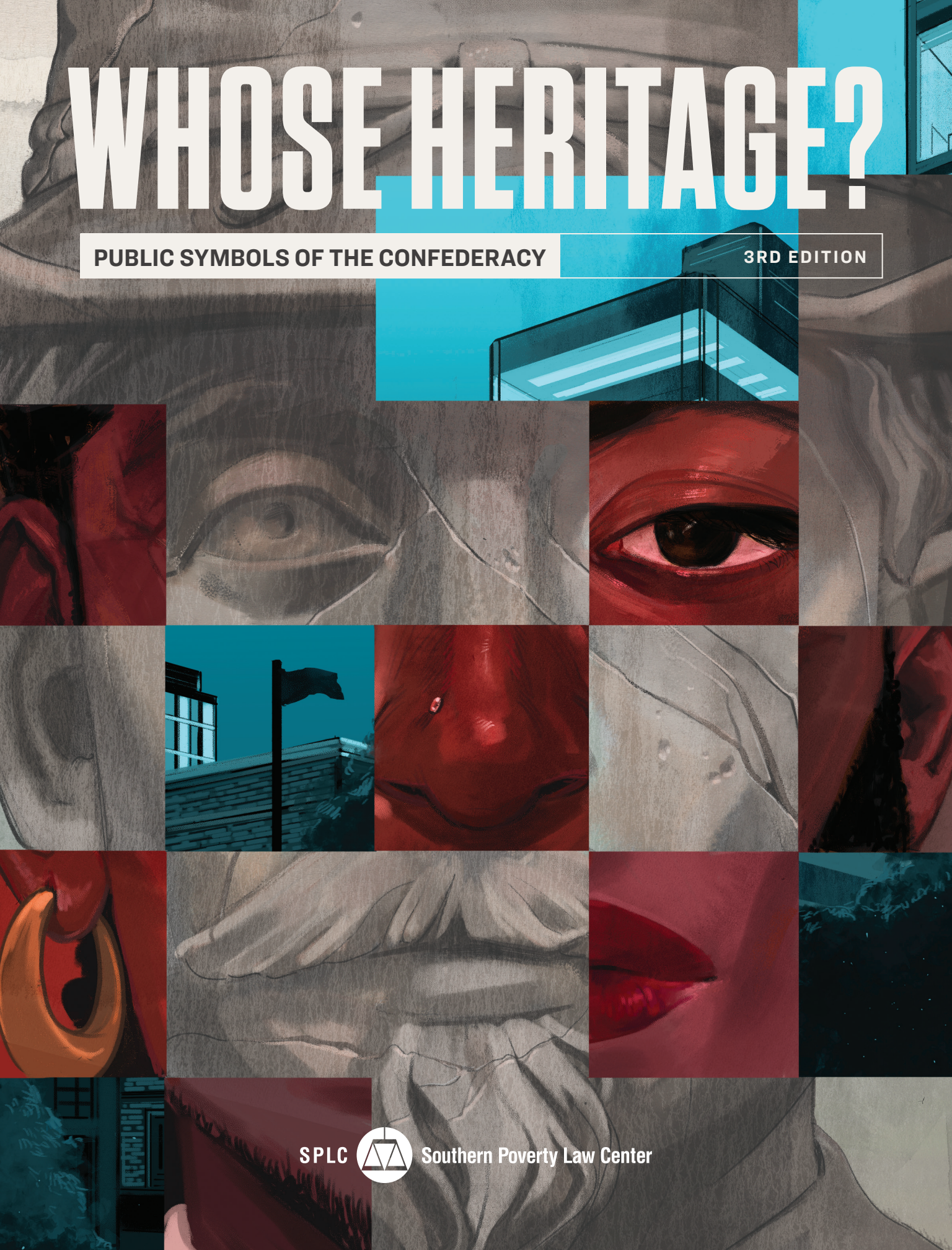


# WHOSE HERITAGE?

PUBLIC SYMBOLS OF THE CONFEDERACY

3RD EDITION



SPLC



Southern Poverty Law Center







# WHOSE HERITAGE?

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## **ABOUT THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER**

The Southern Poverty Law Center, based in Montgomery, Alabama, is a nonprofit civil rights organization founded in 1971 and dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society.

For more information  
visit [splcenter.org](http://splcenter.org)





A black and white photograph of a statue of a soldier and a classical column capital. The statue, on the left, depicts a soldier in a trench coat and helmet, holding a rifle, suspended by ropes. The column capital, on the right, is ornate with acanthus leaves. A teal banner at the bottom contains the word 'CONTENTS' in white capital letters.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**ALTHOUGH THE CIVIL WAR** ended more than 150 years ago, 2,089 Confederate memorials can still be found throughout the United States and its territories.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these numbers, there has been progress in removing Confederate symbols of hate and white supremacy. Public opinion is changing as more people learn about the cause of the Civil War—slavery—and the motivations behind the dedication of Confederate memorials. Comparing polling of registered Georgia voters in 2018 and 2021 demonstrates that support for Confederate memorial removal has increased. Moreover, when myths about the “Lost Cause” are dispelled and people are taught that heritage groups and white Southerners erected Confederate monuments in response to Reconstruction and during the Jim Crow era to venerate the white supremacist values of the Confederacy, support for monument removal increases.<sup>2</sup> These encouraging findings suggest that a deeper understanding of the past can facilitate a future free of Confederate symbols of hate.

The John B. Castleman Monument—removed from Louisville, KY on June 8, 2020—is one of more than 200 memorials taken down since George Floyd's murder.











This Third Edition of *Whose Heritage?* builds upon and expands the first and second editions.<sup>3</sup> In 2015, after nine Black worshippers at the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina were murdered by a white supremacist gunman who had previously been photographed with Confederate iconography, the Southern Poverty Law Center launched a project to identify Confederate memorials, compiling a comprehensive and publicly accessible database that accompanied the 2016 *Whose Heritage?* report. Our data showed that Confederate monuments were erected in the wake of Reconstruction during the Jim Crow era, which reinforced arguments historians made about how Confederate memorials were part of an organized propaganda campaign to promote the Lost Cause and venerate the white supremacist values of the Confederacy.

After the 2017 Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia prompted many communities to grapple anew with the Confederate memorials in their presence, SPLC reissued

*Whose Heritage?* in 2018. The second edition had an updated count of Confederate memorials, a map, and a major methodological change: tracking whether a monument was live, relocated, renamed, or removed. More recently, protests over the murder of George Floyd sparked the removal, relocation, or renaming of at least 200 memorials.<sup>4</sup> This has shifted the focus from understanding to action; rather than just understanding when and why memorials were erected, forces facilitating memorial removal became more active. Situating the recent activism within a longer historical context provides a fuller account of why this moment (and not others) enabled the removal of so many memorials while simultaneously honoring Black activists working on monument removal in the past.<sup>5</sup>

This report has five parts in addition to our public map and dataset. The introduction details the long history of Black protest over Confederate memorials, drawing on scholarship to help contextualize our data, and argues that Confederate monument removal offers an important education in democracy and civic participation.<sup>6</sup> Next, the

methodology section explains how SPLC works in collaboration with communities to source our data, and how we make decisions about what to include (and exclude) from our database. The analysis section outlines five main conclusions drawn from the data. Action items provide suggestions for how you can work to remove Confederate symbols from your community. Finally, the conclusion looks ahead to how we can make our collective history.

**Most Confederate memorials are not what are commonly referred to as monuments.**

Although there are 723 live monuments in SPLC's database as of January 20, 2022, there are more roadways (741) honoring Confederates than there are monuments. Together with schools (201), counties and municipalities (104), parks (38), buildings (51), holidays (22), military bases (10), commemorative license plates (7), bodies of water (6), and bridges (6), these places do important cultural work to reinforce white supremacy.

**Confederate memorials are not limited to the South.**

While the vast majority of Confederate memorials today are located in former Confederate States (1,910), Confederate memorials can be found in Union States and Washington, DC (44), border states (102), states that were not yet admitted to the Union (30), and even Puerto Rico (1).

**The popularity of different kinds of Confederate memorials changes over time, reflecting shifting methods of intimidating Black communities.**

Most Confederate monuments were erected in the period following Reconstruction and during Jim Crow. After World War II, the Confederate battle flag took on new meaning as a symbol of white supremacy, when “Dixiecrats” used it to oppose Civil Rights.<sup>7</sup> Schools were largely named after Confederates in the period following the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board*, which ended racial segregation in public schools. In each instance, though the specific type of memorial changed, the intent—to terrorize Black Americans—remained the same.<sup>8</sup>

#### # OF LIVE THINGS HONORING CONFEDERATES

**723**  
MONUMENTS

**741**  
ROADWAYS

**201**  
SCHOOLS

**51**  
BUILDINGS

**38**  
PARKS

**22**  
HOLIDAYS



## SECTION 1

**Recent efforts to remove Confederate memorials offer insights that can assist social justice advocates working to create fairer, freer, and more just public spaces.**


Since the Charleston church massacre in 2015, activists have successfully renamed, relocated, and removed 377 Confederate memorials from communities across the United States. This progress draws on the long history of Black activism contesting Confederate memorials. Despite the passage of draconian preservation laws over the past decade, communities have found creative ways to remove symbols of hate from public space.

**The top three individuals commemorated are Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, and Stonewall Jackson.**

Most Confederate memorials in the United States today don't commemorate a specific individual (722). But of the ones that do, Robert E. Lee (235) is most frequently honored, followed by Jefferson Davis (144), and Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson (121).

Along the way, the report features artwork and poetry by artists who are using visual narratives and verse to find alternative ways of challenging the Lost Cause ideology. SPLC believes that there is no "one size fits all" approach to fighting the legacy of slavery, and we hope that combining multiple approaches in one report will serve as an inspiration to activists, scholars, journalists, creatives, and others committed to eradicating hate and white supremacy.

SPLC recognizes that removing Confederate memorials is, in and of itself, not enough. The legacy of the Confederacy is far more enduring than any memorial ever could be. This is demonstrated clearly by the fact that systemic racial inequality is endemic to our society and is built into our very institutions. The devastating impact of the pandemic on Black communities in the United States is one of the many ways in which the legacy of slavery and the Confederacy has manifested itself. Destroying these monuments will not erase the legacy of slavery. But abolishing these memorials is a first and essential step in combating the white supremacist values of the Confederacy, while drawing on historical memory to facilitate community healing.



Professor Sonya Clark's visual narratives in *Unraveling* offer an alternative way of challenging the Lost Cause ideology.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAYLOR DABNEY







# INTRODUCTION

**IN 1954, WHEN** Mrs. Goldie Kingston heard that Harry C. Seibold wanted to name his Richmond, Virginia baseball team The Confederates, she told reporter Lee Barrow of the *Afro-American* that she had no interest in watching games so long as the team retained the name.<sup>9</sup> The waitress was among 35 people queried by the newspaper, and only two respondents supported the name change. Living in the former capital of the Confederacy in the shadows of Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, Matthew Fontaine Maury, Stonewall Jackson, and J.E.B. Stuart on Richmond's Monument Avenue, the Black community was all too aware of what the name symbolized.<sup>10</sup>

The name was “rotten,” according to Charlie Grant. “Instead of honoring what happened nearly 100 years ago,” he said, “we should be looking forward.” Others made similar objections based on historical context, calling the name “a throwback to 1865” and “all right for the 19th century, but inappropriate now.” Clarence H. Fields drew on the contemporary context—Jackie Robinson integrated

Crews work to remove one of the country's largest remaining monuments to the Confederacy, a towering statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee on Monument Avenue in Richmond, VA.









MLB in 1947—noting that he’d be willing to attend the games despite the proposed name “if they give colored players a chance.”<sup>11</sup> One person seemed to sum up the sentiments of many when calling the decision “a slap in the face.”

While the historical record does not tell us why the team was ultimately named the Richmond Virginians (and whether the objections of the city’s Black residents played any role in that decision), the proposed name clearly conjured the legacy of slavery for the city’s Black residents.<sup>12</sup> Their reactions to Confederate memorials are part of a much longer tradition of Black Americans protesting, challenging, and removing Confederate memorials from public space.

As historian Modupe Labode notes, “Although some people may regard the vehement arguments over these symbols and the calls for removal of monuments as a new part of twenty-first-century life, protests over the display of Confederate monuments and emblems go back decades.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, calls on communities to remove symbols of hate is not an imposition of our contemporary values on

the people of the past or an attempt to erase history. Rather, it holds communities accountable to Kingston, Grant, Fields, and other Black Americans whose protests go back decades and who clearly understood that Confederate memorials falsely valorize a government that fought to preserve the right to enslave Black people.

Protests over Confederate monuments have garnered much popular and scholarly attention, and this report is attentive to how Black Americans have protested both monuments *and* memorials. Here and elsewhere, SPLC distinguishes between monuments and memorials, following historian Seth Bruggeman who explains,

*“Monument,” [...] usually refers to a commemorative structure or edifice, whereas “memorial” applies to almost anything—including buildings, books, roads, stadiums—that recalls the dead or the experience of profound loss. The Lincoln Memorial, in Washington, D.C., is [...] a monument, because the structure itself functions as a well of national regard for Lincoln’s sacrifice and*

*vision. Across town, however, only sports fans likely consider the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium a monument. Its tribute to Kennedy's memory is in name alone.<sup>14</sup>*

Bruggeman notes that these categories are fluid, but they offer useful guidelines for differentiating between monuments like obelisks, statues, plinths, and pedestals and other memorials including schools, roadways, buildings, flags, military bases, parks, bodies of water, bridges, roadways, and even sports teams like the Confederates.<sup>15</sup>

This report draws on scholarship to contextualize data showing the number of Confederate memorial removals, relocations, and renamings.<sup>16</sup> To date, 409 Confederate memorials have been removed, relocated, or renamed, and another 24 are pending. However, these figures do not capture the long history of activism surrounding Confederate memorial removal.<sup>17</sup> Nor do they reflect the larger context informing these removals; communities frequently remove Confederate memorials in response to heinous acts of violence committed against Black Americans.

As early as 1870, before most Confederate monuments were built, Frederick Douglass was forewarning the public about their impact. In a piece for the *New National Era*, he notes, “Monuments to the ‘lost cause’ will prove monuments of folly, both in the memories of a wicked rebellion which they must necessarily perpetuate, and in the failure to accomplish the particular purpose had in view by those who build them. It is a needless record of stupidity and wrong.”<sup>18</sup> Douglass recognized that Confederate monuments were part of a campaign to erase the role that slavery played in the Civil War, drawing attention to the traitorous acts of the Confederacy. His prescient words are remarkable for both their accuracy and because he spoke in a time when Black men were lynched for challenging the established racial order.<sup>19</sup>

Black Americans also spoke out against proposed statues to “faithful slaves,” a pernicious myth that implied enslaved people would rather remain faithful to their masters than be free.<sup>20</sup> Among the most famous examples was the United Daughters of the Confederacy’s proposal to erect a statue to the Black mammy figure near Union General

**TO DATE,  
409 CONFEDERATE  
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Philip Sheridan's statue on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, D.C.<sup>21</sup> On Feb. 28, 1923, when the U.S. Senate approved bill S. 4119 (which called for the creation of a statue to the mammy figure), African Americans objected to this offensive portrayal.<sup>22</sup> The Black press—including the *St. Louis Argus*, the *Chicago Defender*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and the *Washington Tribune*—voiced their strong opposition to the bill in editorials and cartoons, and the NAACP opposed the bill in a letter to the Senate. Their activism was effective in shifting public opinion, and the bill never made it to the House floor. Like other Confederate monuments never built, it was Black activism that prevented this racist depiction from being erected.<sup>23</sup>

The speeches given at the dedication ceremonies for Confederate memorials underscore why African Americans reacted so strongly to these monuments in their communities. For example, the 1913 dedication speech given by white businessman Julian Carr for the Silent Sam statue at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill graphically exposes his investment in white supremacy<sup>24</sup>:

*The present generation, I am persuaded, scarcely takes note of what the Confederate soldier meant to the welfare of the Anglo Saxon race during the four years immediately succeeding the war, when the facts are, that their courage and steadfastness saved the very life of the Anglo Saxon race in the South – When “the bottom rail was on top” all over the Southern states, and to-day, as a consequence the purest strain of the Anglo Saxon is to be found in the 13 Southern States – Praise God.*

*[...] One hundred yards from where we stand, less than ninety days perhaps after my return from Appomattox, I horse-whipped a negro wench until her skirts hung in shreds, because upon the streets of this quiet village she had publicly insulted and maligned a Southern lady, and then rushed for protection to these University buildings where was stationed a garrison of 100 Federal soldiers. I performed the pleasing duty in the immediate presence of the entire garrison, and for thirty nights afterwards slept with a double-barrel shot gun under my head.*

The speakers and sponsors at dedication ceremonies frequently expressed their commitment to



An African American army battalion, standing in formation and holding the American flag, Fort Bragg, NC (1939–1945). African American soldiers still fought in segregated units during World War II and strongly objected to the use of the Confederate flag in the armed forces during the war.

asserting white supremacy and racial terror, a message that continues to speak clearly to both Black and white audiences through the actual monuments.

And it wasn't just monuments. As Matthew Delmont has argued, Black troops strongly objected to the use of the Confederate flag in the armed forces during World War II, noting the hypocrisy of displaying the flag of a government that fought against the United States.<sup>25</sup> During the Civil Rights movement, Black students in Thomaston, Georgia objected to attending a school named after Robert E. Lee, protesting the name and other issues surrounding integration.<sup>26</sup> These protests and objections, like those made against the Virginia Confederates baseball team, illustrate how Black Americans have long objected to Confederate memorials. And that activism laid the groundwork for the removals taking place today.

# DEMOCRACY ONLY WORKS WHEN PEOPLE ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED, AND THE PROCESS OF REMOVING A CONFEDERATE MONUMENT GALVANIZES PEOPLE TO DO SO.

Examining Confederate memorials from a historical and a contemporary lens has important lessons to teach us about democracy. Their very existence reminds us how easily white supremacy can erode our democracy and can subvert this country's promise to provide liberty and justice for all. A nation that truly believed in the equality of all people and that was committed to realizing the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments would have never allowed these shrines to white supremacy to be built.

That Confederate monuments are associated with lynching is no accident.<sup>27</sup> And it's not just monuments that convey white supremacy. Schools were named after Confederates to signal opposition to federal integration mandates. Roadways named after Confederates reinforced residential segregation. Confederate battle flags were raised over state houses in South Carolina and Alabama.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Georgia and Mississippi incorporated elements of the Confederate flag in their state flags.<sup>29</sup> These are clear government endorsements of the values of the Confederacy. In short, Confederate memorials offer a cautionary tale about the failures of democracy, its fragility, and how our laws and landscapes have actively thwarted the promise of equal protection.

Confederate memorials also teach us about civic engagement, and how ordinary Americans have effectively challenged the pervasive and pernicious Lost Cause ideology by exercising their rights and demanding that our institutions live up to their

stated democratic ideals. Democracy only works when people are actively engaged, and the process of removing a Confederate memorial galvanizes people to do so. Activists who organize against Confederate memorials, many of whom are people of color, do so at great personal risk. Often for reasons beyond their control, activists cannot remove a specific memorial. However, we all benefit from their efforts to create places that are more just because Confederate memorial removal offers a Tocquevillian education in democracy, providing social justice activists with the training and skills that will prove useful in other forms of civic involvement.

Activism surrounding memorial removal requires exercising our first amendment rights to speech, the press, and assembly. When activists tweet, post to social media, write letters to the editor, and give interviews to media outlets, they are practicing freedom of expression. For example, when current students at Wheeler High School in Cobb County, Georgia post announcements to their Wheeler Name Change Facebook account, asking their community to put pressure on the school board to change the name of their school, they exercise their freedom of expression.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, organizing a peaceful protest to draw attention to the hypocrisy of honoring Confederates in a public space is a form of practicing freedom of assembly. The Northside Coalition of Jacksonville, Florida held a rally last summer that helped convince the





On Monday, June 15, 2020, John Lewis, left, and Sonniah Ramirez protest for the removal of the Confederate monument that stands on the Lowndes County Courthouse lawn in Columbus, MS.

school board to change six names.<sup>31</sup> While the outcome in this case was favorable, their actions also reinforced the right to assemble peacefully.

The benefits of Confederate memorial removal extend beyond strengthening the First Amendment. It also provides an education in the law. Because issues about monument removal are fundamentally

about property, most activists get an unofficial education in property law. Other laws on the local, state, or federal level may also apply.<sup>32</sup> For example, the Founder and Executive Director of Project Say Something, Camille Bennett, has detailed how efforts to remove a Confederate monument from Florence, Alabama involve engaging with laws related to the monument's ownership, and its future.<sup>33</sup>

Six states have preservation laws: Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Despite these draconian laws, careful readings and interpretations have allowed for



the removal of some Confederate memorials. For example, when the city of Wilmington, North Carolina removed two Confederate monuments in August 2020, they cited public safety concerns, an exception permitted under North Carolina's law.<sup>34</sup> Unsurprisingly, there has been political retribution for using these legal loopholes. After the city of Memphis, Tennessee sold a park with a statue of Nathan Bedford Forrest to a non-profit that swiftly removed the monument, the legislature amended Tennessee's Heritage Protection Act to prohibit "the sale or transfer of a memorial or public property containing a statue without first obtaining a waiver from the state Historical Commission."<sup>35</sup>

In addition to deepening their knowledge of the law, activists also engage with and participate in the legislative process, the branch of government where people have the most direct say over the laws that govern them. Activists can challenge unjust laws that protect Confederate memorials by introducing new legislation that can overturn the old rules. In some cases, advocates of Confederate memorial removal run for or hold elected office. For example, Rep. Kabir Karriem worked with leaders in his community to bring down a Confederate monument in Lowndes County, Mississippi.<sup>36</sup> Learning how to interpret, challenge, and engage with the legislature produces more informed, active, and engaged citizens. Racial justice advocates carry on the legacy of Black activists who have long worked to remove symbols of hate even when they were barred from formal political channels.

Beyond the legislature, the process of Confederate memorial removal often involves engaging with and learning about the judiciary—the branch of government responsible for interpreting and determining the legality of the law. In many communities, even after an elected body or official has voted to remove a Confederate monument, heritage groups bring cases against the state that result in long, protracted legal battles. And while this unnecessary action stalls the removal process, it also provides an education in how the legal system works: how lawyers build cases and marshal evidence, and how judges interpret case law to resolve disputes between different parties. For example, activist groups who successfully advocated for the removal of the Confederate monument from the

town square in Decatur, Georgia had to wait over a year after the monument was removed for a judge to reaffirm that it was lawfully removed, dismissing a lawsuit that sought to restore it.<sup>37</sup> Closely following the outcome of the case provides instruction in navigating the legal system, a lesson which extends far beyond Confederate memorials.

Finally, Confederate memorials teach us how the past informs our current moment, and how historical tools and methods can be used to advance social justice. People from across the United States—almost all of whom lack formal historical training—have shared their incredibly rich primary sources with SPLC. Their archives document the racism fueling white Southerners who erected Confederate memorials as well as the Black activists who have long challenged symbols of hate and oppression. Many of these stories are intensely local and are not housed in traditional archival settings. Nonetheless, their research rivals (and in some cases exceeds) that of professional historians. Effectively mobilizing historical evidence allows activists to make more persuasive arguments to the legislature, the judiciary, and the public about how the past informs inequality in our current moment and provides a fuller understanding of our collective history.

Thus, SPLC considers all campaigns to remove Confederate symbols—both historic and contemporary—a success in some way regardless of whether they achieve the intended outcome. This process provides activists with skills, tools, and resources that are broadly applicable to all social and racial justice movements. SPLC maintains that our nation's commitment to equality will continue to ring hollow until every Confederate memorial is removed. But we privilege both process and outcome, honoring the activists who objected to Confederate memorials when they were barred from the democratic process.

The contributions of women like Goldie Kingston and the many other anonymous people who have questioned and fought the presence of Confederate memorials in their communities cannot be captured by a statistic and is not always reflected in our database. But their actions have helped make our democracy stronger, inspiring us to fully exercise our rights and demand that our country lives up to its ideals.

# METHOD

**SINCE SPLC FIRST** put out its call for information on Confederate monuments in 2015, the *Whose Heritage?* database has been a collaborative effort between researchers at SPLC and the general public.<sup>38</sup> While the goal of the *Whose Heritage?* database is to help individuals and communities identify Confederate symbols, this collaborative methodology reinforces the organization's mission to work in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy and advance a more inclusive democracy. SPLC defines method as the sources, guidelines, and processes that make up the *Whose Heritage?* database and report.

The *Whose Heritage?* database has benefitted from the exhaustive research and documentation of people across the United States. Between the publication of the first and second editions, over 800 people submitted memorials for consideration. In addition to augmenting the dataset, input from the public shapes how Confederate memorials are tracked. Initially, SPLC did not track the status of memorials or note whether a memorial was live, removed, relocated, pending, or renamed.

Black Lives Matter protesters led a chant in front of the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee on Monument Avenue in Richmond, VA.











When individuals, journalists, and local officials pointed out that some memorials had recently been removed, SPLC responded by adding categories reflecting a memorial's status. Publicizing the raw data encourages further collaboration; the *Whose Heritage?* database invites scholars, journalists, and the public to use the data to create narratives that educate broad audiences on how the history of the Confederacy continues to impact the contemporary landscape. In short, a collaborative methodology begets the production of even more collaborative research, stories, and reports.

Adopting a collaborative method also means that the *Whose Heritage?* database is constantly changing. Fluctuations in the total number of memorials indicates public engagement with the database and ongoing activism surrounding memorial removals. Because the information is obtained from official and unofficial sources (for example, Waymarking relies on users to upload information) duplications and other inaccuracies occur. Moreover, the database is not comprehensive, and as new memorials are discovered they are added to the database. The

public's input in finding and correcting mistakes has made the database stronger, and community input will continue to improve this resource.

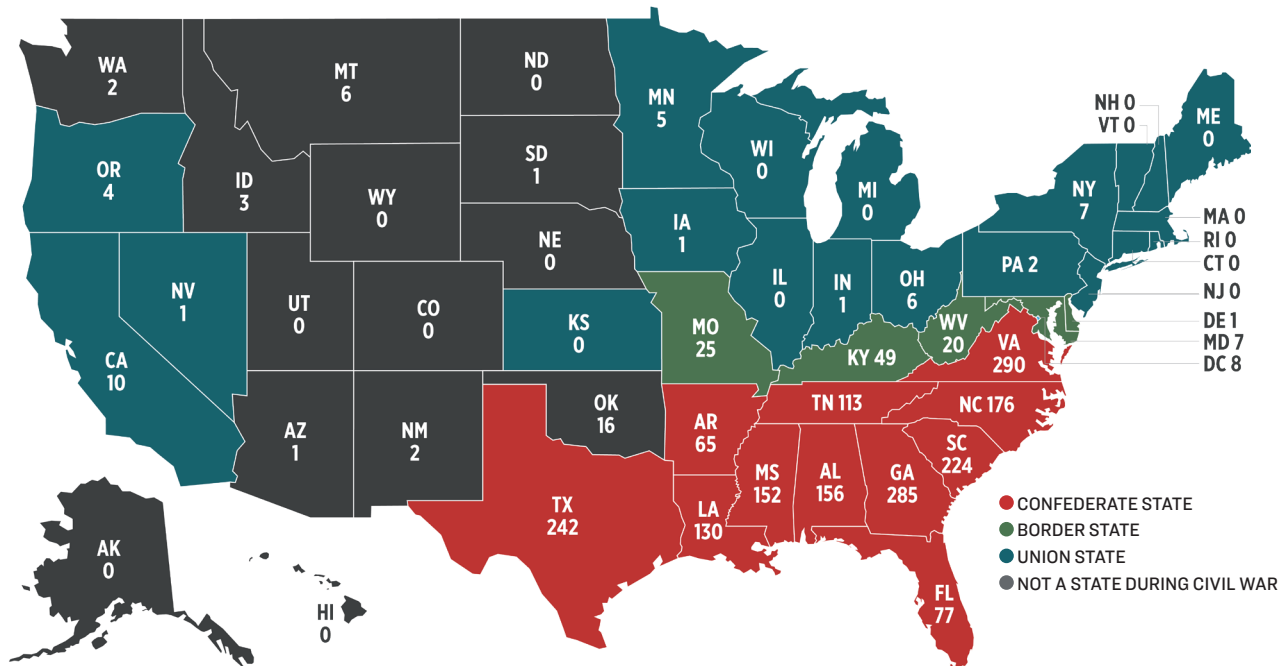
In addition to the methodological guidelines outlined below, SPLC uses cultural history as method. Cultural history uses texts to study change over time.<sup>39</sup> Through close readings of websites, material culture, and archival sources, SPLC researchers seek to understand the context in which a memorial was produced.<sup>40</sup> Examining *when* the memorial was dedicated, *who* sponsored it, *where* it was located, and *how* it was interpreted provides insight into what the memorial meant, and how that meaning continues to inform the present. Historically marginalized communities' interpretations of Confederate memorials are given primary consideration, and determinations about what is included in and excluded from the database are made based on context.

For example, cultural history helps to explain why so many schools were named after Confederates in the wake of *Brown v. Board*. In most cases, primary source information on the exact motivation



## TOTAL NUMBER OF LIVE CONFEDERATE MEMORIALS IN EACH STATE

Explore an interactive version of this map at [splcenter.org/whose-heritage](https://splcenter.org/whose-heritage)



for naming a school after a Confederate is not available. Coupling research on when the school was named and where it was located with secondary research—how Confederate heritage groups intentionally used primary and secondary education as a way to inculcate the Lost Cause ideology to the next generation, how monuments fell out of fashion in the 1950s while “living memorials” came into vogue, how Black Americans objected to attending schools named after Confederates, and finally how white Southerners resolutely objected to integration—allows researchers to determine that schools named after Confederates were part of a larger propaganda campaign to promote the Lost Cause.<sup>41</sup>

In some instances, primary sources are not available to confirm whether a memorial honors a Confederate, or somebody else. While SPLC has reasonable confidence that a memorial named Robert E. Lee or Jefferson Davis is honoring the Confederate general and president, respectively, other times a memorial is only named “Lee” or “Davis.” Because these are common last names, without primary source evidence it’s nearly

impossible to confirm whether these memorials honor Confederates. Therefore, SPLC relies on the context—when a memorial was dedicated and where it was located—to determine whether the memorial belongs in the database. The public can help to augment the database by sending SPLC primary source documentation to confirm a memorial’s origins, even (and most especially) if this evidence helps correct inaccuracies in the database.

While it’s impossible to ever truly know the thoughts or ideas of people who lived in the past, studying the larger context in which memorials were dedicated promotes understanding of the dominant beliefs and ideologies of the time. SPLC is confident that the Confederate symbols in the database cannot be understood outside of white supremacy because of the careful consideration given to the context in which they were produced.

Adopting cultural history as a method requires remaining attentive to change over time. Meaning and interpretation are not static; how a memorial was interpreted in one place at one time might differ from how the very same memorial



**THE *WHOSE*  
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INCLUDES ANY PERSON  
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OF AMERICA.**

was interpreted just a few years later. The monument to Robert E. Lee on Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia symbolized racism to many, but when the base was transformed into a piece of protest art following the murder of George Floyd, for some the meaning changed; it became a symbol of resistance and transformation. Therefore, cultural history requires taking a nuanced approach that balances competing interpretations, meanings, and ideas.<sup>42</sup> SPLC researchers weigh these considerations when making an ultimate decision about what is, and is not, included.

In what follows, the who, what, where, when, why, and how of SPLC's method is discussed in further detail.

**Who did we include?**

The *Whose Heritage?* database includes any person who served in the military or the government of the Confederate States of America. Examining the larger historical context and specific elements of the memorials guides decisions about Confederates whose legacies are not primarily defined by their service to the Confederate States of America. For example, James Longstreet was a Confederate general, but he later joined the Republican Party and criticized Robert E. Lee. Similarly, John Tyler served as the 10<sup>th</sup> president of the United States from 1841 – 1845. When the South succeeded in 1861, he tried to facilitate a compromise but ultimately failed and joined the Confederacy, serving as a member of the Confederate House of Representatives. Memorials to Tyler are generally excluded from the database since they more often reference his legacy as president, not his legacy as a Confederate. However, memorials to Longstreet may or may not be included depending on whether the memorial celebrates his contributions to the Confederacy or to Reconstruction (some memorials intentionally do not feature him wearing his Confederate army uniform). Gathering information about who sponsored a memorial, why they sponsored it, when it was erected, and how it was interpreted is necessary for deciding whether it merits inclusion in the database.

*Whose Heritage?* also features memorials dedicated specifically to women of the Confederacy. Historians have noted the pivotal role white Southern women played in memorializing the

Confederacy and propagating the Lost Cause ideology.<sup>43</sup> In addition to memorials that are dedicated to the women of the Confederacy generally, the database also includes memorials to Varina Davis, Jefferson Davis's wife, and Winnie Davis, his youngest daughter who became a symbol of the Lost Cause.<sup>44</sup>

By limiting the scope to memorials honoring Confederates, the database inevitably excludes racist or other problematic figures who did not serve the Confederacy. Memorials to John C. Calhoun, the South Carolina senator and defender of slavery, are excluded.<sup>45</sup> It also excludes figures who were adjacent to the Confederacy and offered significant material support but were not officially involved. People like Robert Ryland—a Baptist minister who served as president of Richmond College, enslaved people, and invested in the Confederacy—though deeply problematic, are also excluded.<sup>46</sup>

As debates over memorials to Lewis and Clark, George Washington, and even Abraham Lincoln have demonstrated, legacies are complex.<sup>47</sup> Memorialization raises important questions about

who gets remembered and how their contributions inform our collective past and our current historical moment. Although SPLC calls for the removal of all symbols of hate and white supremacy, the goal of the *Whose Heritage?* database is to provide evidence in the service of interrogating and upending the deeply problematic values of the Confederacy. Although the integrity of the database requires making difficult decisions about who to include and exclude from the database, SPLC encourages the replication of our methodology in order to create new projects tracking other figures who represent hate and are valorized in public space.

### What are the criteria for inclusion?

There are two main criteria for inclusion in the database. First, the memorial must honor a Confederate or the Confederacy. Second, the memorial must be located in public space within the United States and its territories.

Public space includes property owned by the government as well as privately owned spaces that the general public is invited to enter. Therefore, memorials in cemeteries, battlefields, private schools, museums, parks, and even churches are included because these places all invite the public to view or venerate the Confederacy. Memorials that receive taxpayer subsidized financial support

City workers drape a tarp over a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, VA.







The Dallas Confederate War Memorial statue at Pioneer Park stands over 65 feet tall and depicts a Confederate soldier standing atop an obelisk surrounded by Confederate President Jefferson Davis, Gens. Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson and Albert Sidney Johnston. It was removed in June, 2020.

or official government endorsements (such as inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places) are also considered public.<sup>48</sup>

Although the majority of memorials in our database were dedicated after the Civil War, there is no criterion dealing with a memorial's dedication date. This is because several memorials in the database were dedicated before the Civil War. They were included because the men they honor are known mostly today for their role in the Confederacy.

In some instances, memorials that fit the criteria above may be excluded from the database. For example, a plaque in a cemetery listing the names of individual Confederate soldiers who died would not be included if it was not promoting the "Lost Cause" (but a 65-foot obelisk in a

cemetery dedicated to Confederate soldiers is included). Ultimately, context—not hard and fast rules—guides decisions about what is included and excluded from the database. This allows for a full consideration of the many factors at play, and for SPLC to have confidence that the memorials in the database promoted hate and continue to convey this message in the present.

Finally, although reconciliation monuments dot the Southern landscape, SPLC does not include these memorials in the database. Civil War expert David Blight has argued that there are three visions of Civil War memory: reconciliation, white supremacy, and emancipation.<sup>49</sup> In Blight's personification, reconciliation and white supremacy "locked" arms, and reconciliation "overwhelmed" emancipation.<sup>50</sup> Though reconciliation memorials are deserving of special scrutiny, this database excludes reconciliation memorials. SPLC encourages communities to study the history of their reconciliation monuments to understand the context in which they were constructed and to interrogate the deeply problematic legacy of reconciliation.

### Where was the data sourced from?

In past editions of *Whose Heritage?*, SPLC gathered data from the public alongside federal, state, and private sources including the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the National Park Service, the National Register of Historic Places, state historical commissions' resources, Art Inventories Catalog: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Waymarking, The Historical Marker Database, Documenting the American South, and online databases maintained by Confederate heritage groups. These websites formed the basis of the data used in the Third Edition.

This report builds upon and extends the data. Sequentum conducted data scrapes of the Waymarking and NCES websites. Researchers cross-listed the existing database with the "web scraped" data to identify any new memorials that were not captured in previous data scrapes. When the origin of a school's name was unknown, schools were contacted to verify whether it honored a Confederate.



In June, 2020, protestors rallied outside Robert Mills Lusher Charter School, which is named after a Confederate and white supremacist.

Finally, SPLC researchers set up Google Alerts (using the keyword Confederate) to monitor memorial removals, relocations, and renamings. In the spring of 2020, researchers reached out to state officials to verify the status of monuments in the database. In the summer of 2020, researchers again contacted officials at schools named after Confederates pending a name change.

#### **When was data analysis conducted?**

The data and figures in this report are updated constantly, responding to changes made to the database. That means that numbers may fluctuate from day to day as new memorials are discovered and removed. To see the entire *Whose Heritage?* dataset, please visit [bit.ly/3u5skqz](https://bit.ly/3u5skqz).

#### **Why was a new edition needed?**

The third edition methodologically departs from the previous editions in three important ways,

which allowed new insights and conclusions to emerge from the data.

First, this report explicitly draws on cultural history as a method of analysis. Emphasizing the context—who sponsored a memorial, when it was erected, and how was it interpreted—informs decisions about what to include or exclude from the database.

Second, the criteria for inclusion in the database have expanded. Confederate memorials on battlefields and cemeteries are now included in the database. All Confederate memorials that welcome the public, even those that are privately owned, are now listed.

Finally, key terms used in the report and database have been defined and refined. Of note are different designations between memorials that were relocated, removed, pending, and renamed.



### How are categories of analysis defined?

The *Whose Heritage?* data is publicly available on Google Sheets and is updated automatically every four hours. Each row in the master spreadsheet lists a different memorial and each column represents a different category of analysis. Definitions for the designations in each column can be found below.

#### DESIGNATION DEFINITIONS

<b>Unique ID</b>	This is a unique identifier for each memorial that is generated automatically by the database.
<b>Feature Name</b>	This is the name of the memorial. When an official name is listed in the database where the data is sourced from, SPLC uses the official name. In the absence of an official name, SPLC researchers assign a descriptive name to the memorial.
<b>Honoree</b>	The person who the memorial honors. Most often, researchers assign an honoree based on the name of a memorial. Occasionally, an honoree is assigned based on the likeness or image of somebody depicted in a memorial.
<b>City</b>	The city that houses the memorial.
<b>County</b>	The county that houses the memorial.
<b>State</b>	The state that houses the memorial.
<b>Side</b>	This tracks whether the memorial was located in the North, South, or a border state during the Civil War.
<b>Coordinates</b>	This is the latitude and longitude of a memorial. SPLC uses Google Maps and Google Street View to obtain and verify coordinates.
<b>Symbol Type</b>	SPLC identifies six primary types of memorials. Those are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monument</li> <li>• Roadway</li> <li>• Other</li> <li>• County/Municipality</li> <li>• Building</li> <li>• School</li> </ul>
<b>Symbol Type Other</b>	SPLC further differentiates between types of memorials. Those are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body of water</li> <li>• Bridge</li> <li>• College</li> <li>• Commemorative license plate</li> <li>• Flag: Any flag featuring Confederate iconography.</li> <li>• Holiday</li> <li>• Marker: Throughout the South, there are historic markers about the Civil War, which often focus on military battles and Confederate leaders. At present time, few of these markers are included. While they contribute to a highly problematic narrative about the Civil War that eschews slavery and the events leading up to the war, as well as the effects of the war on women, civilians, and the enslaved, the information in them is usually factually true. Markers that engaged in Lost Cause propaganda were included. This is an area which merits further research and analysis — especially markers that record banal aspects of the war, such as noting a structure where Robert E. Lee, for example, spent the night, which is an attempt to deify him by memorializing every place he stepped foot.</li> <li>• Other</li> <li>• Park</li> <li>• Plaque</li> <li>• Prison</li> <li>• Scholarship</li> <li>• Seal</li> <li>• Song</li> <li>• School District</li> </ul>

<b>Sponsor</b>	Sometimes, a specific individual or group, like the United Daughters of the Confederacy or the Sons of Confederate Veterans, sponsored a Confederate memorial. Monuments are more likely to have a sponsor than other types of memorials. Usually, the name of the sponsor is displayed on the monument. Occasionally this information is culled from online or archival research.
<b>Year Dedicated</b>	This field denotes the year a memorial was officially dedicated. Monuments are most likely to have a year dedicated on them, though occasionally this information is culled from online or archival research. In some cases, when the year dedicated is unknown, but the year completed is known, that figure will be input into this entry.
<b>Year Removed</b>	If a monument has been removed, that year is recorded here.
<b>Tracking Status</b>	<p>SPLC uses five different designations to reflect the status of a memorial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live:</b> The memorial met SPLC's criteria and is currently on display. Monuments where part has been removed but references to the Confederacy remain—such as a pedestal which includes Confederate names or symbols—will be considered live. This also applies to monuments that have been altered (for example, switching from the Confederate States of America battle flag to the First National Flag) but still fit the criteria for designation as a Confederate memorial.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• <b>Relocated:</b> The memorial met SPLC's criteria and has been relocated from one site to another. For example, often a municipality will move a statue from a prominent public location—such as a courthouse—to a less visible location, such as a cemetery. This includes memorials that are in storage while officials decide where to put them as well as memorials in undisclosed locations. It also includes memorials that have been returned to individuals who display these memorials on private property and welcome the public to view them.</li> <li>• <b>Removed:</b> The memorial met SPLC's criteria and has been removed in its entirety. There is no indication that it will be returned to public or private land for public viewing, even if it was illegally removed. Monuments in storage that will not be put back up in public will be considered removed. If a memorial was stolen and has not been returned within 1.5 years, SPLC considers the memorial removed.</li> <li>• <b>Pending:</b> When the local governing board has voted to remove the memorial, but the object has not been physically removed, it is considered pending. Moreover, if the monument has been removed but there is credible ongoing legal action to reinstate the monument, it is characterized as pending.</li> <li>• <b>Renamed:</b> The object met SPLC's designation for a Confederate memorial but has been renamed.</li> </ul> <p><sup>1</sup> John Sharp, "Baldwin County Votes To Replace Four Flags From its Seal Including Confederate Battle Flag," AL.com, October 6, 2015, <a href="https://www.al.com/news/mobile/2015/10/baldwin_county_votes_to_remove.html">https://www.al.com/news/mobile/2015/10/baldwin_county_votes_to_remove.html</a></p>
<b>Symbol Location</b>	<p>Though not every memorial fits within the locations listed below, those that do are characterized accordingly. There are seven different symbol locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cemetery</li> <li>• College</li> <li>• Courthouse grounds</li> <li>• Federal land</li> <li>• Government office grounds</li> <li>• Military</li> <li>• Private land</li> </ul>



# MAIN CONCLUSIONS

## Most Confederate memorials are not monuments.

SPLC has identified 723 live monuments, which make up just over a third of all memorials in our database. But there are more roadways (741) honoring Confederates than there are monuments. Together with schools (201), counties and municipalities (104), parks (38), buildings (51), holidays (22), military bases (10), commemorative license plates (7), bodies of water (6), and bridges (6), these places do cultural work to reinforce the values of the Confederacy.

They are living memorials, which historian Andrew M. Shanken describes as “useful projects such as community centers, libraries, forests, and even highways that were marked in some fashion...as memorials.”<sup>51</sup> Living memorials commemorate the past differently than monuments because they are used in the present, and therefore privilege everyday living over an official historical narrative. They deserve special attention because they force students at schools, soldiers on military bases,

Bishop O.C. Allen III stands in front of what used to be called Confederate Avenue. Until it was renamed United Avenue in 2018, Confederate Avenue in Atlanta served as a concrete reminder that Georgia once took up arms against the United States.



Confederate AVE  
SE

at Park





citizens of towns, and commuters traveling by roads to honor Confederate heroes in their everyday lives. Attending to the different forms Confederate memorials take provides a greater understanding of how the legacy of the Confederacy continues to inform racial inequality in the present.

Attending to the type of memorial is especially important given that the media frequently covers stories dealing with monuments. Images of crowds toppling Confederate monuments and construction crews removing statues in the dead of night dominate media coverage of Confederate memorials. These powerful photographs and televised coverage dramatically reflect ongoing debates about whether Confederate memorials are symbols of hate or history.<sup>52</sup> Sometimes stories about students attending schools named after Confederates and efforts to rename the ten military bases receive attention, but media coverage does not always reflect the diversity of Confederate memorials in this country. Though renaming and removing living Confederate memorials might not offer as dramatic a visual as toppling a monument, this action has an

equally meaningful impact because it removes vestiges of the Confederacy from schools, roads, military bases, parks, and buildings—the places and spaces that are the fabric of our communities and our lives.

**Confederate monuments are not limited to the South.**

While the vast majority of Confederate memorials today are located in former Confederate States (1,910), Confederate memorials can be found in Union States and Washington, DC (44), border states (102), states that were not yet admitted to the Union (30), and even Puerto Rico (1).

Since the Civil War, more than 200 Confederate memorials have been dedicated outside of former Confederate states. Many of those have been removed, relocated, or renamed, but too many remain. Why are there so many Confederate memorials outside of the South?

Chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy existed outside of the South and promoted the Lost Cause across the United States. For



example, during the 1930s, the United Daughters of the Confederacy's California Division established two scholarships for UCLA students who were decedents of Confederate veterans—a scholarship that was last offered in 2012 – 2013.<sup>53</sup> In 1963, the Boston Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy erected a monument to Confederate prisoners of war held on Georges Island.<sup>54</sup> Though this memorial was removed in 2017, it illustrates how effective the organization was at promoting a false narrative about the Civil War that erased the role slavery played in the conflict. Moreover, white supremacy is not limited to the South. Because Confederate memorials are symbols of white supremacy, it is unsurprising that they would appear throughout the United States and its territories, as white supremacy is endemic to our society.

Confederate memorials have no place in public space. But it's especially egregious that places that actively fought against the Confederacy and suffered casualties readily celebrate them. Therefore, SPLC calls on communities across the United

States—within and beyond the South—to reckon with their heritage and to remove not only symbols of white supremacy, but the systems that produced them.

**The popularity of different kinds of Confederate memorials changes over time.**

Most Confederate monuments were erected in the period following Reconstruction and during Jim Crow.<sup>55</sup> In 1908, 31 Confederate monuments were erected. The following year, 38 monuments were dedicated. In 1910, 46 new Confederate monuments were put up in public space. And by 1911, the year when the most Confederate monuments were erected in all United States history, communities and heritage groups erected 50 new Confederate monuments. Not coincidentally, these monuments were being erected around the 50th anniversary of the Civil War when Americans were eager to embrace reconciliation—and not emancipation.<sup>56</sup>

As the popularity of statuary memorials waned around World War I, so too did the



## THE CONFEDERATE BATTLE FLAG TOOK ON A NEW MEANING AS A SYMBOL OF WHITE SUPREMACY AFTER 1948, WHEN "DIXIECRATS" USED IT TO OPPOSE CIVIL RIGHTS.

production of Confederate monuments.<sup>57</sup> By World War II, Confederate sympathizers found new ways to commemorate the Confederacy.<sup>58</sup> Just as monuments were erected in response to Reconstruction, schools were largely named after Confederates in the period following the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board*, which ended racial segregation in schools. In 1965, the year after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the same year as the Voting Rights Act was passed, nine schools were named after Confederates—more dedications than any other year. Eight schools were dedicated in 1959, six schools were dedicated in 1958 and in 1962, and five schools were dedicated in 1961. Put another way, white communities signaled their opposition to the federal desegregation mandate by recalling Confederates who fought the United States to uphold white supremacy.

By carefully attending to what kinds of memorials were erected in different time periods, a clearer picture emerges of how memorial type conveys messages about race, white supremacy, and Civil War memory in different historical moments. Historian and General Ty Seidule explained how during World War I the War Department's guidelines about naming bases included a preference for Civil War generals who were local to the area and who would not "offend local sensibilities."<sup>59</sup> He explains that

training camps named for Lee, Beauregard, Benning, Bragg, and Gordon made sense to white Americans at the time who "found the Confederate states' veterans more American than treasonous."<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the Confederate battle flag took on new meaning as a symbol of white supremacy after 1948, when "Dixiecrats" used it to oppose Civil Rights.<sup>61</sup> More research is needed to understand when and how the dedication of Confederate memorials including roadways, natural landmarks, holidays, counties, and towns enshrined white supremacy in public space.

Specifying which memorials were erected and when also helps us to contextualize how the Civil War is commemorated today. Since 2000, 45 new Confederate monuments have been erected, and 24 of those were dedicated by the Sons of Confederate Veterans.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, in 2019, 200 people attended a rededication for a Confederate monument in Sylvania, Georgia that was originally erected in 1909.<sup>63</sup> This ceremony reanimated the monument and reinforced the white supremacist values it represented. Scholar Erika Doss notes that memorials in America are "flourishing," and coins the term *memorial mania*: "an obsession with issues of memory and history and an urgent desire to express and claim those issues in visibly public contexts." According to Doss, "Today's growing numbers of memorials represent heightened anxieties about who and what should be remembered

in America.”<sup>64</sup> The recent (re)dedications of Confederate monuments should be understood in this larger context, signaling how monuments powerfully reflect and shape anxieties over race in America. These new Confederate monuments reassert the Lost Cause narrative and cling to the racist belief of white Americans’ superiority.

**Recent efforts to remove Confederate memorials offer inspiring insights that can assist social justice advocates working to create fairer, freer, and more just public spaces**

Since the Charleston church massacre in 2015, activists have successfully renamed, relocated, and removed 377 Confederate memorials from communities across the United States. This progress is inspiring and draws on the long history of Black activism contesting Confederate memorials. Our data suggests that despite the passage of draconian preservation laws, communities have found creative ways to remove symbols of hate from public space (but not always without retribution from state lawmakers and authorities). Moreover, the database indicates that there is more activism surrounding removing Confederate monuments than other kinds of monuments in the United States. According to Monument Lab’s *National Monument Audit*, 99.4 percent of monuments “remain in place.” In contrast, a much higher percentage of the 885 monuments in our database have been removed, relocated, or renamed.<sup>65</sup>

One sobering conclusion about memorial removal is that communities are more likely to take action to remove a Confederate memorial in the wake of a tragedy or a hate crime. In 2015, sixteen memorials were relocated, removed, or renamed, compared with two memorials removed the year before. It took Charleston for Nikki Haley—who served as governor of South Carolina when the shooting occurred—to realize that the Confederate flag at the State house grounds “should have never been there” and that “people were driving by and felt hurt and pain.”<sup>66</sup> The murder of nine Black worshipers should not have to be the impetus for the governor to realize that a Confederate symbol is causing hurt and pain.

In 2017, after the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia resulted in the death of



After the 2017 Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia resulted in the death of Heather Heyer, 37 memorials were removed.

anti-racist protestor Heather Heyer, 37 memorials were removed (compared with 17 memorials removed the year before). This was the moment Shah Rahman, who has worked tirelessly to remove Confederate symbols from his alma mater, Virginia Military Institute, realized Confederate memorials should be removed from public space.<sup>67</sup> Seeing that the people protecting the statue of Lee in Charlottesville were “a bunch of white supremacists,” helped Rahman question the role of these memorials in our society. He described how, “It never really occurred to me until that moment that these people we’d been taught to worship as heroes—they were scumbags and traitors, fighting their own country.” Rahman was not alone in taking action to create more fair and just public spaces in the wake of Charlottesville.

In 2020, the murder of George Floyd sparked the removal of 157 memorials, the most removals in any



one year on record. In some instances, protestors dramatically felled the monuments. Other times, elected officials removed monuments, citing public safety concerns.

Some kinds of Confederate memorials are easier to remove than others, an insight that can impact social justice activists working to remove Confederate memorials. In 2021, at least 49 living memorials were removed, relocated, or renamed, but only 16 monuments came down. This trend bears out in 2016, 2018, and 2019, when communities removed, relocated, or renamed more living Confederate memorials than monuments. The years when George Floyd’s murder (2020) and the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville (2017) occurred, communities took down more monuments than living Confederate memorials. Absent a similar social justice flashpoint, communities and activists seeking to remove symbols of hate from public space should consider starting with living Confederate memorials.

Schools are a good place to begin. In 2021, 33 schools were renamed or closed. The year before, 20 schools were renamed. This means that students—and most especially students of color—are not forced to attend institutions named for people who fought to protect enslavement. Perhaps the public is more sympathetic to renaming schools than they are to taking down monuments. More research is needed to determine why communities have more successfully removed living Confederate memorials and to test this hypothesis about schools specifically.

The data also tells us that because removals are most likely to happen after a tragedy, better strategies for promoting sustained dialogue and activism are needed. The process of removing symbols of hate is continual and involves engaging communities in conversations about race and memory. In fact, at least one historian has argued that discussion is critical for removals. Denise Meringolo has said that after a monument has been removed, “I’d be more interested in seeing those places turned into spaces for forums and discussions...”<sup>68</sup> SPLC is committed to supporting communities in their efforts to grapple with the legacy of the Civil War by removing symbols of white supremacy and by promoting ongoing, open, and honest communication about race in this country.

#### TOP 3 INDIVIDUALS COMMEMORATED

235

MEMORIALS COMMEMORATE  
ROBERT E. LEE

144

MEMORIALS COMMEMORATE  
JEFFERSON DAVIS

121

MEMORIALS COMMEMORATE THOMAS  
JONATHAN “STONEWALL” JACKSON

The top three individuals commemorated are Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, and Stonewall Jackson.

Most Confederate memorials in the United States today don’t commemorate a specific individual (722). But of the ones that do, Robert E. Lee (235) is most frequently honored, followed by Jefferson Davis (144), and Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson (121).

Robert E. Lee was a famed Confederate general who enslaved people and wrote about the superiority of the white race.<sup>69</sup> There is no truth to the pernicious myth that he was a “kindly” enslaver. He separated enslaved families, and, Wesley Norris, a man that Lee enslaved, described torture at Lee’s direction. “Not satisfied with simply lacerating our naked flesh,” Norris said, “Gen. Lee then ordered the overseer to thoroughly wash our backs with brine, which was done.” Despite this brutality,

there are more memorials to Robert E. Lee in the United States than there are monuments to either Benjamin Franklin or John F. Kennedy.

Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, was similarly cruel. He enslaved more than 100 people and said that slavery was, “a form of civil government instituted for a class of people not fit to govern themselves...We recognize the fact of the inferiority stamped upon that race of men by the Creator, and from the cradle to grave, our Government, as a civil institution, marks that inferiority.”<sup>70</sup> In addition to his views on slavery, he led a government that committed treason against the United States. And he was extremely unpopular with his own public.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson, another General in the Confederate States Army, enslaved six people and used Christianity to defend his views on slavery.<sup>72</sup> According to the Library of Congress, only Robert E. Lee is a more celebrated Confederate general.<sup>73</sup> Speeches at Virginia Military Institute for the dedication ceremonies of the Jackson-Hope Medals (1877), the Stonewall Jackson Memorial Building (1897), and the Stonewall Jackson Statue (1912) provide insight into why Jackson retains such a stronghold on the popular imagination. Speakers lauded his faith and praised his skill as a general, often elevating him and deifying the role he played in the war.<sup>74</sup> However, his commemoration—like all Confederates—is premised on the erasure of the role he played in defending the institution of slavery and his acts of treason against the United States.

This is the history that is celebrated by the memorials that honor these men. That two of these three men are remembered primarily for their military service is no accident. Indeed, most of the Confederate figures honored by memorials served the Confederate armed services, not the government. Eighty percent of the 20 most commemorated Confederate figures were in the military. After Jefferson Davis, the second most frequently commemorated Confederate civilian is John C. Breckinridge, the Secretary of War.<sup>75</sup>

War is a dominant theme in monuments across the United States.<sup>76</sup> Confederate memorials reflect this, intentionally telling a version of history that erases what these men fought to protect: slavery. Who Confederate memorials remember

reinforces the way war and violence work simultaneously to facilitate white supremacy and dominate our collective memory.

### Action Items

If you’ve been inspired by the data and stories in the report, SPLC invites you to take action and challenge the Lost Cause ideology. Within and beyond the South, there are opportunities to make a lasting impact through education and engagement with elected officials and community leaders. Here are three ways to get started:

1. Use the *Whose Heritage?* map and database to research whether there’s a Confederate memorial in your community. Contact us if there is a Confederate memorial that’s missing from our data.
2. Support or promote legislation, policies, and community action that support efforts to remove symbols of hate from public space.
3. Teach the history of the Civil War honestly and accurately. Learning for Justice’s Teaching Hard History framework provides resources for

On July 1, 2020 in Richmond, VA, workers removed the statue of Confederate General Stonewall Jackson from its pedestal on Monument Avenue.





educators looking to inform students about the legacy of slavery in the United States.

For more information, and for tools to build a campaign against these offensive Confederate symbols, check out the *Whose Heritage?* Community Action Guide.

### Conclusion

On Oct. 15, 2021, the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center (JSAAHC) in Charlottesville, Virginia wrote to the City Council asking them for possession of the Robert E. Lee statue—made famous during the city’s deadly Unite the Right Rally in 2017—for the purpose of melting down the metal and “remolding it into a new work of public art that expresses the City’s values of inclusivity and racial justice.”<sup>77</sup> By building the community’s input into the transformation process and prioritizing the descendants of enslaved people, JSAAHC ensured democratic participation and community healing. Their appeal was persuasive and in the early morning hours of Dec. 7, 2021, the city council voted to donate the statue to the history center.<sup>78</sup>

According to poet and Mellon Foundation President Elizabeth Alexander, “permanence in our commemorative landscape is an illusion.”<sup>79</sup> Despite the best efforts of those who sought to commemorate the Confederacy, their memorials, like all memorials, are impermanent. Confederate memorials should never have been built, and we must follow the lead of communities and groups like the JSAAHC and actively remake our history and our public space. Transforming our commemorative and political landscapes are not mutually exclusive goals; the work of *Whose Heritage?* will continue well beyond the removal of the last remaining Confederate memorial and will end only when our institutions are free of racial inequality. We invite you to join us as we embark on this project.

### Further Reading

If you’d like to learn more about Civil War memory and the history of Confederate memorials, we encourage you to check out these resources:

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➤ Blight, David W. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.

➤ Bonner, Robert E. *Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.

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## A NEW DAY DAWNS

BY NIKKY FINNEY

On the occasion of the Confederate flag falling in South Carolina, July 10, 2015

It is the pearl-blue peep of day.  
 All night the palmetto sky  
 Was seized with the aurora  
 And alchemy of the remarkable.  
 A blazing canopy of newly minted  
 Light fluttered in while we slept.  
 We are not free to go on as if  
 Nothing happened yesterday.  
 Not free to cheer as if all our  
 Prayers have finally been answered  
 Today. We are free only to search  
 The yonder of each other's faces,  
 As we pass by, tip our hat, hold a  
 Door ajar, asking silently,  
 Who are we now? Blood spilled  
 In battle is two-headed: horror &  
 Sweet revelation. Let us put the  
 Cannons of our eyes away forever.  
 Our one and only Civil War is done.  
 Let us tilt, rotate, strut on. If we,  
 The living, do not give our future  
 The same honor as the sacred dead,  
 Of then and now — we lose everything.  
 The gardenia air feels lighter on this  
 New day, guided now by iridescent  
 Fireflies, those atomlike creatures  
 Of our hot summer nights, now begging  
 Us to team up and search with them  
 For that which brightens every  
 Darkness. Soon, it will be just us  
 Again, alone, beneath the swirling  
 Indigo sky of South Carolina. Alone &  
 Working on the answer to our great  
 Day's question: *Who are we now?*  
 What new human cosmos can be made  
 Of this tempest of tears, this upland  
 Of inconsolable jubilation? In all our  
 Lifetimes, finally, this towering  
 Undulating moment is here.<sup>80</sup>

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bonds of nationalism.' Statues not only embellished the postbellum public landscape but encouraged passionate and consensual understandings of nationhood." See Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 20.

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