

The Ethics of Racist Monuments

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*“In the beautiful household, no matter what music you play, there is always
someone to dance.”
—Nso proverb*

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we focus on the debate over publicly maintained racist monuments as it manifests in the mid-2010s Anglosphere, primarily in the United States (chiefly regarding the over 700 monuments devoted to the Confederacy),¹ but to some degree also in Britain and Commonwealth countries, especially South Africa (chiefly regarding monuments devoted to figures and events associated with colonialism and apartheid). After pointing to some representative examples of racist monuments, we discuss ways a monument can be thought racist and neutrally categorize removalist and preservationist arguments heard in the monument debate. We suggest that both extremist and moderate removalist goals are likely to be self-defeating and that when concerns of civic sustainability are put on moral par with those of fairness and justice, something like a Mandela-era preservationist policy is best: one which removes the most offensive of the minor racist monuments, but which focuses on closing the monumentary gap between peoples and reframing existing racist monuments.

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THREE RACIST MONUMENTS

For the purposes of this chapter, any monument considered racist by enough people to be controversial counts as a racist monument. Thus, our uses of “racist monument” are morally neutral and are not intended to imply that the monument in question is “in fact” racist. Three particularly interesting cases of racist monuments serve us throughout the chapter.

Our first example is the Battle of Liberty Place (BLP) monument. A simple obelisk atop a plinth, the BLP monument was erected in 1891 on New Orleans’ busy Canal Street. The “battle” the monument commemorated was an 1874 armed uprising by a white paramilitary group trying to prevent a reconstructionist Republican governor from taking office. The uprising was put down by federal troops sent by then-President Grant (reconstruction would be killed two years later when, to resolve a disputed presidential election, Republicans agreed to remove troops from the South in return for the presidency). A plaque added to the BLP monument in 1932 read:

United States troops took over the state government and reinstated the usurpers [i.e. the Republicans] but the national election of November 1876 recognized white supremacy in the South and gave us our state.

The BLP monument was always a magnet for controversy. Over its 126-year tenure, it had inscriptions effaced and inscriptions added to qualify and historically reframe its racist significance. The monument itself was briefly warehoused, then reinstalled in a less prominent location as a compromise between its detractors and defenders. Finally, it was swept up in a wave of popular outcry for removal of Confederate monuments that followed Dylann Roof’s June 2015 murder of nine black churchgoers. On April 24, 2017, the BLP monument was removed under police guard in the middle of the night by workers wearing bulletproof vests.²

Another important racist monument is Charlottesville, Virginia’s Robert E. Lee statue, commissioned by a Charlottesville-born stockbroker named Paul Goodloe McIntire. McIntire was a boy during the Civil War; his father, the mayor of Charlottesville, surrendered the city to the Union, and Paul could recall Union soldiers in his home looking for food.³ After he made his fortune, McIntire became one of Charlottesville’s greatest philanthropists, developing and donating McIntire park, meant for Charlottesville’s white population; Booker T. Washington park, for Charlottesville’s black population; and Lee Park, which showcases a 26-foot tall equestrian statue of the Confederate general.⁴ In recent years, the statue has been repeatedly vandalized with red paint or “Black Lives Matter” scrawl, but Charlottesville Vice Mayor, Wes Bellamy, has led the official demand for the statue’s removal, calling it disrespectful to black citizens. The statue’s supporters, meanwhile, emphasize its aesthetic, cultural, and historic significance.⁵ On August 12, 2017, a “Unite the Right” rally descended on the park to protest the Lee statue’s removal with white nationalist

and anti-Semitic chants. They were met by crowds of “antifascist” counter-protesters, and state police shut down the rally. Later, a right-wing activist plowed his car into a group of counter-protesters, resulting in the death of one person.⁶ Today, the statue is shrouded by tarps as lawsuits about its fate work their way through the courts.

A third example is the University of Cape Town’s (UCT) statue of Cecil Rhodes, which since 1934 had surveyed the stunning campus his estate helped make possible. Rhodes is often described as an “arch imperialist”: having leveraged Rothschild financing to found and expand the De Beers diamond mine empire, Rhodes worked tirelessly to unite Britain’s southern and northern African holdings, making an inscription on the monument from Kipling quite apt:

I dream my dream
By rock and heath and Pine
Of Empire to the Northward
Ay one Land
From Lion’s Head [a Cape Town mountain] to Line [i.e., equator]!

As a politician and magnate, Rhodes’ policies did much to immiserate the black population by disrupting their native cultures and disenfranchising blacks of the non-race-based rights they previously enjoyed from colonial government.⁷ More than a century after his death, Rhodes casts a long shadow, having endowed UCT with much of its land, the Rhodes Scholar program, Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape, and numerous other institutions.⁸ The UCT statue of him weathered milder protests by Afrikaner students in the 1950s who resented British colonization of Boer lands. Nonetheless, the UCT memorial proved no match for the primarily black “Rhodes Must Fall” activists, whose campaign in the spring of 2015—constituted by speeches, sit-ins, protest dances, and defacements of the offending statue (including strewing it with human feces)—saw the monument removed after only one month. Since this early success, the Rhodes Must Fall cause has been subsumed by a more ambitious decolonization campaign seeking, among other things, removal of Rhodes’ statue at Oriel College, Oxford.⁹

WAYS MONUMENTS CAN BE RACIST

In what ways can these or other monuments be racist? The question turns on what a statue “symbolizes,” “represents,” or “means,” and—as is the case with texts—there are a variety of ways a monument may have racist significance. First, and most crudely, a monument may be racist to an audience because of *who* it represents. So a statue of Jefferson Davis usually would, while a statue to the racehorse Seabiscuit usually would not, be racist on this count. Second, a monument may be said to be racist because it celebrates a racist *aspect* of a person or an event. For instance, the actual BLP had racist and nonracist or even anti-racist aspects (given reconstructionists formed one side of the dispute),

but the BLP monument extolled the racist dimension, whereas another monument might be built praising the latter. Third, a monument may be racist because of the *intentions* of its sponsor, artist, or designer. It matters to many people that most Confederate monuments, for instance, were erected not in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War by Southern survivors mourning their dead but rather by segregationists in the 1910s and 1960s intent upon rehabilitating their ancestors' honor or celebrating the "lost cause" of the Confederacy.¹⁰

Of course, since the public meaning of a monument is contingent on audience interpretation, a monument may acquire a racist significance. Just as "niggardly" has become an unacceptably insensitive adjective for miserliness (despite its nonracist etymology), a monument (say) composed of white marble will have racist significance if enough people—and there are some—come to see white marble statuary as racist.¹¹ A monument may even become racist by association: it is possible for a monument with nonracist content, and erected for nonracist purposes, to become racist if, for example, racists frequently congregate around it or adopt it as a meme.

Furthermore, much as how the term "punk" is a homophobic slur in the black community but not elsewhere, it is entirely possible for a Confederate statue to mean nothing racist whatsoever to some group while at the same time have a plainly racist significance to another. We take up this observation again later. But for present purposes, the problem of divergent cultural interpretations raises a few important questions for the monument debate, including: when disputes over the racist significance of a monument arise (because of either disputes about what counts as racist or disagreements over what a monument "really symbolizes"), is there a privileged cultural interpretation that policymakers can appeal to? If not, do policymakers have the right to impose an interpretation upon citizens or subjects to achieve greater national cohesion on the issue? If an official or privileged interpretive framework is not acceptable or forthcoming for whatever reason, is there some moral principle that should guide conscientious parties in the dispute? For instance, should we treat a monument as racist if it is racist on one widely shared interpretation but not on another? Or should we do just the opposite and default to the nonracist interpretation?

REMOVALIST ARGUMENTS

The most straightforward reason for removing racist monuments is that racist monuments are offensively racist. "[S]tatues dedicated to the Confederacy," the BBC has written, "often serve as an offensive reminder of America's history of slavery and racial oppression."¹² Context matters here, for it is not clear that *mere* racist significance justifies removing, or even noticing, a memorial. After all, any number of monuments can be found celebrating irrational or harmful views about, say, economics, politics, or human origins. Unless racist irrationality is qualitatively worse than other irrationalities or somehow "reasonably taboo," the mere racism of a monument should not provide us with a uniquely forceful

reason for removal.¹³ Similar points can be made about mere offensiveness: surely, many people are offended by publicly maintained monuments to Nelson Mandela or Martin Luther King, Jr. Thus, it appears the racist-offense argument for removal of racist monuments needs to appeal, at minimum, to the fact that *public* monuments are offensive to a segment of the population that has been disadvantaged, victimized, or oppressed *by* the racism widely held to be signified by the monuments.

Another offense-based argument for removal is expressive. Speaking of Confederate statues in the Capitol Building, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi stated:

The halls of Congress are the very heart of our democracy. The statues in the Capitol should embody our highest ideals as Americans, expressing *who we are* and who we aspire to be as a nation. [...] There is no room for celebrating the violent bigotry of the men of the Confederacy in the hallowed halls of the United States Capitol or in places of honor across the country.¹⁴ (emphasis added)

South African versions of this argument will refer to the vision of South Africa as a “rainbow nation” that must transcend its disastrous history. Expressive arguments appealing to group identity hardly specify liberal causes, of course. Yet on liberal lips, the expressivist argument is the more universalistic offense-based removalist argument, insofar as citizens of any background can advance it with equal moral standing.

Next come arguments premised on defeated white supremacy: the Confederacy being a failed white supremacist rebellion or apartheid being an overthrown supremacist regime, their monuments naturally should be torn down. This argument thus analogizes proper treatment of monuments to those suitable for an evil and conquered adversary: if we are justified in felling Nazi or Soviet statues, then surely we are justified in removing Confederate ones.¹⁵ One nuanced version of this argument analogizes Confederate monuments to imaginary Nazi-sympathetic monuments erected in the 1990s, given that most Confederate monuments were installed many decades after the Civil War. When evil regimes are defeated, we typically remove their monuments, so allowing *new* monuments to them, let alone maintaining original ones, is especially absurd. If we think Germans should find *neo*-Nazi statues morally intolerable in public spaces, why should Americans allow Confederate statues to stand?¹⁶

Although invocations of history are more common among preservationists, some removalists argue that far from “erasing history,” removing racist monuments from the landscape helps correct history. In New Orleans, Mayor Mitch Landrieu’s rhetorically masterful speech defending his removal of four racist monuments (including the BLP monument), the word “history” or its cognates is mentioned 30 times in an effort to rebut this preservationist talking point. For Landrieu, the monuments in question were attempts “to rewrite history to hide the truth [and] purposefully celebrate a fictional, sanitized Confederacy; ignoring the death, ignoring the enslavement, and the terror that it actually stood for.”¹⁷ Historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage points out that:

an observer scanning the commemorative landscape of North Carolina will see little evidence of the tens of thousands of white North Carolinians who fought for the Union, the even larger number of white North Carolinians who actively opposed the Confederacy, or the tens of thousands of African Americans who escaped slavery and joined the Union army. Confederate commemorators suppressed these unwelcome blemishes to their preferred version of history while simultaneously making the Confederate cause virtually sacred.¹⁸

Although not offense based, it would be unfair to say that the historical removalist argument is motivated by a dry commitment to historical accuracy. As these quotes suggest, its advocates are concerned about the way commemoration shapes the moral narrative citizens implicitly accept.

Another group of rationales are more or less honor based, focusing on the disrespect for blacks, colonized peoples, and their ancestors that the monuments commemorate. To appreciate the difference between this argument and the racist-offense objection, consider a case where Amahle and Blessing are subjected to a racial insult from Connor. Amahle is offended by Connor's racist sentiment—this is the equivalent to the racist-offense objection to racist monuments outlined above. In contrast, Blessing does not really care about Connor's racism as such—indeed, she may expect it, and Blessing herself may be an unrepentant, self-described racist who sees herself as not one whit Connor's moral superior in that regard. Rather, Blessing feels disrespected by the fact that Connor *uttered* the racist statement or felt licensed to *direct it at her*. One can observe this rationale at work in this exchange between journalist Charlie Rose and former Congressman Al Sharpton, where Rose presses Sharpton on whether his removalist goals should extend to monuments to Thomas Jefferson:

Al Sharpton: When you look at the fact that public monuments are supported by public funds, you are asking me to subsidize the *insult of my family*.

Charlie Rose: Then I repeat: Thomas Jefferson had slaves.

Al Sharpton: And I would repeat that the public should not be paying to uphold somebody who had that kind of background. You have private museums. You have other things that you may want to do, but that's not even the issue here, Charlie. We're talking about here, an *open display of bigotry announced and over and over again*.¹⁹

(emphasis added)

The "insult" Sharpton is fixing on is the "openness" of the bigotry represented by the monuments, which is distinct from the moral badness of private racism. Or consider this comment by Rhodes Must Fall leader Kgotsi Chikane, who separates concerns about racial offensiveness from those of dishonor:

It's not just because [the UCT Rhodes statue] makes people feel uncomfortable, but because it's the biggest symbol of the institutionalization of racism. That's why we wouldn't want to pull it down ourselves. We want the university to acknowledge this.²⁰

Chikane's sentiment here recalls codes governing dueling. It does not matter if the insult is believed by the insulter, or even the public at large. And it is not enough for the insulting belief to be abandoned or for the insulter to apologize privately. The insult must be publicly retracted, which comes at a cost of face to the insulter. Thus, removal of racist statues is not simply "putting an ugly episode of our past behind us"—a trope meant to smooth over removal for audiences wishing to avoid a loss of moral face. Having preservationists swallow their pride is an important part of the agenda for removalists motivated by this rationale.

Honor-based considerations inspire concerns for future consequences, the final category of removalist argument we consider here. One blogger's thoughts are representative of this inference:

[Confederate monuments are] a constant reminder that I as a person am not valued or respected. [Their continued maintenance] would feel like the leaders in my city didn't acknowledge or care about me, my family, my ancestors and the contributions they made to build that city where we live.²¹

Simply put, if your ancestors are publicly disrespected by monuments, what does this portend for you or your descendants? Just as a child with no pictures of herself on the walls of the family home should be concerned about her college fund, (say) a black American may well wonder whether recent advances in political rights may not be rolled back as quickly as they came, as long as statues to her oppressors are thick on the ground, while monuments to her ancestors and liberation heroes remain few and far between.

PRESERVATIONIST ARGUMENTS

The first²² preservationist argument is aesthetic. Some racist monuments, such as the unremarkable spike of the BLP monument, have essentially no aesthetic value or importance. Others, such as Charlottesville's Lee monument, do. The most notable instance of an appeal to aesthetics came in the form of tweet by President Trump during a spate of removals in 2017:

Sad to see the history and culture of our great country being ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful statues and monuments.²³

Although an appeal to pure aesthetics is perhaps the weakest preservationist argument, the sight of empty pedestals from removed statues is an arresting one and a favorite motif of editors interested in attracting attention to articles about the controversy. Preservationists enjoy a natural advantage of appearing, superficially at least, to defend culture, art, and material civilization.²⁴

The more controversial the monument is—the more meaningful or "alive" it is—the less compelling mere aesthetic considerations will be.²⁵ Other preservationist arguments stress the meaningfulness of the controversial monument

but deny the racist *function* the monument is said by its critics to have had or still have. For instance, by far the most common preservationist argument remonstrates against “whitewashing” history: on it, racist monuments should be preserved to help present and future generations understand the complexities of the American past. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice argued along this dimension in one interview:

I grew up in a Birmingham that was segregated, and so [seeing Confederate monuments] is painful. But if you forget your history, then you’re likely to repeat it. One of the things about statues and monuments is that for those who weren’t a part of that history it can be a reminder. [...] 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. So I myself am not much of a fan of whitewashing history.²⁶

Far from wanting the harm of colonialism, apartheid, slavery, or segregationism to be forgotten or “put behind us,” this sort of anti-racist preservationist wants the monuments to remain as a constant reminder to them and future generations of just how poorly their (or their neighbors’) people have been treated, of how precarious civil rights can be without constant vigilance.²⁷

In contrast, arguments appealing to (white) heritage deny the monuments’ racist significance, or at least their racist significance to supporters. For instance, the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) celebrates their ancestors as having “personified the best qualities of America” and as motivated by the “preservation of liberty and freedom” in the “Second American Revolution.”²⁸ Although groups such as the SCV and United Daughters of the Confederacy disavow the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and even Alt Right causes, such groups certainly join their efforts to preserve racist monuments out of a sense that Confederate statues are totemic of their ancestry and/or the heritage of Southern whites.

Seeing monuments as effigies to Southern white ancestry brings us to consequentialist rationales for preservationism. The flipside of the consequentialist logic for removalism motivates preservationism as well, for (once again) the monumentary of your landscape signals society’s attitudes toward you and your descendants. In this case, Southern whites see an ominous future for themselves. “The Confederate monuments in New Orleans have been repeatedly tagged with graffiti like ‘Die Whites Die’ ...” notes one influential white nationalist:

[and in] a multiracial democracy, those sentiments will be reflected in municipal politics. That’s because there isn’t a single people, but several races with different identities. [...] We’re often told that multiracial politics isn’t “a zero sum game.” Yes, it is! In a multiracial democracy, someone will always rule. Racial demographics will determine who rules.²⁹

For this brand of preservationist, racist monument removal confirms the theory that whites are doomed to be “despised minorities in their own lands.”

But even moderate, non-ethnonationalist preservationists hold that the rhetoric of some removalists foretell an iconoclasm that will not end with figures such as Rhodes and Lee but rather soon extend to Horatio Nelson and the American Founders.³⁰ However much moderate removalists may see a clear distinction between monuments celebrating colonialism and slavery on the one hand, and monuments celebrating problematic figures (such as Thomas Jefferson) for their civilizational contributions on the other,³¹ this line is often irrelevant or unreal to their more extreme fellows. For example, attorney, activist, and *CNN* commentator Angela Rye opined in one interview that:

George Washington was a slaveowner. [...] [W]hether we think he was protecting freedom or not, he wasn't protecting my freedom. My ancestors weren't deemed human beings to him. So to me, I don't care if it's a George Washington statue, or a Thomas Jefferson statue, or a Robert E. Lee statue, they all need to come down.³²

Thus, the slippery slope concern by these preservationists is not completely paranoid, since many removalist campaigners do indeed have radical goals, and some markers for Founders have in fact been removed in the most recent wave of iconoclastic fervor.³³

GOING FORWARD: CONCERNS, ANALOGIES, AND PRINCIPLES

We cannot comment on these arguments in detail here. But in this final section, we do venture a few considerations that put concerns of civic sustainability on moral par with those of fairness and justice.

First, action on racist monuments should proceed deliberately, legally, and through the most legitimate procedures available. To quote the CEO of South Africa's Heritage Council, Sonwabile Mancotywa,

[n]o-one should destroy or damage heritage objects and sites, no matter how frustrated they feel. Instead, we all need to undertake serious introspection and ask ourselves what has brought us to this point. We need to separate the broader societal issues and the heritage ones.³⁴

Even technically legal methods involving an end run around achieving any sort of consensus are ill advised. For instance, in late 2017 the city of Memphis, looking to remove statues of Jefferson Davis and Nathan Bedford Forrest, circumvented a Tennessee law making it difficult to remove Confederate monuments by selling the two parks with the offending statues to a nonprofit organization, which promptly removed them to an undisclosed location. As even some commentators sympathetic with removalist causes note, exploiting such loopholes undermines rule of law and is equally exploitable by preservationists wishing to maintain statues in removalist crosshairs.³⁵

Second, deciding which monuments should be removed by appeal to rational principles and their concomitant disputable facts (i.e., whether creators really had racist motives, whether statues in fact celebrate racist ideology, whether Confederates really were “traitors,” etc.) is unlikely to mollify enough disgruntled citizens to matter. For instance, the commonly heard refrain from moderate removalists, that Confederate monuments should go because they “stand for” rebellion and slavery, while monuments to Jefferson and Washington should stay because they “stand for” freedom and individual rights, may work as a compromise, but it will not succeed as a popularly endorsed principle for discriminating between racist monuments.³⁶ To take one instance, the Emancipation monument in Washington, DC’s Lincoln Park portrays Lincoln with an arm outstretched over a kneeling black slave. Since the composition of the statue is held by some to be demeaning, it is more likely to be targeted by anti-racist removalists than some of the less offensive Confederate monuments.³⁷ And it is unclear why, in an era of monumentary reform, we *should* tolerate offensive monuments just because they represent the right things.

Likewise, neat solutions about what to do with removed monuments, insofar as they are meant to reduce controversy, strike us as unconvincing. Placing monuments in historically framed “statue gardens” will not address the concerns of removalists who resent preservation at public expense and demand explicit denunciation of Confederate or colonialist ideology and figures. On the other hand, preservationists concerned with heritage would probably prefer that monuments be destroyed rather than treated as mere historical relics in a museum and stripped of their commemorative function—or worse, treated akin to Nazi artifacts. Additionally, new museums (or museum wings, if any existing museums would be foolhardy enough to accept them) devoted to racist monuments would be occasions for even more controversy, as interested parties would find little common ground about how explicitly to frame, from scratch, European colonialism or the Confederacy. In contrast, monuments *in situ* are more multifaceted—are more likely to have accrued multiple incompatible meanings and salient frames—and thus allow citizens more flexibility in how to understand what their local or national jurisdiction “means by” them.

In the absence of rational principles and neat solutions, we turn to questions about motives, mental frameworks, and psychology. Regarding motives, it seems clear that removalists morally must avoid a “capture the flag” mindset that aims at insulting and dismantling monuments in order to provoke or humiliate their supporters. It is one thing to find racist monuments racially offensive and/or contrary to liberal enlightenment values. It is quite another thing to attack racist monuments as punishment for their supporters’ racism (real or alleged) or to revenge one’s race through iconoclasm, or, most problematically of all, to demoralize racial opponents in a scramble for racial supremacy. When South Africa became democratized and the African National Congress (ANC) took the reins of power, many commentators expected the landscape to be scoured of its monuments to whites: “With the passions of centuries, the purging ritual that comes with revolution has begun in South

Africa,” begins a *New York Times* piece from 1994, after an initial spate of removals of monuments to particularly hated apartheid figures, such as Hendrik Verwoerd.³⁸ However, Nelson Mandela guided the ANC and black South Africa away from triumphalism in order to allay the fears of white South Africans and present a good face to the global community (and international investors) who had concerns about post-apartheid political stability—a policy enshrined in the 1999 National Heritage Resources Act.³⁹ Painting in broad strokes, the South African solution has been to remove the most offensive of monuments of lesser importance, yes, but for the most part to add new monuments and reframe old ones. In many cases, the successes are spectacular: at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, just a stone’s throw away from an ignored equestrian statue of South Africa’s first Prime Minister Louis Botha, now stands a nine-meter-tall statue of a jovial Mandela, whose outstretched arms provide tourists the opportunity to have a photo taken of them holding hands with the smiling Madiba. Likewise, the Voortrekker monument, once a literal shrine to Boer colonization (complete with on-premise religious services), has accrued an *additional* identity as a “museum of Afrikaner culture and history” that buses in black schoolchildren and hires black guides.⁴⁰ It is now connected by “Reconciliation Road” to Pretoria’s serene Freedom Park.

Every people needs its heroes, and any people with a developed material culture will remember them with monuments.⁴¹ This is why nations with racist histories must make a concerted effort to memorialize overlooked culture heroes from oppressed groups. By the same token, however, efforts to cleanse the landscape of racist monuments are unacceptably damaging to civic cohesion and will ultimately frustrate anti-racist goals. Widespread removalism will tend to “resurrect” forgotten monuments, confirm the suspicions of white separatists and nationalists, and lend credence to the belief that the national identity of these lands is inextricably based on white hegemony. As we see it, whether there is any rational stopping point between the BLP and the Lincoln Memorial is less important than steadying an increasingly fragile democracy. Small gains unimpeachably made last longer than sweeping victories, or, as the Nso of Northwest Cameroon put it, in politics “the fraction is greater than the whole.”

Given the facts about past attitudes, trying our best to accommodate each other’s culture heroes means tolerating to some extent the veneration of tribalistic ancestors and heritage. The example of many Native American monuments in the United States, and to a much greater degree many democratic South African monuments, show that it is perfectly possible to memorialize culture heroes for their sacrifices for *their* communities, even if they were at war with the ancestors of fellow citizens and completely opposed to the creation of the modern states that now memorialize them. For instance, the statues of African royal captives recently installed at their former prison, Cape Town’s Castle of Good Hope, gracefully honor all the peoples whose history shaped the Castle and South Africa itself.⁴²

As hinted at above, when considering the racist monument controversy from a moral perspective, one might imagine an interracial couple decorating their home. In an interracial household, we would expect mementos and

pictures from both sides of the family. Although a high-trust relationship does not keep strict track of the numbers, the gap in monumentary between whites and blacks (especially in the United States and South Africa) is impossible to ignore and should gradually and organically be closed. Moreover, the quotient of “genuine” racist significance of a monument matters less than the *offense* it causes our fellow citizens, just as a picture of a Confederate ancestor may be perfectly acceptable in an interracial household, whereas an absurd, meaningless racist tchotchke may not. A functional interracial couple, just like healthy racially diverse citizenry, will want their cohabitants to feel free to honor their ancestors and draw pride in their heritage. A black South African or African American may not personally advocate for radical political solutions but still wish to honor black nationalists or separatists who struggled on behalf of her people. A white Southerner or white South African might not condone all that her ancestors did but still admire their sacrifices or heroism. Every married person knows it is possible to place on the same mantle pictures of in-laws who loathed each other, so we can tolerate monuments to figures who were enemies. Likewise, just as we may hang a picture of a disapproving father-in-law for the sake of a spouse, the children, and domestic tranquility, we should be able to tolerate monuments to figures who would disapprove of us or our union with their descendants.⁴³

NOTES

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