS Design Group will support the research and work of organizations and people who are designing and building new monuments across the United States.

“Monuments and memorials powerfully shape our understanding of our country’s past, and determine which narratives we honor and celebrate in the American story,” said Elizabeth Alexander, President of the Mellon Foundation. “Future generations ought to inherit an inclusive commemorative landscape that elevates the visionary contributions and remarkable experiences of the many different communities that make up the United States. With these five grants, we are affirming our commitment to support organizations engaged in creating and contextualizing monuments and memorials that convey the extraordinary multiplicity of our complex history.”⁸⁴

The Mellon Foundation is not a new entrant into commemorative work. Mellon was a major supporter of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. With the Ford Foundation and other grantmakers, Mellon also provided funding for a memorial in New York’s Central Park to the Lyons family, who were prominent abolitionists. The section of Central Park where the memorial now sits was once a free black community called Seneca Village.⁸⁵ The Mellon Foundation also helped fund the nation’s only Arab American National Museum, in suburban Detroit.

A Public Charity Looks Back and Major Funders Step Forward

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund

The National Trust for Historic Places' (NTHP) \$50-million African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund is the largest preservation effort ever undertaken to support African American historic sites. Since its founding in 2017, in partnership with the Ford Foundation, the program has funded more than 100 historic African American places and invested more than \$7.3-million to help preserve "landscapes and buildings imbued with Black life, humanity and cultural heritage."⁸⁶

In June, 2021, NTHP received a \$20-million grant from the philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. This nearly doubled the size of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. The fund was created in partnership with the Ford Foundation. The Fund's other major donors, besides Ford and Scott, include its partner JPB Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Open Society Foundations and others.⁸⁷

In June, 2020, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), which is a private non-profit organization, reversed its past stance⁸⁸ on Confederate symbols, announcing that it "supports their removal from our public spaces when they continue to serve the purposes for which many were built—to glorify, promote, and reinforce white supremacy, overtly or implicitly..." The statement continued: "...unless these monuments can in fact be used to foster recognition of the reality of our painful past and invite reconciliation for the present and the future, they should be removed from our public spaces."⁸⁹

Meanwhile, the affirmative projects and sites supported by the Fund are testament to the vast creativity and richness of commemoration and preservation work in local communities across the nation. The Fund's portfolio can surely provide inspiration and concrete examples of the types of commemoration projects that place-based funders might support. The Fund also offers a "best practices" webinar that describes the Fund's grantmaking process and features the work of grantees.⁹⁰

In July, 2021, the Fund made \$3-million in grants to 40 sites and organizations. Grantees included the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission which, in collaboration with the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission, is documenting and mapping "Green Book" sites in both states. Between 1936 and 1967, the Negro Motorist Green Book listed establishments such as hotels, restaurants and other places where African Americans travelers would be safe. Started by a mail carrier, Victor Green, the Green Book was vital to African Americans' safety during the Jim Crow era amid increases in lynchings and other forms of violence. This will be a model for national Green Book sites markers and a digital mapping program.⁹¹ Green went on to open a publishing office in Harlem to support the Green Book. He later founded a travel agency that booked reservations at black-owned establishments.⁹²

Another 2021 grant will help to rehabilitate the site of the Georgia B. Williams Nursing Home in Camilla, Georgia where black midwives worked throughout the Jim Crow era when hospitals were

either segregated and unequal or even non-existent for black women and their families. The building will become the Southern African-American Midwife Museum.

The previous year, in 2020, grantees included Memphis Tennessee non-profit, Clayborn Reborn, to restore the Clayborn Temple, which was the organizing site for the Sanitation Workers Strike in 1968. Clayborn's pastor had printed the famed "I AM A MAN" signs, often reproduced for contemporary racial justice protests. The NTHP grant will enable Clayborn Reborn to hire a preservationist so that the story of the site can be more fully shared with the public.

Another 2020 grant supports the "Mapping C'Ville" project, part of an ongoing effort to examine racial discrimination in the built environment. This research and design project teaches the rich history of Black communities in Charlottesville and central Virginia since the 18th century.⁹³

A (Very) Brief History of Confederate Monuments

- The Confederate-related monument building boom began in the **1890s**, nearly three decades after the end of the Civil War at a time when racial violence against African Americans was on the rise in response to expanded rights and blacks' growing political power.
- After the unanimous **1954** Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* that outlawed intentional racial segregation in schools and up until 1970, at least 45 schools and colleges were named after Confederates. This marked an uptick in Confederate-related naming activity.⁹⁴
- Civil War centennial celebrations in addition to a backlash against the ongoing Civil Rights Movement helped inspire the creation of new statues and memorials to Confederates and slaveholders from **1961 to 1965**. Historian Karen Cox explains that this round of statue building represented “a clash of values in the South — those that were forward-looking and guided by the goals of racial equality versus those still shaped by the fabricated narratives of the Lost Cause and a commitment to segregation and white supremacy.”⁹⁵
- A recent wave of monument-building has occurred since **2000**. Cox' research indicates that 35 new monuments have been created through the work of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV). “White anxiety about racial progress served as the backdrop to earlier periods of monument expansion, and the same has been true since 2000,” Cox writes.⁹⁶
- According to data compiled by the Southern Poverty Law Center, some 100 monuments to Confederate generals and politicians have been removed from US public land since **June, 2015**. For nearly a century before – from **1923 and 2015** – only nine such monuments had been removed.⁹⁷
- The first round of new removals began in **2015**, after a 21-year-old admitted white supremacist murdered nine Black parishioners at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina in June that year.
- In **July, 2015**, a month after the murders in Charleston, legislators in North Carolina passed a bill that banned state agencies and local governments from taking down any ‘object of remembrance’ on public property that ‘commemorates an event, a person, or military service that is part of North Carolina’s history’ without permission from the state’s Historical Commission.⁹⁸
- After anguished debate and protests, South Carolina’s state legislators in **July, 2015**, voted to remove the Confederate flag from the Statehouse grounds.
- Alabama passed its Memorial Preservation Act in **2017**. It prohibits local governments from removing, altering or renaming monuments that are more than 40 years old. At least five other states have similar laws.⁹⁹
- In **May, 2017**, New Orleans began taking down its monument to Robert E. Lee, originally unveiled in 1884. The effort to remove the statues in New Orleans had been stalled by lawsuits and opposition from the governor’s office. Eventually, though, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the city could not be prevented from removing statues on property that it owned. The New Orleans removals elevates more conversations and action around statue removal.

- In **August, 2017**, white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia took part in a “Unite the Right” rally to protest removal of a Confederate monument. This led to violence and the death of a counter-protester. This reignited debate and action around public memory and the power of public symbols.
- In **May, 2020**, a Minneapolis police officer was caught on video kneeling on the neck of George Floyd for more than eight minutes as Floyd pleaded for his life. Floyd died and the former officer has been convicted of murder. Racial justice protests that followed Floyd’s murder inspired or re-ignited efforts to remove or contextualize contested statues from Los Angeles to New Mexico to Massachusetts. The vast majority of this activity has occurred in the South and concerns Confederate-related commemoration.

In observance of the Juneteenth holiday in 2020, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ordered removal of portraits of four former House speakers who had been members of the Confederacy.

- In **June, 2020**, the US Navy and the US Marines banned public displays of the Confederate battle flag.¹⁰⁰
- In **June, 2020**, officials in Birmingham, Alabama ordered the removal of a Confederate monument in Linn Park.¹⁰¹ Protestors had previously damaged and attempted to remove the statue themselves. City officials in 2017 had previously covered the statue in response to long standing protests and had been sued by the state for violating a law protecting statues.
- In **2020**, NASCAR also banned the Confederate flag from its races and events.¹⁰²
- In observance of the **Juneteenth holiday in 2020**, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ordered removal of portraits of four former House speakers who had been members of the Confederacy.¹⁰³

- In the **summer of 2020**, people in more than a dozen communities, including Richmond and Portsmouth, Virginia; New Orleans; and Birmingham, Alabama, vandalized and in some cases even tore down monuments and memorials.
- In **November, 2020**, Mississippi’s voters approved a new state flag that featured a magnolia flower. This replaced the state’s old flag, which had flown for 126 years and incorporated the Confederate battle emblem.
- In a closely watched, long-running controversy in Memphis, Tennessee, statues of the slave trader and Ku Klux Klan leader Bedford Forrest and of the former Confederate president Jefferson Davis were removed from two city parks in **December, 2020**. The city then sold the parks to a non-profit organization, getting around a state law that protected the statues.



Chavez. A statue of the civil rights activist Cesar Chavez in San Luis, Arizona. Credit: @sleeping_beauty1 via Twenty20

- By the **end of 2020**, at least 26 Confederate-related memorials and statues had been taken down.¹⁰⁴

- In **July 2021**, the city of Charlottesville, Va, removed two statues of Confederate generals, including the one of Robert E. Lee that had been the cause of a deadly white supremacist “Unite the Right” rally in **2017**. The city had been embroiled in legal challenges mounted by local residents to prevent removal of the statues. In 2021, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled in the city’s favor.

Activists, city leaders and funders who have been engaged with commemoration work emphasize that achieving what King Boston’s creators call “spatial justice,” is one part of moving toward racial and social justice in society at large. This brief has provided several onramps for funders inclined to support this creative, multidimensional and deeply civic work in communities across the United States. Our examples from funders, municipalities and institutions demonstrate the range of roles that grantmakers might play in this evolving space. A collection of resources follows.

In the summer of 2020, people in more than a dozen communities, including Richmond and Portsmouth, Virginia; New Orleans; and Birmingham, Alabama, vandalized and in some cases even tore down monuments and memorials.

Resources

Books

- **Denmark Vesey’s Garden: Slavery and Memory in the Cradle of the Confederacy** by Ethan J. Kyle & Blain Roberts (2020)
With special attention to the city of Charleston, South Carolina, this book traces the institution of slavery and Civil War to current discourse around Confederate memorials and the perpetuation of Lost Cause mythology.
- **Down Along with That Devil’s Bones: A Reckoning with Monuments, Memory, and the Legacy of White Supremacy** by Connor Towne O’Neill (2020)
Bringing a more personal, journalistic eye to the monuments debate, this book from Journalist Connor Towne O’Neill focuses on representations of Confederate general Nathan Forrest Bedford. Bedford remains one of the most controversial figures to be memorialized, spawning widespread removal efforts but with varied success across Southern communities. O’Neill’s analysis provides a thoughtful look at how these deliberations, and any ensuing decision to remove, continue to be deeply dependent on local context.
- **Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture** by Karen Cox (2003)
This early book from historian Karen Cox unpacks the long lineage of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), who have been a powerful force in transmitting and elevating the legacy of Confederate figures for future generations. To this day, the UDC has played an integral political and cultural role in the preservation of Confederate memorials and the Lost Cause narrative.
- **How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America** by Clint Smith (2021)
In this recent publication, journalist and poet Clint Smith extends his focus beyond the world of Confederate statuary to revisit other major sites of American history, including Thomas Jefferson’s slave-owning estate in Monticello, Virginia. Smith highlights the ways in which historical commentary at these sites often continues to erase or omit racial oppression from the public stories we tell.
- **Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong** by James W. Loewen (2000)
Loewen unpacks the misrepresentation of history through a survey of the nation’s historical markers and statues, and how these distortions have shaped public memories of slavery, the Civil War, and more.
- **Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory**, edited by Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson (2019)
This essay collection brings scholars from Art and American History to explore the paramount role of women-led preservation groups in early sponsorship of Confederate monuments and in the intergenerational transmission of the Lost Cause narrative.
- **No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice** by Karen Cox (2020)
As the title suggests, this latest contribution from historian Karen Cox considers how competing claims to public memory of the Civil War continue to divide American communities today. Cox unpacks the history of Confederate memorials with an eye to their early UDC origins and the sense of racial threat that

animated memorialization. She later brings this history full-circle to present-day conversations around removal in Richmond and elsewhere.

- **Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory** by David W. Blight (2001)
This book surveys commemorative practices from oratory to pageantry to monuments and beyond. Recent studies have made ever more nuanced analyses that interweave the issue of race with gender, class, and region.
- **Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity** by William Fitzhugh Brundage (2000)
The essays in this book demonstrate that a great deal can be at stake in conflicts over memory. Each group of southerners we meet in this book seeks control over the social memory of their community or state or region.

Academic Articles & Reports

- **“Juxtapositioned Memory: Lost Cause Statues and Sites of Lynching”** by Brent Steele (2020)
This article considers the political projects embedded in Confederate memorialization and competing claims to historical memory around slavery and the Civil War.
- **“The Costs of the Confederacy”** by the Smithsonian Magazine & the Investigative Fund at the Nation Institute (2018)
This special report investigates the scale of public funding that has been leveraged to maintain and preserve the country’s Confederate statues, and its role in the continuation of Lost Cause mythology.
- **“Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy”** by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)
This investigative report provides an unprecedented survey of the general number, type, and distribution of Confederate statues across the American South, urging us to consider the foundational question – “whose heritage do they truly represent?”

Other

- **Contemporary Monuments to the Slave Past**
Aiming to spur deeper public-led conversations around our collective past, this digital archive features contemporary collections of monuments that reckon with the history and legacy of slavery in the U.S.

Endnotes

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Katharine Elder, MPP, is a research analyst in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute, where she works on projects related to fair housing reform and affordability. She has also worked at the intersection of public policy and social justice philanthropy through her work as a research associate with the Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy at Brandeis University.

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