

A Case for Removing Confederate Monuments

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1. Introduction

On August 21st 2017, white supremacist protestors marched in Charlottesville, Virginia purportedly to protest the city's planned removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. On that day, white supremacist James Fields, drove into a crowd of counter-protesters severely injuring many, and killing one, Heather Heyer. As of this writing, the Confederate statues in Charlottesville haven't been removed, although they were covered with tarps for about six months.ⁱ In the wake of the violent protests and public outcry, many other cities began removing Confederate statues from public display.ⁱⁱ

This, of course, raises the philosophical question of whether Confederate monuments *ought* to be removed. I'll focus on the ethical question of whether a certain group, viz. the relevant government officials and members of the public who together can remove the Confederate monuments, are *morally obligated* to (of their own volition) remove them. I'll not be discussing the closely related question of whether it ought to be *legally obligatory* to remove Confederate monuments. Even if people are morally obligated to remove them, it doesn't follow that should be illegal to preserve the monuments.ⁱⁱⁱ Figuring out the correct answer to related questions, however, likely necessitates first answering the moral question on which I focus.

In this paper, I argue that people have a moral obligation to remove most, if not all, public Confederate monuments because of the unavoidable harm they inflict on undeserving persons. This paper is structured as follows. In the next section, I provide some relevant historical context. I then make my harm-based argument for the removal of Confederate monuments. After that, I consider and rebut five objections.

2. A Brief History of Confederate Monuments

Without having first looked into their history, one may naturally assume that, while perhaps not created for entirely innocuous reasons, Confederate monuments at least weren't created for explicitly racist reasons. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be the case. There are a minimum of 1,728 publicly sponsored Confederate symbols in the United States.^{iv} Most of them were created long after the Civil War ended to, at least in part, further subjugate African-Americans.^v

Of course, plenty of Confederate monuments were created in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. During the "Reconciliation" period between the North and the South, white Southerners used the Confederacy to promote white cultural unity.^{vi} Historian Fitzhugh Brundage argues that the "pursuit of white cultural unity through the Confederate commemoration went hand-in-hand with the promotion of white supremacy."^{vii} An immediate consequence of promoting *white* cultural unity meant excluding, "othering," non-whites.^{viii} Moreover, as Brundage notes, some of the early Confederate monuments were further inextricably linked to white supremacy because white supremacists were chosen to speak at their dedication.^{ix} So, a non-trivial number of Confederate monuments created in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War are unquestionably racist.^x

What is particularly surprising (and depressing), however, is that the majority of Confederate monuments appear to have been created long after the Civil War for distinct explicitly racist reasons. The majority of Confederate monuments were erected in one of two periods: the portion of the Jim Crow era between the early 1900s and 1920s and the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s.^{xi} During the late 19th century and early 20th century, Jim Crow voting laws were passed to disenfranchise African-American voters. A number of advocates in Southern towns erected Confederate statues because the Confederate mythologies seemingly helped justify the Jim Crow laws.^{xii} Historian Jane Dailey argued that erecting public Confederate monuments near government buildings (e.g. in front of court houses) was a “power play” aimed at intimidating African-Americans.^{xiii}

Interestingly, statues were often the monument of choice because technological innovations allowed companies to mass produce statues quite cheaply. Original bronze statues cost thousands of dollars, which was cost prohibitive for small towns with limited financial resources. Yet, mass produced zinc statues, made by the company Monumental Bronze, sold for a mere \$450. Some popular models (e.g. the “Silent Sentinel” soldier) were even sold as both Northern and Southern soldiers.^{xiv} Many of these statues were purchased by private citizens, most notably the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), to be displayed on public land and preserved with public funds.^{xv}

Although the majority of public Confederate monuments were created before 1950, there was a noticeable spike in Confederate memorials during the 1950s. More than 45 Confederate monuments were dedicated or rededicated “between the U.S. Supreme Court’s school desegregation decision in 1954 and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968.”^{xvi} These actions were examples of the same power play tactics that were used during the Jim Crow era. The rise in Confederate monuments at this time was, at least in part, the product of a backlash among segregationists.^{xvii} So, the majority Confederate monuments, which were created long after the Civil War had ended are also unquestionably racist.

Even this brief overview should suffice to demonstrate that typical Confederate monuments were created by racist people with racist motivations. These facts are no secret, and this is necessary to keep in mind when considering the nature of the harm that the continued existence of public Confederate monuments cause to many.

3. A Harm-Based Argument for Removing Confederate Monuments

In this section, I’ll make a straightforward harm-based argument for the removal of Confederate monuments. My harm-based argument is not exclusive to those who know the relevant history. I’ll explain why Confederate monuments can also wrongfully harm those completely unaware of the racist reasons most Confederate monuments were created. In short, Confederate monuments unavoidably harm people who don’t deserve to be harmed and, as such, we should remove them unless there’s stronger countervailing reason to preserve them. The first part of my argument can be stated more formally as follows.

- (1) If the existence of a monument *M* unavoidably harms an undeserving group, then there’s strong moral reason to end the existence of *M*.
- (2) Public Confederate monuments unavoidably harm *at least* those who suffer^{xviii} as a result of (I) knowing the racist motivation behind the existence of most Confederate monuments or as a result of (II) having the horrors of the Civil War and the United States’ racist history made salient when they see public Confederate monuments.

(3) Therefore, there's strong moral reason to remove public Confederate monuments.

This argument is valid, which means that if both premises (1) and (2) are true, then the conclusion (3) must also be true. Thus, if one wants to reject the conclusion, then as a matter of logic, one must also reject at least one of the premises. Notice that the conclusion only states that there's *strong moral reason* to remove the monuments, stopping short of stating that there's a *moral obligation* to remove the statues. This is because, theoretically, there could be countervailing moral reason to preserve the monuments that's stronger than the moral reason to take them down. For instance, if an evil genius were going to destroy the entire world unless we preserve the monuments, then we would be obligated to preserve them. In the next section, I consider the most viable candidates for such countervailing reasons and argue that they don't outweigh the moral reason to remove the monuments. Before I do that, however, it's necessary to formalize the remainder of my argument.

- (4) If there's strong moral reason to remove public Confederate monuments, then absent stronger countervailing reasons to preserve them, people are morally obligated to (of their own volition) remove public Confederate monuments.
- (5) There are no countervailing reasons to preserve public Confederate monuments that are stronger than the moral reasons to remove them.
- (6) Therefore, people are morally obligated to (of their own volition) remove public Confederate monuments.

Propositions (3)-(6) are also a valid argument. So, (1)-(2) entail (3) and (3)-(5) entail (6). This means that if one wishes to reject my conclusion (6), they'll have to reject premise(s) (1), (2), (4) or (5). I take (1) to be uncontroversial and obviously true. It can be derived from an exceedingly plausible moral axiom that if x unavoidably harms morally considerable beings who don't deserve to be harmed, then there's strong moral reason to prevent x .^{xix}

Premise (2) is also clearly true and, I believe, at least the first disjunct (*I*) is rather uncontroversial. People have been opposed to Confederate monuments as long as they've existed. The motivations behind the creation of Confederate monuments were transparent to those alive at the time of their creation. Countless people who lived through the Civil Rights era are alive today, seeing the same Confederate monuments created to further the oppression of African-Americans. The millions of people who've read the relevant news stories and history texts know the history behind the Confederate monuments. Knowledge of this history factors into manner in which people^{xx} suffer as a result of seeing, or even simply knowing, that the Confederate monuments are still standing.^{xxi} One can find ample testimony from those protesting the Confederate monuments explaining how they find the continued existence of the monuments offensive and harmful.^{xxii} We, of course, should believe people about their first-person experience.

The second disjunct (*II*) of premise (2) should be rather uncontroversial. However, it appears to often be overlooked in the debate. Consider someone unaware of the racist motivations for creating (most) Confederate monuments and who has the typical cursory knowledge of the Civil War. Suppose, hypothetically, that the Confederate monument they happen to see was created for entirely innocuous reasons. Does *this* Confederate monument still unavoidably harm them? Yes; at least, it will for some people. Seeing the monument can non-voluntarily make salient America's racist past and the horrors of one of the darkest periods in American history. Having these facts made salient can clearly cause one to suffer *even if* we grant that the monument itself is not racist and was not created for racist reasons.

To further understand the nature of this harm, consider another historical example. In the mid-1970s, transgressing social norms for shock value was part of the punk ethos. Toward this end, a number of prominent punk musicians (e.g. Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols and Siouxsie of Siouxsie and the Banshees) wore swastika armbands or clothing on which swastikas were prominently displayed. This trend may have been started by the Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren, who was himself Jewish, and who sold clothes with swastikas on them.^{xxiii} These particular punks were not wearing swastikas because they were prejudiced, yet I contend that it was nevertheless morally wrong for them to do so. Those who saw punks donning swastikas in public (many of whom were survivors of World War II) were harmed because seeing them unavoidably made salient the horrors of anti-Semitism, World War II, and the Holocaust. This, in turn, caused them to suffer. Crucially, it could cause them to suffer *even if* they knew that the reasons behind these punks' actions were not prejudice. The same is true in the analogue case of Confederate monuments.

As already noted, premises (1)-(2) entail (3). If one accepts (1)-(3), this leaves premises (4) or (5) for opponents to reject. Premise (4) should be as uncontroversial as (1) and can just be derived from a moral axiom which holds that if you have strong moral reason^{xxiv} to x , then absent stronger reason to not x , you're morally obligated to x . This only leaves premise (5), which is perhaps the most contentious premise of my argument. But critics will need to identify reasons to preserve the monuments that supposedly outweigh the harm-based moral reasons to take them down. In the remaining space, I'll consider what I take to be the most popular and plausible reasons that can be used to argue against premise (5).

4. Objections

4.1 Historical Significance and Aesthetic Value

Those wishing to preserve Confederate monuments may argue that they are great works of art that have a great deal of aesthetic value. They may also claim that the monuments are historically significant and that removing them will result in a loss historical value. If these considerations warrant rejecting premise (5), preventing the loss of the historic and aesthetic value would have to be more important than preventing the harm the Confederate monuments cause.

I deny that removing these monuments need result in the loss of any historical or aesthetic value. Plenty of philosophers have argued that works of art (including monuments) can be intrinsically valuable for historical or aesthetic reasons.^{xxv} Yet, none would think that there's much aesthetic or historical value in the mass produced Confederate monuments created for racist reasons. Moreover, any aesthetic value there is easily replaceable with other works of art.^{xxvi} This needn't be true of all Confederate monuments, of course. For instance, some may think that the Robert E. Lee statue in Charlottesville has great aesthetic and historical value. Granting this, I am quite confident that preserving the collective aesthetic and historical value is less important than preventing the undeserved suffering caused by the statue. To see why, consider the following. Plausibly, the *collective* amount of harm the Lee statue caused amounts to a single lifetime worth of suffering or, at least, many years worth of suffering. Now, imagine that you find yourself in the following situation.

Steve or a Statue: A comet is falling from the sky towards an innocent person, Steve. If you do nothing, it will injure Steve so badly that he will suffer for decades before dying. If

you push Steve out of the way, the comet will strike the Robert E. Lee statue and permanently destroy it.^{xxvii}

What should you do? It seems clear to me that you should save Steve instead of the statue. If this is right, then we should believe that whatever reason there is to preserve Confederate monuments for their (supposed) historical or aesthetic value, that reason is outweighed by the reasons we have to prevent the undeserved unavoidable suffering such monuments cause.

Even if one believes there is more reason to preserve the historic or aesthetic value than there is to prevent people from suffering undeservedly, this preservationist argument fails. The reason why is that it's possible to remove the Confederate monuments without the loss of any historic or aesthetic value. This could be done, as some have argued, by placing the monuments in a museum where they can be put in the proper historical context.^{xxviii} Because monuments are reverential in nature, placing them in a museum in the proper historical context may cause them to cease to be *monuments* and, consequently, so harmful.^{xxix} But it would not cause them to lose any of their aesthetic or historical value.

4.2 Removing Statues Erases History

A closely related response given by preservationists is that removing Confederate monuments erases history and the consequences of erasing history can be bad. As the old saying goes, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made this sort of argument when asked about whether Confederate statues should be preserved. She replied

"Nobody is alive today who remembers the Civil War, but by looking at [a Confederate monument] you can trigger what it meant and what it was like. You don't need to honor the purposes of people [who] were on the other side of history, but you better be able to remind people."^{xxx}

I am extremely skeptical that Confederate statues themselves impart much in the way of historical knowledge or lend insight into what it was like to exist during the Civil War. Any information one gains from looking at a statue or reading a plaque on a monument could be found by going on Wikipedia.^{xxxi} More importantly, however, even granting (for the sake of argument) that there would be a non-trivial loss of historical knowledge if the monuments are removed, it doesn't follow that there need be a net decrease in historical knowledge. Whatever knowledge would be lost by removing the monuments could be compensated for by the creation of additional educational resources^{xxxii} that impart the same relevant knowledge, but are not harmful in the way reverential Confederate monuments are. Finally, even if removing the monuments led to some unavoidable loss of historical knowledge, preventing that loss of that value is just less important than preventing the amount of suffering Confederate monuments cause undeserving individuals to experience.

4.3 Selective Honor

Some preservationists have argued that we can continue to preserve Confederate monuments to honor the noble accomplishments of the people they valorize without also honoring the morally heinous aspects of the people in question.^{xxxiii} This claim is not obviously implausible. A statue of Thomas Jefferson, for instance, may be thought to honor him for such

accomplishments as being the primary author of the Declaration of Independence without thereby, in any way, honoring him for being a vicious slave holder.

This argument won't help the preservationist, however. Granting that it's *possible* for Confederate monuments to only honor the honorable, it does not follow that it's morally permissible to preserve them in the hopes that will happen. First, this is unlikely to be what would actually happen. As the Charlottesville protest helped demonstrate, there is a substantial number of white nationalists (a.k.a. Neo-Nazis) who wish to preserve and honor morally atrocious aspects of the Confederacy. Second, would any good that comes from honoring whatever is good about the Confederacy outweigh the harm the monument inflicts on undeserving people? I think the answer is quite clearly "No." for reasons illustrated by my *Steve or a Statue* case.^{xxxiv} Few would think it morally permissible to create a statue of Bill Cosby to honor him for his contribution to comedy even under the assumption that people would only be honoring Cosby for his honorable accomplishments. A good explanation for *why* this is wrong is because it's simply more important to prevent the pain that a Cosby statue would cause survivors of sexual abuse than it is to benefit people desiring to honor Cosby. The same is true with respect to Confederate monuments, and so the mere fact that it's possible to selectively honor the Confederacy does not suffice to demonstrate that premise (5) is false.

4.4 Harm-Based Reasons to Preserve Confederate Monuments

If we have strong moral reason to remove Confederate monuments because of the harm that preserving them causes, don't we also have strong moral reason to preserve the monuments because of the harm removing them would cause? After all, there's no shortage of preservationists who claim they would suffer if the monuments were removed.^{xxxv}

Much, though certainly not all, of the harm from which preservationists would suffer if Confederate monuments were removed crucially depends on them holding certain irrational beliefs or contemptable attitudes. For instance, the white nationalists chanting "Blood and Soil" in Charlottesville might lament the Robert E. Lee statue being taken down because they would view that as a hindrance to their goal of preserving the "superior" Aryan race. Were they to rid themselves of their racism, they would no longer suffer so much from the removal of the Lee statue.^{xxxvi} Assuming these white nationalists have the rational capacity to rid themselves of their irrational beliefs and contemptable attitudes, any suffering they endure that depends on them holding such attitudes and beliefs matters less than the suffering endured by people whose suffering is predicated upon rational beliefs and fitting attitudes, such as those who suffer from the preservation of Confederate monuments.^{xxxvii}

Moreover, it's quite likely that the suffering that would result from the continued existence of Confederate monuments would be greater than the suffering that would result from removing them. This is largely because the continued existence of Confederate monuments would continue to cause people to suffer because of certain facts that the monuments make salient. However, were the monuments removed, their being removed would not similarly make harmful facts salient. Perhaps seeing the space where the monuments once stood would make the fact that the monuments were removed salient to some people, and having that fact made salient might cause some preservationists to suffer. But it seems highly unlikely that this would occur with much frequency. Moreover, the extent to which it would happen presumably would diminish with each generation.^{xxxviii} After all, future people who grow up without having ever seen a Confederate monument wouldn't suddenly think about the absence of Confederate monuments when they're in the areas where the monuments once stood.^{xxxix} On the other hand,

the continued existence of Confederate monuments would continue to make salient the horrors of the Civil War and the United States' racist history.^{xi}

4.5 Slippery Slope Arguments

Finally, one may object that my argument leads to an absurd conclusion and, as such, it's reasonable to infer that there's something wrong with my argument even if one cannot identify which premise(s) is false. The *reductio ad absurdum* runs as follows. "If we have to remove Confederate monuments because they honor people who acted in ways that were gravely morally wrong, then wouldn't we get the absurd conclusion that we have to remove almost all monuments?" George Washington and Thomas Jefferson both owned slaves, yet few object to monuments of them. Mahatma Gandhi notoriously expressed racist attitudes toward black people and was an unrepentant misogynist, yet few object to monuments of him.^{xli} Almost every contemporary person who has been honored with a monument is someone who routinely consumed factory-farmed meat, a fact that future generations will almost certainly regard as morally monstrous. Yet no one raises this as an objection to honoring anyone with reverential monuments.

If we remove all statues of people who've committed grave moral wrongs, wouldn't we have to remove almost all statues? The answer to this question is "Yes." Is that absurd? Not necessarily. But, more importantly, my argument does not entail that we have to remove the statues of everyone who has committed grave moral wrongs for a few reasons. First, it's worth noting that there's a potentially morally relevant difference between people like Thomas Jefferson or Mahatma Gandhi and people like Robert E. Lee or Nathan Bedford Forrest. While all of them committed grave moral wrongs, the former group also accomplished a great deal of good and were, with respect to some issues, morally prescient. The same cannot truthfully be said of the Confederate generals.

Second, statues of people in the former camp don't cause the same amount of unavoidable harm as people in the latter camp. The motivations behind the creation of Gandhi or Jefferson monuments were not racist. They were not erected to further the oppression of anyone. Moreover, the facts that such statues make salient are generally not harmful because they concern the good that such people have done. When most people think of Gandhi, for instance, they think of his non-violent struggle for Indian independence.^{xlii} They don't think (or generally even know) about his racism or sexism, but they may know about his noble fight for civil rights in South Africa or his fight for the emancipation of women and public declarations of the equality of the sexes. Since these monuments are not harmful in the way, or to the degree, that Confederate monuments are, it's plausible that the moral reasons to preserve them currently outweigh the moral reason to remove them. Of course, times change and cultures continue to evolve. It's quite conceivable that, in the future, a majority of people will oppose monuments of Washington, Jefferson, Gandhi, and the like because of these people's gravely morally wrong actions. Their moral shortcomings may even become the facts that are salient when people see such monuments, and so these monuments may come to harm as many people as Confederate monuments currently do. If that time comes, and the harm-based moral reasons to remove these statues outweigh the moral reasons to keep them up, then I grant that people at that time would be morally obligated to remove them. This is not an absurd conclusion, though. On the contrary, it seems to be exactly what we should do in that situation.^{xliii}

- ⁱ Haag, Matthew. "Judge Orders Tarps Removed From Confederate Statues in Charlottesville." *The New York Times*, February 27, 2018. Accessed April 16, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/27/us/charlottesville-confederate-monuments.html>
- ⁱⁱ Holland, Jesse. "Deadly Rally Accelerates Ongoing Removal of Confederate Statues Across U.S." *The Chicago Tribune*, August 15, 2018. Accessed April 16, 2018. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-confederate-statue-removal-20170815-story.html> See also Landrieu, Mitch. *In the Shadows of Statues: A White Southerner Confronts History*. New York: Penguin, 2018.
- ⁱⁱⁱ It's generally immoral, but shouldn't be illegal, to cheat on one's partner. Or, more closely related to this issue, most people grant that the right to free speech entails legally permitting some speech that's immoral. Alfred Brophy has surprisingly argued that preserving Confederate monuments ought to be illegal because they supposedly violate the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment. See Brophy, Alfred. "Flying the Confederate Flag on Public Property May Violate America's 14th Amendment." Quartz, June 25, 2015. <https://qz.com/437136/flying-the-confederate-flag-on-public-property-may-violate-americas-14th-amendment/>
- ^{iv} A little less than half of them are public monuments, and not all of them are statues.
- ^v Gunter, Booth and Jamie Kizzire. *Whose Heritage: Public Symbols of the Confederacy* Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018. Accessed August 16, 2018, p. 8. https://www.splc.org/sites/default/files/whoseheritage_splc.pdf
- ^{vi} Brundage, Fitzhugh. "I've Studied the History of Confederate Memorials. Here's What to do About Them." Vox, August 18, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/8/18/16165160/confederate-monuments-history-charlottesville-white-supremacy> For a more comprehensive history of this and related issues, see Brundage, Fitzhugh. *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*. New York: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- ^{vii} Brundage, "I've Studied the History of Confederate Memorials. Here's What to do About Them."
- ^{viii} For more on Othering, see Brons, Lajos. "Othering, An Analysis." *Transcience, A Journal of Global Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015). 69-90. See also Fred Dervin, "Cultural Identity, Representation and Othering," in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*, ed. Jane Jackson (New York: Routledge, 2012).
- ^{ix} Brundage, "I've Studied the History of Confederate Memorials. Here's What to do About Them."
- ^x Or, if one wants to deny that the monuments *themselves* are racist, they were still created by racists often, at least in part, for racist reasons. Dan Demetriou and Ajume Wingo helpfully distinguish between three ways monuments can have racist significance. They can be racist because of who they represent, because it honors someone or something racist, or because of the racist intentions of those who brought it into existence. See Dan Demetriou and Ajume Wingo. "The Ethics of Racist Monuments," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Philosophy and Public Policy*, ed. David Boonin (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, forthcoming).
- ^{xi} Gunter, Booth and Jamie Kizzire. *Whose Heritage: Public Symbols of the Confederacy*. See also Parks, Miles. "Confederate Statues Were Built to Further a 'White Supremacist Future'." NPR. August 20, 2017. <https://www.npr.org/2017/08/20/544266880/confederate-statues-were-built-to-further-a-white-supremacist-future> Jim Crow laws refer to the set of laws in the South between the Reconstruction period (1877) and the Civil Rights movement (1950s) that enforced racial segregation. The Civil Rights movement that gained national momentum in the mid-1950s sought to end racial segregation and culminated in 1964 when the Civil Rights Act became federal law.
- ^{xii} Bain, Marc. "You Can't Change History': Read Donald Trump's Defense of Confederate Statues." Quartz. August 15, 2017. <https://qz.com/1054062/statues-of-confederate-soldiers-across-the-south-were-cheaply-mass-produced-in-the-north/>
- ^{xiii} Parks, Miles. "Confederate Statues Were Built to Further a 'White Supremacist Future'." Considered in an ahistorical context, one may not fully appreciate how harmful these Confederate monuments are. Here Marilyn Frye's birdcage analogy of oppression is instructive. She writes "Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire in the case, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire...and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere...It is only when you take a step back...and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere" (pp. 4-5). The Confederate statues, considered in isolation, are but one wire in the cage. Frye, Marilyn. *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*. Freedom, Crossing Press, 1983.
- ^{xiv} The only difference between the two models were the letters on the soldier's belt buckle. Fisher, Marc. "Why Those Confederate Soldier Statues Look a Lot Like Their Union Counterparts." *The Washington Post* August 18, 2017. Accessed March 5, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/why-those-confederate-soldier-statues-look-a-lot-like-their-union-counterparts/2017/08/18/cefcc1bc-8394-11e7-ab27-1a21a8e006ab_story.html?utm_term=.296cbb7938ba
- ^{xv} The UDC is still an active organization and are, as of this writing, suing cities over their attempts to remove Confederate statues the UDC funded during the Jim Crow era. See, for instance, Contreras, Guillermo. "Group Sues San Antonio over Removal of Confederate Statue." *My San Antonio*, October 25, 2017. Accessed November 13, 2017. <https://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/Group-sues-San-Antonio-over-removal-of-12306414.php> and Gauger, Jeff. "UDC: We Had to Sue to Stop Illegal Removal of Caddo Confederate Monument." *Shreveport Times*, October 20, 2017. Accessed November 13, 2017. <https://www.shreveporttimes.com/story/news/2017/10/20/lawsuit-filed-block-removal-caddo-confederate-monument/783966001/>

xvi Gunter, Booth and Jamie Kizzire. *Whose Heritage: Public Symbols of the Confederacy*, p. 8.

xvii Gunter, Booth and Jamie Kizzire. *Whose Heritage: Public Symbols of the Confederacy*. See, in particular, pp. 8-10.

xviii While my argument focuses on the experiential harms Confederate monuments cause people in (I) and (II), I deliberately leave open the possibility that they may cause non-experiential harms to people outside of these groups. In fact, I think that possibility is not implausible, although I don't have space to argue for it in this short paper.

xix This is assuming, of course, that x is preventable.

xx This especially includes those people whose oppression the monuments were meant to further.

xxi For an incredibly insightful analysis of a type of oppression that leads to this harm see chapter 6 (especially § 2) of Cudd, Ann E. *Analyzing Oppression*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

xxii Baltimore mayor Catherine Pugh raises this type of consideration when discussing her decision to remove four Confederate statues. Nevins, Jake. "Baltimore Mayor on Confederate Statues: Why Should People Have to Feel That Pain Every Day." *The Guardian*, August 22, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/22/baltimore-roger-b-taney-confederate-statues-catherine-pugh> Mitch Landrieu discusses how Wynton Marsalis raised this point to him, which served as a catalyst for Landrieu to change his mind about whether the statues should be removed. Landrieu, Mitch. "Confronting Confederate Myths with 'In the Shadow of Statues'." Interview by Trevor Noah. *The Daily Show*, March 19, 2018. See also Marsalis's moving article on why New Orleans should remove their Robert E. Lee statue. Marsalis, Wynton. "Why New Orleans Should Take Down Robert E. Lee's Statue." *The Times Picayune*, May 17, 2017. http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/12/confederate_monuments_new_orle_6.html Multiple people raise this concern in *America Inside Out*. "Re-Righting History." Directed by Cheryl McDonough. National Geographic, April 11 2018. Countless more examples can be found by listening to interviews of counter-protesters who oppose preserving Confederate monuments.

xxiii McLaren, Malcolm. "Punk? It Made My Day." *The Telegraph*, September 30, 2007.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3668263/Malcolm-McLaren-Punk-it-made-my-day.html> See also Goldman, Vivien. "Never Mind the Swastikas: The Secret History of UK's 'Punky Jews'." *The Guardian*, February 27, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/feb/27/never-mind-swastikas-secret-history-punky-jews>

xxiv At least, this is true of moral reasons with *requiring force*.

xxv The moral value of symbolic actions and, relatedly, the moral value of symbols themselves, are discussed in chapter 6 of Blustein, Jeffrey M. *Forgiveness and Remembrance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. For a good discussion of historic value in the context of historic preservation, see Matthes, Erich Hatala. "The Ethics of Historic Preservation." *Philosophy Compass* 11, no. 12 (2016). 786-794.

xxvi Matthes convincingly argues that there's a contingent relationship between historic value and irreplaceability in Matthes, Erich Hatala. "History, Value, and Irreplaceability." *Ethics* 124, no. 1 (2013), 35-64. Even if cheaply mass produced statues have historic value, there is no reason to think that such value is entirely replaceable with harmless monuments.

xxvii If the reader objects to the idea that harms can be aggregated in this way, simply reimagine the thought experiment such that the comet will break into millions of tiny pieces causing non-trivial (but not life-ending) amounts of harm to millions of people unless you destroy the statue. In this case, it still seems clear to me that you should sacrifice the statue to spare millions of people harm.

xxviii Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "Take Down the Confederate Flag-Now." *The Atlantic*, June 18, 2015.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/take-down-the-confederate-flag-now/396290/> Cotter, Holland. "We Need to Move, Not Destroy, Confederate Monuments." *The New York Times*, August 20, 2017.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/20/arts/design/we-need-to-move-not-destroy-confederate-monuments.html?mtref=www.google.com> Knight, Christopher. "What to do with Confederate Monuments? Put them in Museums as Examples of Ugly History, Not Civic Pride." *The Los Angeles Times*, August 18, 2017.

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-confederate-monuments-20170818-htmlstory.html>

xxix If they're in a museum they would not be interpreted as being reverential, thereby removing one offensive aspect of the monuments that cause suffering. While they would still make salient the horrors of America's racist past and the Civil War, and while this would certainly still cause suffering, it wouldn't cause *unavoidable* suffering since anyone would be free to visit or not visit the museum(s) in question. Not everyone has the luxury when a monument is prominently displayed in a public space. Finally, being put in the proper historical context would make these monuments instrumental in acquiring historical knowledge and the good gained from that (by willing museum patrons) could outweigh whatever suffering they may still cause.

xxx Smith, Cameron. "Condoleezza Rice Talks Religion, Confederate Monuments, and Energy Policy". Filmed [May 2017]. YouTube video, 20.01. Posted May 2017]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoCY6oiP4fk> Dan Demetriou and Ajume Wingo also cite this quote in their paper. Condoleezza Rice is not alone. Notably, a non-trivial number of black activists are arguing for preserving the Confederate monuments on these grounds. See Richardson, Bradford. "Honoring Patriots or Traitors? Legacy of Confederate Statues in Eye of Beholder." *The Washington Times*, August 15, 2017. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/aug/15/black-activists-want-confederate-statues-to-serve-/> See also Foster, Brian B. "Confederate Monuments are More than Reminders of our Racist Past. They are Symbols of our Racist Present." *The Washington Post*, August 24, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/08/24/confederate-monuments-are-more-than-reminders-of-our-racist-past-they-are-symbols-of-our-racist-present/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.671ff7bce840

xxxⁱ Of course, some who bother to read plaques on monuments might not bother to acquire that information in the absence of monuments.

xxxⁱⁱ This may include, for example, certain requirements in history classes in primary schools, funding documentaries and television series focusing on the Civil War, creating a Civil War museum, as well as a plethora of other options.

xxxⁱⁱⁱ This sort of argument is made about Confederate Flags (pp. 75-90) in Shedler, George. *Racist Symbols and Reparations: Philosophical Reflections on Vestiges of the American Civil War*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998. See also Shedler, George. "Are Confederate Monuments Racist?" *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2001), 287-308. Preservationists make this argument in the "Re-Righting History" episode of *America Inside Out*. For a devastating reply to Shedler's book, see Torin, Alter. "On Racist Symbols and Reparations." *Social Theory and Practice* 26, no. 1 (2000), 153-171.

xxx^{iv} This is also true because that same amount and type of good in question can be generated by choosing to honor someone better than any of the members of the Confederacy.

xxx^v In fact, the most recent polls show that the majority of Americans oppose removing Confederate monuments. Though, this does not necessarily mean that most of those people would suffer significantly if the statues are taken down. Kahn, Chris. "A Majority of Americans Want to Preserve Confederate Monuments" *Reuters*, August 21, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-protests-poll/a-majority-of-americans-want-to-preserve-confederate-monuments-reuters-ipsos-poll-idUSKCN1B12EG>

xxx^{vi} To be clear, I'm only claiming that much (not all) suffering that would result from removing Confederate monuments is predicated on irrational beliefs and contemptable attitudes.

xxx^{vii} It's also worth noting, per my discussion of Jim Crow laws, that Confederate monuments were inexorably intertwined with other injustices. Whatever pain the removal of Confederate statues would cause isn't connected to other structural injustices. Consequently, one might think that the harm their removal would cause simply wouldn't be the same in kind or degree.

xxx^{ix} Unless, of course, knowledge about the past Confederate monuments was widespread and their absence is visually arresting in some way. However, this too seems highly unlikely.

xⁱ At least they would so long as people who see the monuments know they're Confederate monuments and know about the Civil War and slavery.

xⁱⁱ Gandhi's racism and sexism are well-documented. Concerning his racism, see Lakshmi, Rama. "What did Mahatma Gandhi think of Black People?" *The Washington Post* September 3, 2015.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/03/what-did-mahatma-gandhi-think-of-black-people/?utm_term=.5d924fad66cf Concerning his sexism, see Connellan, Michael. "Women Suffer from Gandhi's Legacy." *The Guardian* January 27, 2010. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jan/27/mohandas-gandhi-women-india>

xⁱⁱⁱ There are exceptions, of course, and the current exceptions may indicate what will be the norm in the future. A statue of Gandhi was "banished" at the University of Ghana because it was viewed as racist toward black South Africans. See Burke, Jason. "'Racist' Gandhi Statue Banished from Ghana University." *The Guardian* October 6, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/06/ghana-academics-petition-removal-mahatma-gandhi-statue-african-heroes>

xⁱⁱⁱⁱ For helpful written and verbal feedback, I am very grateful to Kurt Blankschaen, Bob Fischer, Vicente Medina, Amanda Timmerman, and my audience at the College of New Jersey.