

# Confederate Monuments and Memorials Discussion Guide

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A Guide for National Park Service Interpreters





# Confederate Monuments & Memorials – Discussion Guide

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*This guide was created by the National Park Service WASO Office of Interpretation, Education and Volunteers (IEV) in conjunction with the Stephen T. Mather Training Center.*

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## Memorandum

**To:** All Employees  
**From:** Acting Director /s/ Michael T. Reynolds  
**Subject:** Our place in the national dialogue

As our nation continues to have an intense and emotional dialogue about issues associated with Confederate monuments and their place in our communities, I am reminded of the important role that our parks and programs can play, helping our fellow citizens understand and discuss our nation's democratic and civil rights history. We tell America's story through our parks, and we are the keepers of many of the places where we became the nation that we are.

Through our civil rights sites, civil war battlefields, monuments, and programs that support those resources and places nationwide, we can help tell the full story - the best and worst of our national experience - and help one another come to a deeper understanding of the American experience, especially through difficult times.

To do this successfully is not easy – we must facilitate conversations with our visitors without getting into political, moral, or other debates, and passionate reactions are to be expected. I have seen the incredible work happening across the country, where our staff are using a deep knowledge of our resources to help people experience the very places history lived and to invite them to see these places in the context of our collective journey as a nation.

We have developed some broad, national talking points to help parks answer visitor questions about Confederate monuments and the role of the National Park Service in conversations around these monuments. Those are attached for your knowledge and use. Secretary Zinke has also issued a strong statement that I have attached for your awareness. We understand that some parks face different, more specific questions, and the NPS Office of Communications is working with regional and program staff to ensure that we can provide additional guidance where it is needed.

I want you all to be comfortable doing this important work, and I know that you need the full faith and support of our leadership to support your efforts to provide respectful, reflective, accurate experiences for our visitors. I can tell you that each and every one of you have my support in your



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work every day. I ask that you always keep your safety and that of our visitors at the top of your mind as you do.

I believe the nation will turn to its park rangers in the next few days and weeks, and I am confident that you will all rise to this challenge, as you have many times before. I could not be more proud to work with you and on your behalf here in Washington, DC.

Please feel free to share any feedback or concerns you have with me – I welcome the dialogue and appreciate your attention to this important topic.

Attachments



## Discussion Guide

As interpreters and front-line staff, you advance the national dialogue and provide needed context to the monuments and memorials found throughout the service. As visitors bring different concerns surrounding Confederate monuments, use this guide to open lines of discussion that help explore new perspectives, invite mutual learning, and potentially evolve collective meaning. Please work with your supervisor to assess your safety and readiness to open dialogue during visitor interactions.

### Overarching Visitor Concern:

***ARE YOU GOING TO REMOVE THE MONUMENTS OR KEEP THEM?***

### Agency Response:

It is the policy of the NPS that monuments will not be removed or altered nor will new or existing off-site monuments be moved to NPS grounds without direct legislation or a waiver from the Director of the NPS. The NPS will continue to provide historic context and interpretation to reflect a fuller view of past events and values under which they occurred.<sup>1</sup>

While Confederate commemorations will always remain a part of this nation's story, we also recognize that they represent different symbolism to different Americans. To some, Confederate commemorations represent an important part of their heritage, but to others they are seen as symbols of oppression.

Through our civil rights sites, civil war battlefields, monuments, and programs that support those resources and places nationwide, we can help tell the full story - the best and worst of our national experience - and help one another come to a deeper understanding of the American experience, especially through difficult times.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a more full explanation of these policies, please see "National Park Service Confederate Monuments & First Amendment Activities," August 2017.

<sup>2</sup> See Memo from Acting Director Michael Reynolds, 18 August 2017.



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## *Questions Visitors Might Have*

- Is removing monuments an attempt to erase history?
- If these Confederate monuments get removed, where does it stop?
- Isn't keeping Confederate monuments offensive?
- Why are you going to keep them if they offend people?
- Can we put monuments up to balance the story?
- Why aren't there monuments representing the other side?

## *Prompts for Opening Deeper Conversation*

- What do these monuments mean to you?
- What do you feel will be lost by removing them/by keeping them?
- Who was not memorialized in the past but perhaps should have been?
- How do you want to be remembered, and for what?



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## Context & Historical Perspectives

“While many early memorials were erected to honor Confederate dead, most monuments were created during the Jim Crow era to stand in opposition to racial equality. Veneration of Confederates symbolized white racial dominance. If the monuments are not removed, then they need to be reinterpreted in an accurate historical context which plainly states why they were erected and what they were intended to represent. Only with accurate and honest historical interpretation can we understand how the circumstances of our collective past continue to shape our present.”

[Atlanta History Center](#)

“Dr. King always preached the importance of fighting what's important - the three evils in America: racism, poverty, and war. The fight was always about removing those evils and not the symbolic statues of Confederate soldiers and generals, or even the Confederate flag. Fighting those issues just clouds what's really important.”

[Former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young](#)

“So the monuments reflect more than one current of early twentieth-century America. They served to venerate Confederate heroes like Robert E. Lee, thereby cementing the narrative of the Lost Cause and all its misty-eyed nostalgia about the South. But they were also an outpouring of grief and remembrance for the hundreds of thousands who had died in the war. Nearly a quarter of Southern white men in their twenties were killed or died from disease. Is it any wonder that decades later, as families began to bury Confederate veterans in greater numbers, there would be a push to erect memorials to that generation?”

[John Daniel Davidson, The Federalist](#)

“Southerners began honoring the Confederacy with statues and other symbols almost immediately after the Civil War. The first Confederate Memorial Day, for example, was dreamed up by the wife of a Confederate soldier in 1866. In 1886 Jefferson Davis laid the cornerstone of the Confederate Memorial Monument in a prominent spot on the state Capitol grounds in Montgomery, Alabama. There has been a steady stream of dedications in the 150 years since that time. There were two major periods in which the dedication of Confederate monuments and other symbols spiked — the first two decades of the 20th century and during the civil rights movement.”

[Southern Poverty Law Center](#)



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## Further Investigation

### Resources from Partners

[Teaching Tolerance](#) provides free resources to educators—teachers, administrators, counselors and other practitioners—who work with children from kindergarten through high school. Educators use our materials to supplement the curriculum, to inform their practices, and to create civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected, valued and welcome participants.

[Sites of Conscience](#) are places of memory – such as a historic site, place-based museum or memorial – that prevent erasure from happening in order to ensure a more just and humane future. Not only do Sites of Conscience provide safe spaces to remember and preserve even the most traumatic memories, but they enable their visitors to make connections between the past and related contemporary human rights issues.

[Atlanta History Center](#) has produced a guide for placing monuments in context. Learn about monuments, why and how they were erected, and the role they have played in communities (most of all, your own). The “Research: Books and Latest News” page features current literature and discussion surrounding the topic. As you conduct research, you’ll better understand what effect monuments have had on communities over time.

### Scholarly Works

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

Foster, Gaines M. *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Janney, Caroline E. *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Linenthal, Edward & Tom Englehardt, eds. *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1996.

Loewen, James W. *Lies Across America: What our Historic Sites Get Wrong*. New York: The New Press, 1999.



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Savage, Kirk. *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth Century America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Wilson, Charles R. *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009.

### Radio and Podcasts

#### [Contested Landscape: The Battle Over Confederate Monuments \(Backstory Radio\)](#)

Communities from New Orleans to Charlottesville, Virginia have been debating the presence of Confederate monuments. On this episode of BackStory, Historians Ed Ayers, Nathan Connolly and Brian Balough discuss when and why many of the nation's Confederate statues were erected, and what they stood for. They examine the many meanings of the Confederate flag and hear a Civil War re-enactor take a closer look at his Southern heritage.

#### [In Reckoning with Confederate Monuments, Other Countries Could Provide Examples \(NPR\)](#)

Though the controversy surrounding Confederate monuments is uniquely American, the U.S. is not alone in reckoning with public symbols of the past.

#### [The Unfinished Battle in the Capital of the Confederacy \(NPR Code Switch\)](#)

As calls to remove Confederate memorials grow louder, NPR's Code Switch podcast heads to Richmond, Va., where the veneration of Confederate leaders has been a source of local pride — and revulsion — for more than a century. Code Switch goes out of their way to discuss the issue with both sides of the discussion (Strong Language).



## Supplemental Document #1

### NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TALKING POINTS CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS & FIRST AMENDMENT ACTIVITIES

#### **MONUMENTS:**

##### **Topline:**

Across the country, the National Park Service maintains and interprets monuments, markers, and plaques that commemorate and memorialize those who fought during the Civil War. These memorials represent an important, if controversial, chapter in our Nation's history. The National Park Service is committed to preserving these memorials while simultaneously educating visitors holistically about the actions, motivations, and causes of the soldiers and states they commemorate. A hallmark of American progress is our ability to learn from our history.

##### **Additional Toplines from Acting Director Mike Reynold's Memo to the Field (8/18):**

"As our nation continues to have an intense and emotional dialogue about issues associated with Confederate monuments and their place in our communities, I am reminded of the important role that our parks and programs can play, helping our fellow citizens understand and discuss our nation's democratic and civil rights history. We tell America's story through our parks, and we are the keepers of many of the places where we became the nation that we are." "Through our civil rights sites, civil war battlefields, monuments, and programs that support those resources and places nationwide, we can help tell the full story - the best and worst of our national experience - and help one another come to a deeper understanding of the American experience, especially through difficult times."

"To do this successfully is not easy – we must facilitate conversations with our visitors without getting into political, moral, or other debates, and passionate reactions are to be expected. I have seen the incredible work happening across the country, where our staff are using a deep knowledge of our resources to help people experience the very places history lived and to invite them to see these places in the context of our collective journey as a nation."



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### **On removing a memorial/statue from NPS lands:**

Many commemorative works including monuments and markers were specifically authorized by Congress. In other cases, a monument may have preceded the establishment of a park, and thus could be considered a protected park resource and value. In either of these situations, legislation could be required to remove the monument, and the NPS may need to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act before removing a statue/memorial.

Still other monuments, while lacking legislative authorization, may have existed in parks long enough to qualify as historic features. A key aspect of their historical interest is that they reflect the knowledge, attitudes, and tastes of the people who designed and placed them. Unless directed by legislation, it is the policy of the National Park Service that these works and their inscriptions will not be altered, relocated, obscured, or removed, even when they are deemed inaccurate or incompatible with prevailing present-day values. The Director of the National Park Service may make an exception to this policy.

The NPS will continue to provide historical context and interpretation for all of our sites and monuments in order to reflect a fuller view of past events and the values under which they occurred.

### **On moving off-unit monuments to NPS lands:**

Outside of the District of Columbia and its environs, commemorative works must be authorized by Congress or approved by the Director of the National Park Service. The National Park Service discourages the placement of commemorative works in parks that can divert attention away from the important resources and values for which the parks were established. Absent a waiver from the Director of the National Park Service, new commemorative works will not be approved for placement in Civil War parks except where specifically authorized by Congress. Inside the District of Columbia and its environs, the Commemorative Works Act prohibits the establishment of commemorative works unless specifically authorized by an act of Congress.

### **Statement on removing Confederate monuments that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, but not located on NPS lands:**

The National Register includes historic resources nominated by federal, state, local and tribal governments, and private entities, that are considered worthy of preservation. National Register-listed properties are both publicly and privately owned. Decisions on how to manage those properties remain with the owners. Under the National Historic Preservation Act, listing in the



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National Register does not impose any restrictions to the use or disposition of a historic resource. Under Section 106 Federal agencies are required to take account the impacts of their undertakings on National Register-listed or eligible resources.

### **Additional resources for reference (feel free to pass to media):**

- [National Register of Historic Places](#)
- [National Historic Landmarks Program](#)

### **Background only:**

Absent a waiver of the second paragraph of section 9.6.2 of Management Policies (2006), "with regard to Civil War parks, new commemorative works will not be approved, except where specifically authorized by legislation." The Director could, however, approve a commemorative work for groups that were not allowed to be recognized during a commemorative period.

Section 9.6.1 of Management Policies very clearly lays out that before the Director makes a decision on whether or not to approve a commemorative work, he or she will evaluate if there is a compelling justification between the park and the person or event, and if the proposed work is the best way to express that association. In general, the NPS discourages the use of commemorative works in parks.

### **FIRST AMENDMENT ACTIVITIES:**

#### **Topline:**

The National Park Service has long recognized freedom of speech, press, religion and public assembly. National Parks and other public lands are the very embodiment of our democracy. First Amendment activities, such as demonstrations, at our national parks are activities protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The NPS adheres to the regulatory framework in 36 CFR 2.51 or, where applicable, 36 CFR 7.96. It is this provision that enables parks to accommodate First Amendment activity at designated spaces within the park, while also protecting park resources and values, and minimizing the impact on park visitors and park operations. All requests for similar activities are treated equally. As long as permit criteria and requirements set forth by the park are met, no group wishing to assemble lawfully will be discriminated against or denied the right of assembly. The safety of our employees and our visitors is our top priority. Park managers, in conjunction with local officials, engage in event planning to provide for public safety during permitted demonstrations.



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### **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:**

#### **Statement from Secretary Zinke regarding Charlottesville.**

"The racism, bigotry, and hate perpetrated by violent white supremacist groups has no place in America. It does not represent what I spent 23 years defending in the United States military and what millions of people around the globe have died for. We must respond to hate with love, unity and justice. I fully support President Trump and Attorney General Sessions in uniting our communities and prosecuting the criminals to the fullest extent of the law."

#### **Secretary Zinke's previous statements about monuments designated to Confederate soldiers.**

**Q:** There's been a push recently by some to remove some war memorials, specifically Confederate-related items. What's your message to those that some are saying are attempting to erase or re-write history?

**A:** I think history's important and on this battlefield as an example, what did the battle of Antietam bring us? One is that it was the deadliest battle in the history of our country, but also one can argue successfully that it also brought us the Emancipation Proclamation. So, there's goodness that came out of this battlefield, but recognizing two sides fought, recognizing the historical significance of a change in our country. So, I'm an advocate of recognizing history as it is. Don't rewrite history. Understand it for what it is and teach our kids the importance of looking at our magnificent history as a country and why we are what we are.

**VER 3.0 – As of: 8/18/17 POC: NPS Public Affairs – Jeremy Barnum, [jeremy\\_barnum@nps.gov](mailto:jeremy_barnum@nps.gov)**



## Supplemental Document #2

### **National Park Service and Confederate Monuments:**

Across the country, the National Park Service maintains and interprets monuments, markers, and plaques that commemorate and memorialize those who fought during the Civil War. These memorials represent an important, if controversial, chapter in our Nation's history. The National Park Service is committed to preserving these memorials while simultaneously educating visitors holistically about the actions, motivations, and causes of the soldiers and states they commemorate. A hallmark of American progress is our ability to learn from our history.

Many commemorative works including monuments and markers were specifically authorized by Congress. In other cases, a monument may have preceded the establishment of a park, and thus could be considered a protected park resource and value. In either of these situations, legislation could be required to remove the monument, and the NPS may need to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act before removing a statue/memorial.

Still other monuments, while lacking legislative authorization, may have existed in parks long enough to qualify as historic features. A key aspect of their historical interest is that they reflect the knowledge, attitudes, and tastes of the people who designed and placed them. Unless directed by legislation, it is the policy of the National Park Service that these works and their inscriptions will not be altered, relocated, obscured, or removed, even when they are deemed inaccurate or incompatible with prevailing present-day values. The Director of the National Park Service may make an exception to this policy.

The NPS will continue to provide historical context and interpretation for all of our sites and monuments in order to reflect a fuller view of past events and the values under which they occurred.

### **TOPICS FOR INTERPRETATION**

What is the history of Confederate monuments in the United States?

- The Civil War transformed the United States in many ways, not the least of which was how our country has interpreted and memorialized the conflict. The memory of the war is preserved and presented in numerous National Park units and National Cemeteries, managed by the federal government, as well as at parks, other protected areas, statues,



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and other physical memorials located at sites across the country. The story of the “late unpleasantness,” (one of the many traditional euphemisms for the Civil War) cannot be separated from the era of Reconstruction that followed and the revisionist mythology described as the “Lost Cause of the Confederacy.” Monuments and memorials dedicated to the recognition of the Confederate States of America are physical representations of the way that generations of southerners have interpreted the war. As the historian Eric Foner noted recently in *The New York Times*: “History is what the present chooses to remember about the past. Historical monuments are, among other things, an expression of power — an indication of who has the power to choose how history is remembered in public places.”

How many confederate monuments are there?

- NPS oversees about 233 Confederate memorials
- The Southern Poverty Law Center had identified 718 monuments and statues at various locations across the country.
  - In addition it noted 109 public schools named for Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis or other Confederate icons; 80 counties and cities named for Confederates; 9 official Confederate holidays in six states; and 10 U.S. military bases named for Confederates.

What did Gen. Robert E. Lee think about slavery?

- See: [What Robert E. Lee Wrote to The Times About Slavery in 1858 \(New York Times\)](#)

What is the “Lost Cause?”

- The Lost Cause of the Confederacy, or simply Lost Cause, is a set of revisionist beliefs that describes the Confederate cause as a heroic one against great odds despite its defeat. The beliefs endorse the virtues of the antebellum South, viewing the American Civil War as an honorable struggle for the Southern way of life, while minimizing or denying the central role of slavery.



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What is the United Daughters of the Confederacy?

- The General Organization of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was founded in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1894 and was incorporated in 1919. Among its objectives is the protection, preservation and marking of “places made historic by Confederate valor.”
- See: [LETTERS, Aug. 24: Daughters of Confederacy defend statues \(Star News Online\)](#)

How does the National Park Service manage monuments and memorials?

- Commemorative works are any statue, monument, sculpture, memorial, plaque, or other structure or landscape feature, including a garden or memorial grove, designed to perpetuate in a permanent manner the memory of a person, group, event, or other significant element of history.
- Outside of the District of Columbia and its environs, commemorative works will not be established unless authorized by Congress or approved by the Director (36 CFR 2.62). The consultation process required by section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act must be completed before the Director will make a decision to approve a commemorative work.
- To be permanently commemorated in a national park is a high honor, affording a degree of recognition that implies national importance. At the same time, the excessive or inappropriate use of commemorative works—especially commemorative naming—diminishes its value as a tool for recognizing people or events that are truly noteworthy. This situation can also divert attention from the important resources and values that park visitors need to learn about.
- With regard to Civil War parks, new commemorative works will not be approved, except where specifically authorized by legislation. However, consideration may be given to proposals that would commemorate groups that were not allowed to be recognized during the commemorative period. In those parks where there is legislative authorization to erect commemorative works, superintendents will prepare a plan to control their size, location, materials, and other factors necessary to protect the overall integrity of the park.
- Many commemorative works have existed in the parks long enough to qualify as historic features. A key aspect of their historical interest is that they reflect the knowledge, attitudes, and tastes of the persons who designed and placed them. These works and their inscriptions will not be altered, relocated, obscured, or removed, even when they are deemed inaccurate or incompatible with prevailing present day values. Any exceptions from this policy require specific approval by the Director.



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How should NPS interpret Confederate monuments?

- NPS managers responsible for Confederate monuments will need to sharpen their message generally and start making distinctions between monuments that were designed to simply commemorate a Confederate and those designed to specifically promote white supremacy (such as the Hayward Shepherd marker in Harpers Ferry).
- One difference between the Lee statue in Charlottesville and the Lee statue at Antietam is that the first was meant as a political statement to remind black citizens in Virginia that white people were still in control, and that the second was an act of commemoration in a historic park. One is a statement of white power, the other a statement of white commemoration. There are monuments of white supremacy in the parks, nevertheless, there is a difference between a Civil War monument on the courthouse square and a Civil War monument in a Civil War battlefield park.
- In response to the argument that Confederate monuments belong in museums where they can be properly interpreted, the NPS should respond that monuments in parks are already in museums where they are interpreted in context.

## NPS Web Resources

- As any visit to a National Park Service-managed battlefield can attest, the agency has thousands of monuments, markers, and memorials dedicated to the heroes of the Civil War. Gettysburg National Military Park alone has almost 1,400! Coming in the future, [this section of the CWSS database](#) will include information about them.
- Civil War Era National Cemeteries: Honoring Those Who Served
  - Creating national cemeteries became a necessity during the American Civil War in order for the United States military to respectfully bury the dead. These National Cemeteries have become national shrines, honoring the sacrifice and valor of the men and women who have served this country throughout its history.
  - [“Death and Dying” by Drew Gilpin Faust \(NPS\)](#)
  - [“From Necessity to Honor: The Evolution of National Cemeteries in the United States” by Kelly Merrifield \(NPS\)](#)

## Bookshelf

[“Allen, Powers Weigh-In On Confederate Monuments” \(The Charleston Chronicle\)](#)

[“CHARLOTTESVILLE AND THE STUDY OF THE SOUTH” by Harry L. Watson \(Southern Cultures\)](#)



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[“Building a Southern Past, 1885–1915” by Catherine W. Bishir \(Southern Cultures\)](#)

[“Confederate Statues and ‘Our’ History” by Eric Foner \(New York Times\)](#)

**Reiko Hillyer**, “Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South,” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (November 2011), pp. 35-62

**Kathy Edwards and Esmé Howard**, “Monument Avenue: The Architecture of Consensus in the New South, 1890-1930.” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 6, *Shaping Communities* (1997), pp. 92-110

**Lori Holyfield and Clifford Beacham**, “Memory Brokers, Shameful Pasts, and Civil War Commemoration,” *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (April 2011), pp. 436-456

[CONFEDERATE MEMORY SERIES \(National Council on Public History\)](#)

[CONTESTED LANDSCAPE THE BATTLE OVER CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS \(Back Story\)](#)

**David W. Blight**, “Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory,” Harvard University Press. (2002)

Anything by **Eric Foner** on Reconstruction

**Robert Cook**, “Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961–1965 (Making the Modern South),” LSU Press. (2007)

**Drew Gilpin Faust**, “This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War,” Vintage. (2008)

**Caroline Janney**, “Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause,” The University of North Carolina Press. (2008)

**Kirk Savage**, “Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America,” Princeton University Press. (1997)

[“The Three-Cornered War – Historians Take on White Supremacist Memorials: A Round-Up” \(Megan Kate Nelson\)](#)



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[After Charlottesville: How to Approach Confederate Memorials in Your Community \(National Trust for Historic Preservation\)](#)

[We Need to Move, Not Destroy, Confederate Monuments \(New York Times\)](#)

[The Statue at the Center of Charlottesville’s Storm \(New York Times\)](#)

[Lawmakers urge removal of Robert E. Lee statue at Antietam \(Politico\)](#)

[The Real Story Behind All Those Confederate Statues \(Mother Jones\)](#)

[The Confederate Monument Movement as a Policy Dilemma for Resource Managers of Parks, Cultural Sites, and Protected Places: Florida as a Case Study \(Irvin D.S. Winsboro\)](#)

[CONFEDERATE MONUMENT INTERPRETATION TEMPLATE \(Atlanta History Center\)](#)

[WHOSE HERITAGE? A Report on Public Symbols of the Confederacy \(Southern Poverty Law Center\)](#)

