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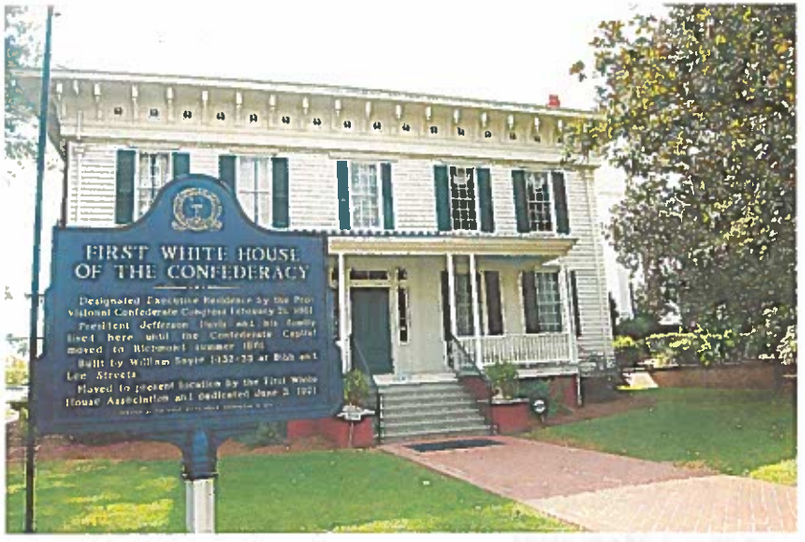
Why We Need a National Lynching Memorial

The tree of memory sets its roots in blood.
—Aphorism

There are two versions of Montgomery, Alabama, which coexist in mutually exclusive forms of public memory that mirror this country's history. In white supremacist Montgomery, which was the first capital of the Confederacy, the most important Confederate memorial is the First White House of the Confederacy. Subsidized by taxpayer money, it celebrates the life of Confederate president Jefferson Davis as a "renowned American patriot" in the home where he lived for less than a year during the Civil War. Slavery as a cause leading to the Civil War plays no part in the historical presentation of the house, which focuses on the objects and memorabilia that celebrate the life of Davis and his family.

In this Montgomery, streets and schools bear the names of beloved Confederate generals, such as the Robert E. Lee High School, which sports a statue of Lee on a pedestal near its entrance, or Jefferson Davis Highway. According to the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), there are fifty-nine monuments, markers, and memorials to the Confederacy in the city.

At the First White House of the Confederacy, I asked the older male docent who introduced the house and was clearly a history buff whether Davis had owned slaves. He readily admitted that the Confederate president and his family enslaved "130 people," and informed me that many "remained loyal" to Davis, invoking the myth promoted by many southern slaveholders that they



The First White House of the Confederacy, executive residence of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his family in 1861 while Montgomery was capital of the Confederacy.

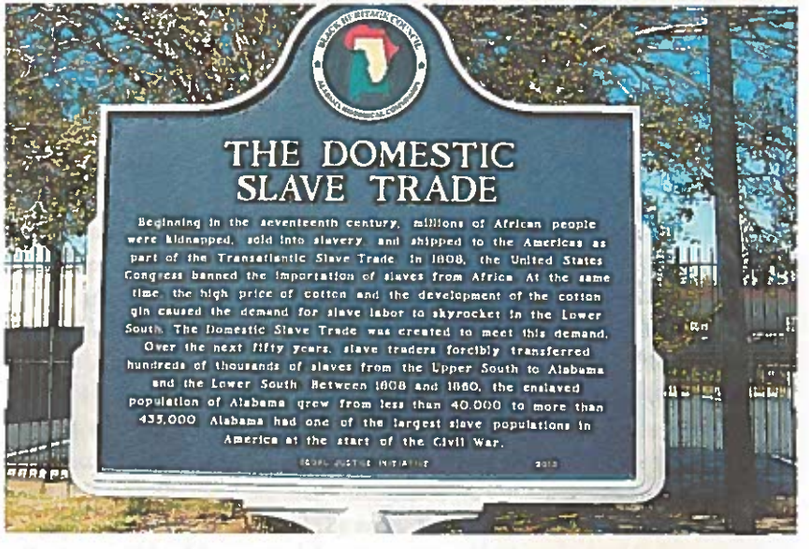
Robert E. Lee High School, one of two high schools named after Confederate generals in Montgomery, Alabama, along with Jefferson Davis High School.

were beloved by their slaves. According to historian Jill Lepore, a small group of enslaved families who lived on Davis's thousand-acre cotton plantation Brierfield, in Mississippi, made a break for freedom in 1862, with at least 137 of the more than 200 slaves who lived on the plantation leaving after the fall of nearby Vicksburg in 1863.[1] What, I asked, did our docent think of the new Legacy Museum and lynching memorial in town? Growing wary, he said carefully, "A journalist from the newspaper asked me that too. I think it's wonderful."

In many places, the history of slavery is erased or elided. From 1850 until the end of the Civil War, Montgomery was the most active southern port in slave trading, surpassing New Orleans. Between 1808 and 1860, the enslaved population of Alabama grew more than tenfold, from less than 40,000 to more than 435,000, one of the largest slave populations at the start of the Civil War. Two-thirds of the Montgomery population consisted of enslaved people; free blacks could not legally reside in the city.

Court Square, the main slave market where slave traders sold men, women, and children alongside livestock, has an official sign next to it that describes it as a "historic hub for business in Montgomery." This would be like describing a Nazi concentration camp as a "historic hub for communal labor." The sign that explains the nature of that "business" is several blocks away, one of many put up by the EJI to introduce facts about the Montgomery slave trade, slave warehouses, and slave depots that were avoided by local historians.

Montgomery's downtown is dominated by the Alabama State Capitol, a massive Greek revival structure that sits atop Goat Hill at one end of Dexter



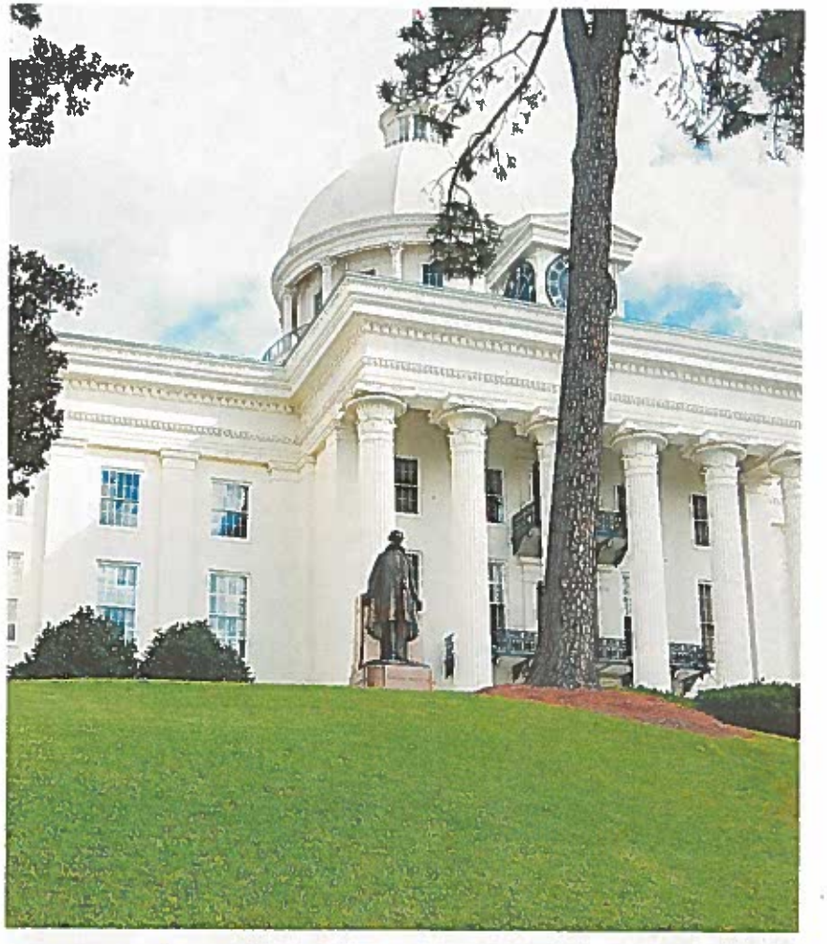
Memorial plaque on the domestic slave trade, placed by the Equal Justice Initiative; Montgomery, Alabama, October 2017.

Avenue, the city's main street, with Court Square at the other end, symbolically connecting the "business hub" with the "business owners." In front of the state capitol, a nine-foot high bronze statue of Jefferson Davis overlooks the city like a beneficent civic father.

Nestling under the shade of a nearby tree is another statue, this one of James Marion Sims, known as "the father of gynecology." Sims developed important gynecological surgical techniques by conducting dozens of operations on enslaved women without anesthesia. He was convinced that black women could not feel pain the way white women could. Sims's practice recalls the medical abuses of other African Americans, such as the Tuskegee experiment that injected black sharecroppers with syphilis and left them untreated to see what happened, or the eugenics movement in the early twentieth century, aimed at "improving" the genetic composition of the population through selective breeding, which largely victimized women, people with disabilities, and racial minorities. The city of New York removed a statue of Sims from its pedestal bordering Central Park in 2008, but in Montgomery, Sims reposes peacefully on the capitol lawn.[2]

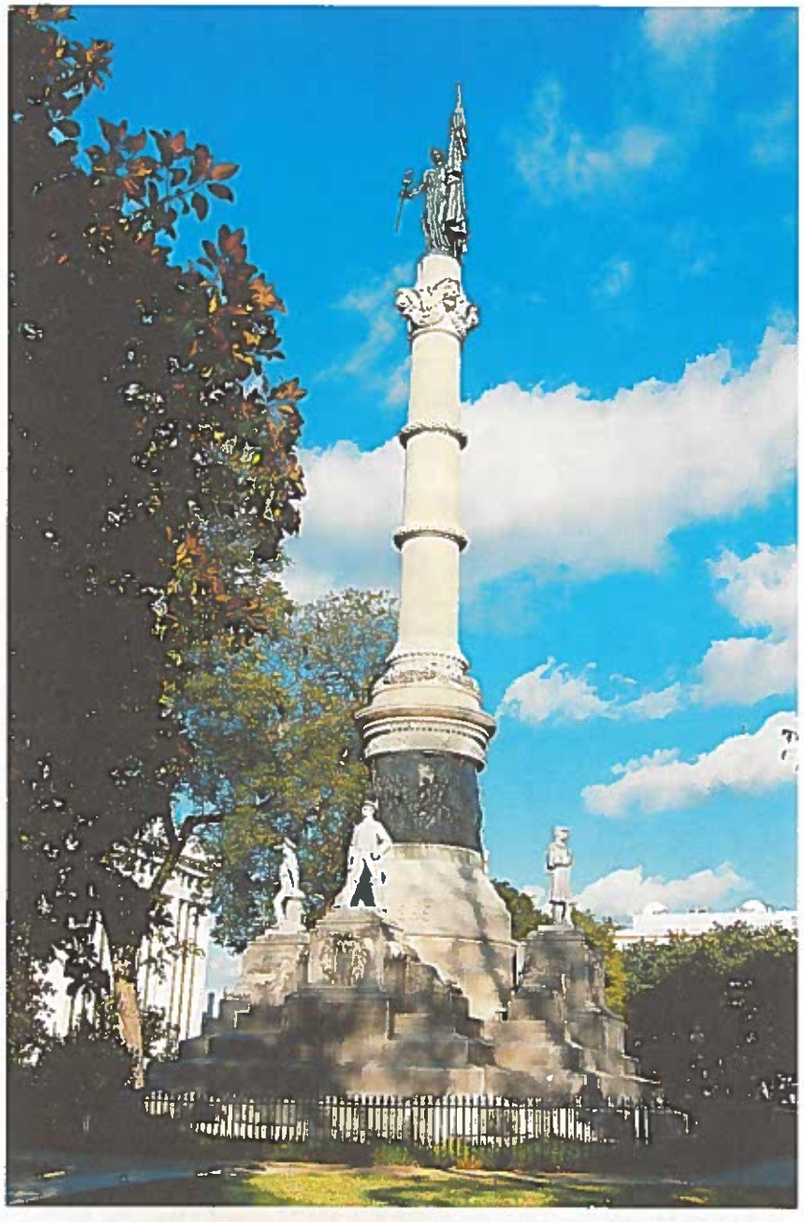
On the north side of the capitol is an eighty-eight-foot Confederate Memorial Monument, erected in 1898 with public funds and dedicated to Confederate veterans.[3] Its cornerstone was laid by Jefferson Davis, for whom a bronze plaque in the shape of a star marks the spot on the capitol steps where he stood when he was sworn in as the first Confederate president, placed there after his death by the Daughters of the Confederacy. Some have called for removal of the Confederate Monument but only the four Confederate flags that surrounded it were removed in 2015 by the Alabama governor in the wake of the Charleston church massacre of nine black congregants. In May 2017, the Alabama state legislature passed the Alabama Memorial Preservation Act, which made it illegal to remove a monument on public property more than forty years old, effectively preventing the removal of Confederate monuments from public lands.[4] The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that 1,740 Confederate monuments still exist in public spaces nationally.

The State Capitol is also where the fifty-four-mile march in 1965 along Jefferson Davis Highway from Selma to Montgomery ended. It was in support of voting rights for African Americans, with some twenty-five thousand people gathering there that day. The Baptist Church within view of the capitol is where Martin Luther King, Jr. and other activists planned the Montgomery bus boycott after police arrested Rosa Parks for refusing to move to the back of the bus for a white passenger in 1955. Originally called for one day, that boycott lasted a year and led to the rise of King as a leader in the black community. Montgomery is also home to the Rosa Parks Museum, and the Civil Rights Memorial Center at the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which tracks hate groups in America and includes a civil rights memorial designed by Maya Lin. The SPLC is under constant guard because of threats to the center.



Statue of Jefferson Davis in front of the Alabama State Capitol, Montgomery, overlooking the city.

Along with the King Memorial Baptist Church, where King became pastor at the age of twenty-five, downtown Montgomery is home to the Equal Justice Initiative. Bryan Stevenson, a Harvard University–trained lawyer who created the EJI in 1994 to fight for justice for people on death row, became interested in the history of lynching and eventually served as the driving force behind both the Legacy Museum and its companion site, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. The Legacy Museum tells the story of slavery, segregation, lynching, and mass incarceration, and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice memorializes the thousands of lynching victims in America between 1877 (the year Reconstruction was abandoned) and 1950 (when the civil rights movement gained momentum), commemorating these deaths on a national level for the



The 88-foot Confederate Memorial Monument on the north side of the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery, commemorating the 122,000 Alabamians who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War, dedicated in 1898.

first time. These and other institutions and memorials constitute the alternative Montgomery. One is known as the "Cradle of the Confederacy," the other as the "Birthplace of Civil Rights."

The Legacy Museum

What is the legacy of slavery? Has the United States ever confronted its past as a nation? The single most important thing to understand about the United States from its inception to the present moment is that it is a democratic republic built upon enslavement. The destructive effect of this profound contradiction continues more than two centuries later, embodied in the iconic words of the Declaration of Independence itself: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Among the founders of the nation who endorsed these sentiments, men who spoke boldly and eloquently about liberty and equality, were slave owners, including George Washington, the first president of the nation, and Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, who refused to recognize the injustice of slavery. In her ambitious account of American history, framed by this fundamental contradiction between freedom and slavery, Jill Lepore observes, "To study the past is to unlock the prison of the present."[5]

The divide between abolitionists and slave owners, free states and slave states, inflected national development every step of the way. From the beginning and without giving black people any rights, the three-fifths rule allowed enslaved people to be counted as three-fifths of a white person for the purpose of proportional representation. This gave the southern states a great advantage in the Electoral College, so that for thirty-two of the first thirty-six years of the Republic, the president of the United States was a Virginian slave owner. When the Union admitted Missouri as a slave state in 1820 along with the free state of Maine, it entailed a "compromise" that reaffirmed the institution of slavery in the southern states. John Quincy Adams, who was critical of slavery, presciently wrote in his diary, "Take it for granted that the present is a mere preamble—a title page to a great, tragic volume."[6]

The white men who ruled also endorsed the attempted genocide of Native Americans and the theft of their land. As the nation expanded westward, the question of the day was whether new states would be slave or free. The flagrant contradiction that formed the very foundation of the republic finally caused southern states to secede from the Union in order to maintain an economy based on slavery, which exploded into a civil war. Despite losing that war, southern legislatures began passing "black codes," which were race-based laws that effectively continued slavery through indentures, sharecropping, and other forms of service.

The Ku Klux Klan, founded in Tennessee in 1866 and comprised of Confederate veterans, began a reign of lynching and racial terror aimed, in large part, at preventing black freedmen from voting. Klansmen knew freedmen would vote for the opposition party that had supported their freedom, which would constrain the power of southern white supremacists who refused to regard black men as "created equal." Their white robes, according to one original Klansman, were meant to evoke "the ghosts of the Confederate dead, who had arisen from their graves in order to wreak vengeance."[7] A decade later, following the public withdrawal of northern troops, which signaled the collapse of Reconstruction and abandonment of the fight for black civil rights, a new set of black codes, known as Jim Crow laws, segregated blacks from whites in all possible public places.

The question of black civil rights has continued to divide the nation. Still disenfranchised through election chicanery and voter suppression, murdered by police with impunity, incarcerated in vastly disproportionate numbers, poet Claudia Rankine sums up this dismal history of atrocity and persecution: "The condition of black life is one of mourning. Dying in ship hulls, tossed into the Atlantic, hanging from trees, beaten, shot in churches, gunned down by the police or warehoused in prisons: historically, there is no quotidian without the enslaved, chained or dead black body to gaze upon or to hear about or to position a self against."[8] From any perspective, there is no getting around the legacy of the past in the present, so that how we remember and interpret the past is crucial to the ongoing struggle for equality and democracy.

The Legacy Museum, which opened in 2018, employs unique technology and videography to dramatize the enslavement of African Americans, describing in four sections the evolution of the slave trade, the terror of lynchings, legalized racial segregation, and mass incarceration in the world's largest prison system. It begins with the international slave trade that carried by force twelve million Africans to the Americas. When Congress finally banned the importation of slaves in 1808, the domestic slave trade took over, trafficking some 1.2 million enslaved people from the upper South to the Deep South. Painted on a red brick wall after reading about this are words that deliver a gut punch: "You are standing on a site where enslaved people were warehoused." You realize you are not just in a museum, but in *one of the places where the enslaved were imprisoned*. A ramp downward into the main gallery leads to a corridor of slave pen replicas where six-foot video screens in the prison cells depict enslaved men, women, and children who plead, pray, sing, and narrate their stories, seeming to respond to your presence, as they await sale at auction.

What is remarkable about the museum program, "From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration," is that it refuses to construct a redemptive narrative, as most history museums do.[9] Instead, it insists on the unhappy reality of a country where the ethos of liberty founded on enslavement has evolved to mean that one in three black boys today will likely go to jail or prison in his lifetime, a

Legacy Museum; Montgomery, Alabama, 2018. (Photo courtesy Julie Langsam.)

continuing subjugation of black people that criminalizes them on the basis of their skin color.

Exhibits in the Legacy Museum include video touch screens, interactive maps that can show where lynchings have occurred in any state, and films on lynching and mass incarceration. Especially affecting is a cluster of four enclosed desks, built to resemble prison visitation rooms, where museumgoers don a headset and pick up a phone to listen to an inmate's prerecorded testimonial while watching him on a life-size video screen. There are texts and facsimiles of advertisements for enslaved people as well as discriminatory signs and statutes from the Jim Crow era, though artifacts are generally secondary to the interactive and narrative nature of the museum, except in one inventive display.

The EJI hit on the powerful idea of collecting soil samples in jars from lynching sites around the nation, each jar labeled with the name of the person lynched (when known), the place of the lynching, and the date. Like urns with ashes, the jars of soil evoke the bodies of the dead, creating a web of connection between place, memory, and the body. Since we can't be at all the sites where lynchings have occurred, these places symbolically come to us through the accretion and materiality of soil samples, their different colors and textures standing in for the different individuals and geographical locations. Massing together more than three hundred jars on shelves, the display conveys a sense of

Jars of soil from lynching sites around the nation collected as part of EJI's Community Remembrance Project, on display at the Legacy Museum. (© 2018 by Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post.)

absence and loss that is both specific to individuals and representative of the thousands killed whose blood has soaked the earth across the nation.

Three jars bear the names of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie, respectively, who died in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1920. They were falsely accused of raping a white girl and lynched by a mob of five to ten thousand people that watched as Clayton and Jackson, nineteen, and McGhie, twenty, were hanged from a lamppost in the center of town. More than eighty years later, a multiracial group of Duluth residents brought to fruition the first substantial lynching memorial to commemorate their lives, consisting of sculptural relief figures and a series of quotations in a small memorial park across from the actual lynching site.[10]

The commemorative process in Duluth, constructed to remember a buried past and foster a shared sense of community, produced forums for discussions of the lynchings and their contemporary implications, and created a locus for the structuring of collective memory. The memorial makes visible a black political and cultural presence in Duluth, a largely white city, bringing disparate antiracist elements of the populace together. In 2017, about a hundred people watched as black elders and community leaders shoveled soil at the memorial into three jars, one for each victim of the triple lynching, in conjunction with officials from the EJI and the Duluth NAACP. The following year, about three dozen Minnesotans took a ninety-eight-hour bus trip to Montgomery to visit the Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice.[11] In part,

Carla Stetson and Anthony Peyton Porter, Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial, Duluth, Minnesota, dedicated in 2003. The text along the top says, "An event has occurred about which it is difficult to speak and impossible to remain silent."

the poignancy of this event resides in the collective remembrance of the names and fates of the three murdered young men for whom no relatives were ever found.

As one exits the main gallery, a corridor contains artwork by Titus Kaphar, Sanford Biggers, Elizabeth Catlett, John Biggers, Yvonne Meo, and Kay Brown. After immersion in the history of racial terror and injustice through the powerful texts, films, and new video technology, however, the small gallery of artworks seems anticlimactic.

On the way out of the Legacy Museum, another cluster of touch screens under the sign "What Do I Do Now?" offers information on a range of issues that connect the educational program to the advocacy work of the EJI. The museum notes, for example, the language of school segregation in the Alabama constitution: "Today, the Alabama constitution still mandates that there be racial segregation in education with 'separate schools for white and colored children.' While federal law prohibits barring black children from attending schools with white students, the Alabama constitutional ban still exists. In 2004 and 2012, an effort to remove this language from the state constitution through a statewide referendum was attempted. On both occasions, predominately white voters elected to ratify this language and keep this restriction in the state constitution." The wall text then asks, "What does it mean that the Alabama constitution still prohibits racial integration in education and what

At a soil collection ceremony at the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial in Duluth, community elder Portia Johnson shovels dirt into containers held by CJM Memorial founder Heidi Bakk-Hansen, bound for the Legacy Museum in Montgomery. (Photo by Clint Austin, *Duluth News Tribune*.)

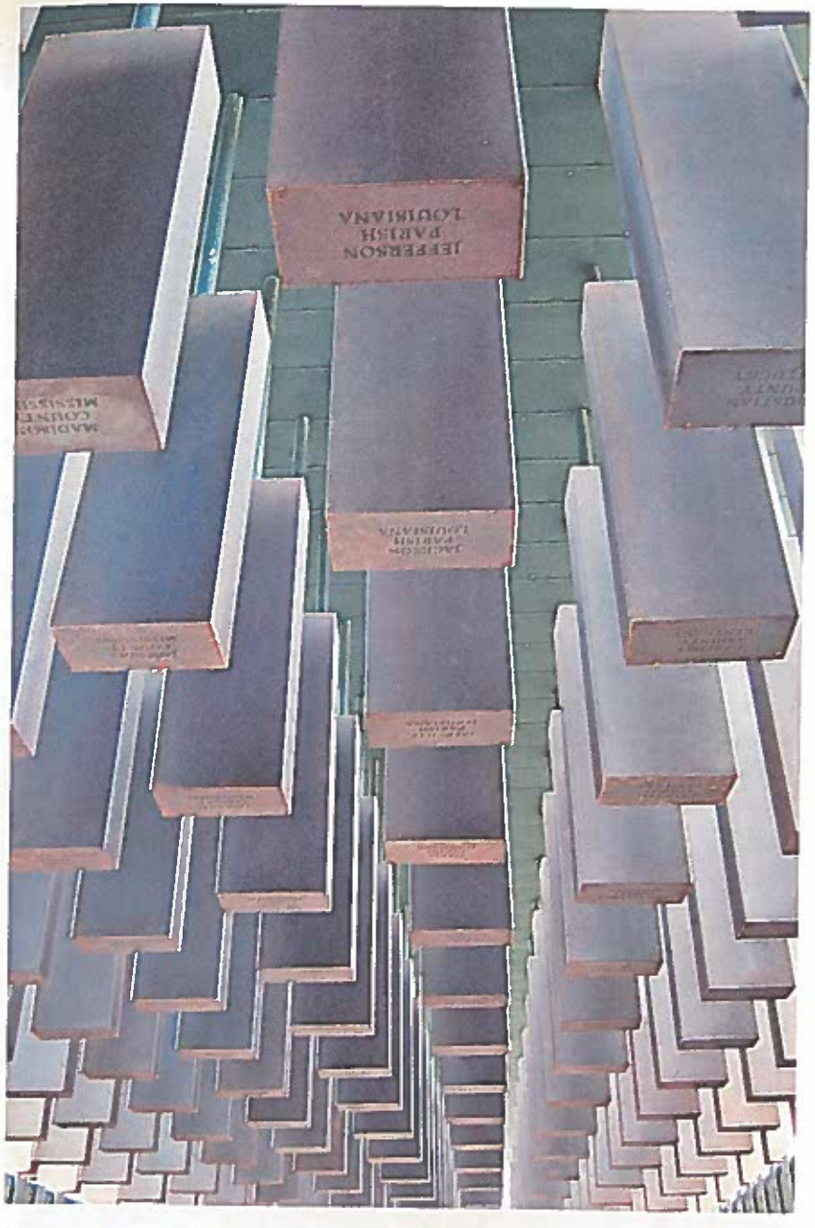
should be done about it?" Evoking an activist tradition of social justice advocacy, the question suggests that *something* should be done, raising the need for social struggle.[12]

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice sits high on a six-acre site in downtown Montgomery and contains over eight hundred corten steel columns, one for every county in the nation where lynching occurred. Each pillar carries the names of victims lynched in that county. The pillars are six feet tall, evoking the height of a person, and the choice of corten steel allows them to weather to different shades of brown. A square structure, it has four roofed corridors surrounding a courtyard. Entering at eye level with the pillars, which sit on the ground, visitors then slowly descend on a slanted wooden plank floor around the next three sides while the columns seem to rise above, eerily evoking rows of hanging bodies. Some of the steel slabs have "unknown" etched among the names, creating an archive of the lost within the archive of the known. The effect of standing before the hundreds of hanging columns is visceral, creating what might be called an embodied act of ethical spectatorship,[13] a symbolic "seeing" that turns us into historical witnesses and a way of "feeling" the traumatized bodies produced through the horror of lynching in an act of radical empathy.

The fourth corridor offers a wall of falling water dedicated to the thousands of victims, and beyond it a "monument park" contains horizontal replicas of the steel slabs in the memorial structure, which are waiting to be claimed and

Montgomery National Memorial to Peace and Justice, dedicated in 2018. Set on a six-acre site, the central memorial square includes eight hundred six-foot monuments to represent thousands of racial terror lynching victims.



Montgomery National Memorial to Peace and Justice, detail of hanging steel monuments.

installed in the counties they represent. In this way, those communities that are willing—or unwilling—to confront their own lynching history will become visible. The invitation to install the steel monuments offered by EJI is a challenge to cities and towns across the nation to resurrect memory that has been largely repressed, ignored, or discounted. While plaques, statues, and monuments to the Confederacy litter the southern landscape, most sites where victims were lynched remain unmarked and unrecognized. "The absence of a prominent public memorial acknowledging racial terrorism," writes the EJI about such sites, "is a powerful statement about our failure to value the African Americans who were killed or gravely wounded in this brutal campaign of racial violence." The communities that failed to value African Americans in the past are also where African Americans today "remain marginalized, disproportionately poor, overrepresented in prisons and jails, and underrepresented in decision-making roles in the criminal justice system."[14] Some communities and institutions, however, wish to change their narrative and construct a more complete racial history despite the fierce resistance.

To create its 2015 report, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*, Bryan Stevenson and a team of EJI researchers spent six years combing through court records and local newspapers and talking to local historians and family members in order to document more than 4,400 lynchings. Stevenson found people who were lynched for knocking on a white woman's door, for failing to address a police officer as "mister," and for bumping into a white girl while trying to catch a train. Men and women were lynched for "being disrespectful," "standing around," "bothering a white woman," or for having the temerity to try to vote, organize sharecroppers, report a crime, demand their wages, or for being associated with someone who did. Primarily people were lynched for being black.

Yet despite the thousands killed, most Americans cannot name a single person who was lynched. The National Memorial for Peace and Justice therefore names names, transforming the undifferentiated mass of victims into individuals, family members, and ancestors, turning them back into grievable bodies. The evocative steel columns serve as a counterpart to the jars of soil at the Legacy Museum, both producing a plangent effect as materiality and as metaphor.

Links to themes of slavery, segregation, and mass incarceration central to the narrative at the Legacy Museum are also made at the lynching memorial through figurative sculptures placed around the more imposing memorial structure. Near the entrance is a sculptural installation by Ghanaian artist Kwame Akoto-Bamfo, which portrays a group of the enslaved who were captured in Africa, setting an emotional tone as one enters the site.

The invitation to produce the sculpture came while Akoto-Bamfo was in the midst of sculpting 1,300 individualized heads for an installation at Cape Coast Castle on the Ghanaian coastline, known as a "slave castle" where people were

Montgomery National Memorial to Peace and Justice, detail of engraved county names and names of the victims.

Kwame Akoto-Bamfo, *Nkyinkyim Installation*, bronze, permanent installation at the Montgomery National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama.

Hank Willis Thomas, *Raise Up*, bronze, permanent installation at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama.

held captive in underground dungeons in the weeks before their transatlantic migration to a New World life of enslavement. His sculpture for Montgomery evokes that transatlantic voyage with seven bronze life-size figures of men, women, and a child straining against their shackles and conveys their stoicism, suffering, and distress. While individualizing his figures, Akoto-Bamfo memorializes the millions of transatlantic slave trade victims and underscores their African heritage. Asserting that representations of the enslaved in art tend to lack individuality and humanity, he handily remedies this condition in his own work.[15]

As one exits the memorial site, a sculptural work by Hank Willis Thomas, *Raise Up*, evokes police violence and the warehousing of black youth in jails and prisons. The work consists of ten bronze figures, black men with their heads barely visible, their hands raised in the air, with most of their bodies sunk into concrete, a kind of metaphorical quicksand from which there appears to be no escape—or else they are slowly emerging from it. The work is based on a 1960s picture by the South African photographer Ernest Cole of miners being subjected to a humiliating group medical examination.[16] Through American eyes, the same figures suggest police suspects lined up at gunpoint or a reference to Michael Brown and the "hands up, don't shoot" gestures of protest that followed his murder by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri.

Black Memory and White Montgomery

Given the long history of Confederate monuments celebrating white supremacy, it is not surprising that many of the conservative white townspeople in Montgomery oppose the new lynching memorial as subversive history. They suggest it digs up the past unnecessarily, that it is "better not to open old wounds" and "let sleeping dogs lie." But are the dogs really sleeping? One local man told a reporter, "It's a waste of money, a waste of space and it's bringing up bullshit."[17] Tommy Rhodes, a member of the Alabama Sons of Confederate Veterans said, "Bring that stuff to light, and let it be there, but don't dwell on it. We have moved past it. . . . You don't want to entice them and feed any fuel to the fire."[18] Some locals questioned the accuracy of the lynching numbers of the EJI report. Indeed, it beggars the imagination to consider that more than 4,400 men, women, and children were hanged, burned alive, shot, drowned, and beaten to death by white mobs.

In an informal survey, I also asked local inhabitants how they felt about the museum and lynching memorial. It was clear that the young black staff at both institutions comprise a fervent cadre dedicated to their mission. The woman behind the front desk of the Legacy Museum beamed with joy when I told her I thought the museum was powerful. The young man at the photo booth at the end of the exhibition wanted to know about Detroit and its ruins; he was proud of the museum staff's book club and ongoing political education.

But how did the public confrontation with the history and legacy of slavery and race terror change the narrative for whites in Montgomery who grew up with a different version of history, one that found it more politically convenient to regard the Civil War as a fight over "states' rights" than slavery?

A pained look often crossed the faces of young whites—part sheepish, part defiant—when I asked what they thought. A server at a local restaurant with a goatee and ponytail dropped his gaze to the ground, hesitated, and said, "I don't think presenting a history of violence is helpful." Not helpful? "It won't bring about change by focusing on the past." Then he looked at me and asked, "Does that make sense?" He was clearly uneasy but willing to talk about it. As Bryan Stevenson points out, "People take great pride in the Confederacy because they actually don't associate it with the abuse and victimization of millions of enslaved black people. So that has to be disrupted."[19] One way to do that is by talking to people, which is prompted by changing the commemorative landscape.

The young woman behind the counter at the Hank Williams Museum, who seemed to know everything there was to know about the country music star, said, "Honestly? I like history and I think it's important to know history, the good and the bad, so I'm glad the museum is here." Then she paused and looked down. "But the problem is the publicity and the people coming from out of town who take it out of context." Out of context? "I feel weird saying this. I'm not a racist and I accept all people for who they are, but people come from out

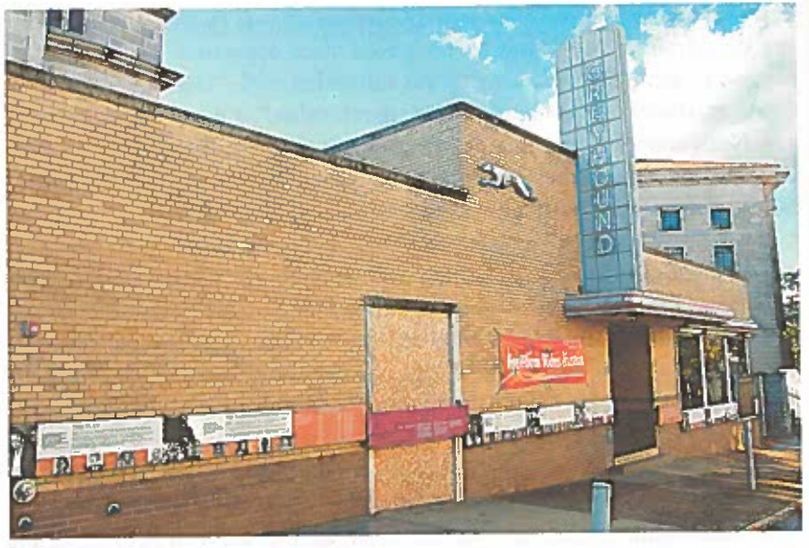
of town and they're like, 'Black power!' I believe *all* lives matter," she said, echoing the refrain of those who see no special black oppression. She went on to suggest that the Confederate flag was misunderstood: "It just stands for the South and people should be able to accept it for that." What about the fact that neo-Nazis and white supremacists carry that flag? "Yeah," she conceded, "that's a problem." And isn't the South that is represented by that flag the slaveholding South? She conceded that too, plaintively adding, "But that's not what I mean. I grew up with that flag. People should be able to accept me."

For some, the national conflicts over race pose a choice between a destabilizing transformation of identity as white southerners or maintenance of a status quo that dismisses or minimizes the racial violence of the past and its implications for the present. Yet as I turned to leave, she called out, "I enjoyed this conversation." She, too, was willing to think about these issues even though they made her uneasy.

For these two visibly conflicted people, the focus on racial violence was "not helpful" or took things "out of context"—the context being the normalization of southern white dominance—because it placed in doubt their upbringing and way of life. These young southerners are products of an educational system that does not effectively teach the history of slavery and the suppression of black civil rights. Although the context is different, it recalls the generation of Germans born in the wake of the Nazi era who struggled to come to terms with the legacy of their parents and grandparents. As one such descendant observes, "Many of my generation were either frozen in guilt and shame or locked into a defensive position, rejecting responsibility by insisting that one cannot be blamed for something that happened before one was born. From what position then can descendants of perpetrators speak? It's too easy to feel like a victim of the guilt and shame handed down by the parental generation, and it all too often feeds into a politics of resentment."[20]

No doubt the young people I spoke to operate from the position of resenting being made to feel blame and shame, yet they are troubled by witnessing the impact of racism, which confronts them with a parental legacy of racialized violence to be worked through. But when I asked one of the young black docents at the lynching memorial whether she often heard comments from white visitors about the folly of focusing on the past, she told me her own grandmother had "said the same thing." In this case, one can imagine an older black generation fearing the effects of stirring up white resentment.[21]

"People are uncomfortable talking about these issues because they have never talked about them before and don't even have the vocabulary," said the young white woman behind the desk at the Freedom Rides Museum. She provided a vivid account of the Freedom Riders, begun by an integrated group of young people, mostly college students, who attempted to integrate interstate transportation and were attacked by a crowd of racist whites in 1961 at the Greyhound station that now houses the museum. They nevertheless succeeded in



The Freedom Rides Museum in the former Greyhound Bus Station, where Freedom Riders in 1961 were attacked by racist whites but succeeded in desegregating southern bus and train stations. Opened in 2011.

helping to end segregation on interstate transport. To people who say the past should be left in the past, she responds, "Should we forget about Anne Frank too?" She also observed that Montgomery was conservative in other ways and had only one gay bar and no visible LGBTQ community.

At the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, an impeccably groomed elderly white woman behind the front desk looked at me cannily when I asked her thoughts about the new museum and memorial. "Well the tourists like them," she said, before leaning toward me conspiratorially and whispering, "But nobody here goes to them." At least, I presumed, no one she knew. Resisting her assumption of my "solidarity," I pressed her a bit. She gave me a flinty look, as if I were dense or foolishly trying to get her to speak that which is not spoken publicly, before changing course and walking back the idea that she was speaking for others: "I'm not originally from here. I'm from Wisconsin but I've been here seventy-five years, so I guess I can call myself a southerner." Then she dismissed the museum and memorial as belonging to the distant past. "Things used to be terrible," she said, "but thank goodness that's all worked out now." Her certainty left no room for contradiction. Here was the voice of white racist gentility.

A visit to the Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum offered further connections to Montgomery's racial history. Zelda's father Anthony Sayre served in the state legislature and then as an Alabama Supreme Court judge for twenty-two years. According to the director of the Fitzgerald House, he helped pass a law that prevented black people from voting until 1964. Zelda's great-uncle

William Sayre, a merchant, brought his brother Daniel, a planter, to Montgomery, and William built what became the First White House of the Confederacy; both brothers lived there before it was physically moved and became Jefferson Davis's home. Zelda's paternal grandfather became a Confederate congressman and served as president of Kentucky's Confederate legislative council. What did the young white female director of the Fitzgerald House, a native of Montgomery, think about the Legacy Museum and lynching memorial? "It's about time," she said with exasperation. Here was the voice of the other Montgomery for whom the museum and memorial were a historic step forward.

For Confederate patriots, commemoration of the history of lynching represents a threat to the hegemony of southern whiteness; hence, their willingness to forget this history as something they have "moved past," that may not even be true, or will only "fuel the fire" of indignation and a demand for democratic rights. French historian Pierre Nora theorized memorials as polemical vehicles, suggesting that "when certain minorities create protected enclaves as preserves of memory," they do so because "without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away."[22] If the histories of slavery and lynching were not threatened with denial or oblivion, there would be no need for insisting upon them. As another local resident supportive of the project observed, "This is something our children need to know, so they can understand the struggle."[23]

This is the mission of the Legacy Museum and the lynching memorial, which together attempt to change the narrative of American history and demonstrate how the legacy of slavery evolved to the present-day conditions of black life in America. Together they not only emplace black memory but also construct an activist form of memory that changes how we think about racial justice. As Bryan Stevenson remarked in an interview, "I believe that the North won the Civil War, but the South won the narrative war. They were able to hold on to the ideology of white supremacy and the narrative of racial difference that sustained slavery and shaped social, economic, and political conditions in America. And because the South won the narrative war, it didn't take very long for them to reassert the same racial hierarchy that stained the soul of this nation during slavery. . . ."[24]

Despite local opposition, surely emboldened by President Trump, but also because of it, the lynching memorial opened at a time when many welcomed such a national reckoning in an increasingly polarized country. Indeed, Trump began his term in office as if he were a Confederate president reasserting white rule. As Rebecca Solnit observes, "In the 158th year of the American Civil War, also known as 2018, the Confederacy continues its recent resurgence. Its victims include black people, of course, but also immigrants, Jews, Muslims, Latinx, trans people, gay people and women who want to exercise jurisdiction over their bodies."[25] The Republican efforts to manipulate and restrict black voting rights during national elections, the horrendous separation of children from their parents at the Mexican border, and whole families held in ICE

U.S. Border Patrol agents conduct intake of illegal border crossers at the Central Processing Center in McAllen, Texas; Sunday, June 17, 2018. Photo provided by Custom and Border Protection to reporter on tour of detention facility. Reporters were not allowed to take their own photos. (CCo via Wikimedia Commons.)

detention centers (evoking the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II), are just some of the racist, antidemocratic atrocities of the Trump administration.

The lynching memorial received front-page coverage in national and international print publications such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *The Guardian*. The *Montgomery Advertiser* offered a critique of its own role in the past. Known as the leading paper of the Confederacy in the nineteenth century, it was historically opposed to lynching but supported it in practice, reinforcing white supremacy right through the era of the civil rights movement. The current forty-one-year-old editor, Bro Krift, however, greeted the opening of the lynching memorial by printing the names of lynching victims from Alabama on the front page alongside an editorial acknowledging and condemning the newspaper's complicity. This principled act reminds us of the shameful role that newspapers often played in the past by announcing lynchings before the fact with dates, times, and places, and justifying lynchings by presuming that blackness was linked inextricably to criminality, a presumption still in force today.

Remembering or forgetting the history of lynching constitutes two mutually exclusive ways of preserving history, and the two sets of Montgomery memorials, focusing on the Confederacy or on black history, preserve contradictory historical narratives that are nevertheless inextricably linked. The Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice disturb the hierarchy of

power through the insurgent eruption of black memory into public discussion and public life on both a local and national scale, producing a confrontation with the country's past that is long overdue.

The Debate over Confederate Monuments

The debate over what to do with Confederate monuments has been raging since at least 2015, when the young white supremacist Dylann Roof massacred nine black people in the fellowship hall at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. This church was one of the first black congregations in the South. Founded in 1818, whites destroyed it in 1822 because of its role in a failed slave rebellion and hanged many church members. The church was reconstituted and served as a sanctuary and center of resistance through Reconstruction to the civil rights era.

In a manifesto found on Roof's website, he cited his "awakening" by the 2012 killing of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood vigilante who shot Martin in the chest because the unarmed young black man in a hoodie looked "suspicious." A jury acquitted Zimmerman of the crime. Roof also drew inspiration from the Council of Conservative Citizens and the Northwest Front, both white supremacist organizations, and posted photos of himself posing with segregationist symbols and the Confederate flag. In the two weeks following the mass shooting, racists torched eight black churches, recalling the hundreds of church fires set by the Ku Klux Klan. Roof's association with Confederate symbols prompted South Carolina's governor and legislature to remove the Confederate battle flag outside the state capitol in Columbia, and that led to a push to remove symbols of the Confederacy across the South—flags, monuments, and statues—a push that extended north to places as far-flung as the Bronx and Seattle. In Boston, protesters reenacted a slave auction to demand a name change for Faneuil Hall, named for Peter Faneuil, a colonial slave owner.

Georgia elections for governor in 2018 erupted in controversy over the three-acre Stone Mountain Confederate Memorial Carving, the largest Confederate monument in existence, dedicated in 1970. Black Democratic gubernatorial candidate Stacy Abrams called for its removal by sandblasting. Abrams termed it a "blight" upon the state, and civil rights groups have called for its removal for years. The enormous bas-relief represents the southern Civil War leaders Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, and Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson on horseback. Proponents of the monument, with strong ties to the Klan, first proposed it in 1914. The carving stalled during the Great Depression but a segregationist governor who bought the land in 1958 had it completed and wrote a law that mandated its operation as a "perpetual memorial" to the Confederacy. The carving's public prominence was revived with a cross burning atop Stone Mountain in 2015.[26]

Stone Mountain Confederate monument, a bas-relief of three acres four hundred feet above the ground depicting three Confederate generals on horseback; Stone Mountain, Georgia. Stone Mountain was the site of the founding of the second Ku Klux Klan in 1915. (Photo: ©2012–2018 VickyM72 via www.deviantart.com.)

In Charlottesville, Virginia, white nationalists held an infamous "Unite the Right" rally in August 2017, in which a car driven by a twenty-year-old neo-Nazi plowed into a group of antiracist protesters, killing thirty-two-year-old Heather Heyer and injuring nineteen others. The purpose of the rally was both to unite the various factions of neo-Nazis, neo-Confederates, and neo-Klansmen into one nationalist movement and to oppose removing a statue of Robert E. Lee from the city's Emancipation Park (renamed Market Street Park in 2018).

After these violent events helped reignite a debate about Confederate monuments, the American Historical Association released a statement describing such monuments as "part and parcel of the initiation of legally mandated segregation and widespread disenfranchisement across the South." Confederate monuments, the statement maintains, erected primarily during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras, were meant "to obscure the terrorism required to overthrow Reconstruction, and to intimidate African Americans politically and isolate them from the mainstream of public life during the Civil Rights era."

Crucially, the statement notes the unilateral nature of this shaping of the memorial landscape: "Nearly all monuments to the Confederacy and its leaders were erected without anything resembling a democratic process. Regardless of their representation in the actual population in any given constituency, African

Americans had no voice and no opportunity to raise questions about the purposes or likely impact of the honor accorded to the builders of the Confederate States of America."[27]

Those who vigorously defend Confederate monuments in the South do so by arguing they are part of southern history, but the history they represent is that of white supremacist suppression of black civil rights. Issues of class and gender are also important components of Confederate monument building. The southern elite built monuments in the 1910s that compared Confederate soldiers to World War I soldiers as a way of reasserting the patriotism of the former by conflating them with the latter. The monuments were meant to burnish the cause of white supremacy by appealing to the patriotism of the working class, not unlike the way Donald Trump appealed to his base by promising a capricious wall on the Mexican border as a way of consolidating white working-class identification with the white ruling class.[28]

The 1910s also marked the height of the women's suffrage movement, which brought about a period of intensive monument building by the upper-class white women of the United Daughters of the Confederacy who opposed the vote for women. Striving to hold on to a former way of life in a changing world, they used the monuments to create inscriptions about "love" that reinforced traditional gender roles in which women stayed home, raised children, and supported their men.[29]

White supremacists today still see feminism as a scourge. Anders Breivik, for example, murdered seventy-seven people in Norway in 2011 in order to publicize his white nationalist manifesto in which he blamed "Islamism," "cultural Marxism," and "feminism" for a European "cultural suicide" and the emasculation of white men. In the United States, male supremacy has joined with white supremacy to preach the inferiority of women who, they believe, exist primarily for their reproductive and sexual functions. Die-hard defenders of Confederate monuments are part of a larger history of attempts to reclaim southern masculinity and virility in the face of the defeat of the South in the Civil War and in response to a felt sense of emasculation by the gains of women and their economic status.

Adding a class component to the antifeminism of white nationalists is the fact that they are mostly downwardly mobile, lower-middle-class men that experience economic displacement because of globalization and neoliberal economics. Unlike many minorities, however, as white men they believe they are entitled to greater economic prosperity and success and feel emasculated by their inability to achieve it. Sociologist Michael Kimmel argues that white nationalist organizations offer not only a sense of belonging but a restoration of masculinity.[30] Like the conservative white elite in the early twentieth century, white nationalists today boost white men's sense of masculinity by insisting on gender essentialism, the subordination of women to men, and the primary function of women as mothers and sex objects.[31]

White nationalists embrace "Great Replacement" or "white replacement" conspiracy theories that posit a concerted plan to replace whites with nonwhites through such means as immigration, abortion, intermarriage, and racial integration. There are a variety of sources for replacement theory, which has been expressed in Europe, North America, and other countries. These include the neo-Nazi concept of "white genocide," which refers primarily to contraception and abortion, and French right-wing theorist Renaud Camus's 2012 book *The Great Replacement*, which focuses on the replacement of Christian white people in France with Muslims and others. The two ideas have merged into "white extinction anxiety," a phrase coined by Charles Blow that refers to the fear that whites will become a minority stripped of their race-based privilege.

In 2017, the white nationalists in Charlottesville chanted, "You will not replace us" and "Jews will not replace us," demonstrating their embrace of "replacement theory," their combined hatred of blacks, Jews, Muslims, and migrants, as well as the global connections among white nationalists who fear an existential threat to their existence. Replacement theory has been cited most recently in the manifestos of the mass shooter who killed twenty-two people at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, fearing a "Hispanic invasion" and the shooter who massacred more than fifty Muslims at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. This fear of replacement, along with an aggressive white patriarchal masculinity, has been galvanized and modeled by Donald Trump as the nation's president and is central to his rhetoric and campaign to restrict immigration.

While white nationalists fear replacement by people of color and Jews, whom they consider racially different,[32] and regard, as part of the solution, keeping white women at home producing more white babies—preventing them from working, voting, and controlling their own reproductive health—right-wing lawmakers, hoping for a compliant right-wing Supreme Court in the event of challenges, have passed highly restrictive anti-abortion bills that threaten to imprison women who get abortions or doctors who perform them. By attempting to control women's bodies, criminalize abortion, and overturn Roe v. Wade—which would return women to an era when tens of thousands obtained illegal or self-induced abortions and many died—conservative lawmakers carry out a program that perfectly accommodates a white supremacist agenda.

Despite the conservative morality promoted by religion, wealthy women can always find the money and resources to obtain a safe abortion if needed. Access to abortion is therefore a class demand, because it is poor and minority women who suffer the consequences of restriction to abortion, just as overall health care is a class demand, because the wealthy always have access. In a truly democratic society, abortion would be free on demand as part of free, quality health care for all, along with free daycare. The white nationalists who believe that abortion deserves greater punishment than rape—therefore making no exceptions for rape or incest in their anti-abortion bills—don't consider sexual violence a real crime. Far-right Congressman Steve King, for example, defended

his position of not allowing exceptions for rape and incest in anti-abortion bills by asserting that sexual violence was just normal practice: "What if we went back through all the family trees and just pulled those people out that were products of rape and incest? Would there be any population of the world left if we did that?"[33] Both Trump and Brett Kavanaugh, who was appointed by Trump and confirmed to the Supreme Court, have been accused by numerous women of being sexual predators.

Fear of replacement also blossomed in the Jim Crow era when conservative southerners feared racial eclipse by freed slaves and northerners who moved south. The erection of Confederate monuments asserted the political and cultural hegemony of southern whites by taking control of public space and defending a Confederate narrative, while blacks had little to no opportunity for memorialization. Upholding the values of the planter aristocracy, memorial building reinforced a class and gender hierarchy that was integral to the racial hierarchy in response to the changing status of whites and women in the 1910s as well as the 1960s. It is not surprising that impassioned defense of these monuments in the 2010s arises under similar circumstances, when many whites perceive similar threats to their status both from people of color and from women, in part galvanized by the #MeToo movement.[34] Modern memorials that instantiate black history and memory therefore help redress this historical repression lasting more than a century.

One might possibly argue that the lynching memorial, like other monuments and memorials, will become a repository of memory that abrogates the responsibility to remember and paradoxically functions as an agent of forgetting. But as Lewis Hyde argues in *A Primer for Forgetting*, "Forgetting appears when the story has been so fully told as to wear itself out. Then time begins to flow again; then the future can unfold."[35] We still have a long way to go to reach that point in history.

What's in a Name?

The design of the lynching memorial (credited to Bryan Stevenson and the EJI working with MASS Design Group and several artists) combines key elements of some of the most well-known commemorative memorials of the past several decades. These include an insistence on names or, conversely, a lack thereof, as well as an abstract structure that resists heroization. Remembering even thousands of names by writing and reciting them is among the oldest forms of perpetuating memory, especially in Jewish practice. When the medieval Pinkas Synagogue in Prague's old Jewish Quarter was turned into a memorial to Holocaust victims in the 1950s, the interior walls were covered with more than 78,000 names of Jews from Bohemia and Moravia, most of whom were sent to Theresienstadt and then to their deaths in Auschwitz. Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who found out late in life that her paternal grandparents were

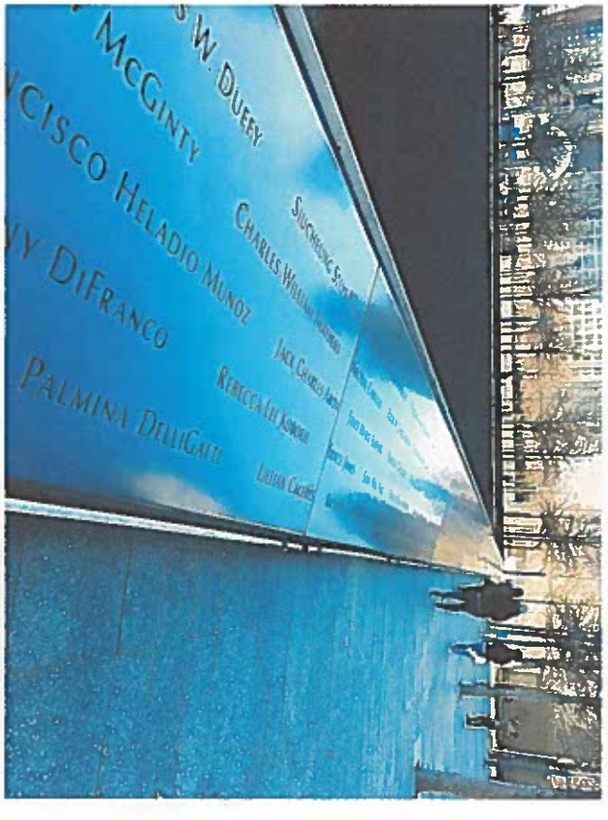
Pinkas Synagogue, with 78,000 names of Holocaust victims from Czech lands on the synagogue's inner wall; Prague, Czech Republic. (Photo by Øyvind Holmstad/CC BY-SA 3.0 from Wikimedia Commons.)

Jewish, went straight to the Pinkas Synagogue on a visit to Prague that same year and found her grandparents' names on the wall. The evidence of names serves as a countermemory to the fictions and omissions of an earlier generation.

The power of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., likewise resides in the 58,000 names of soldiers who died in that war that are etched onto its two converging black walls. Visitors often come to make crayon or pencil rubbings of a family name, making the memorial the second-most-visited monument in the United States after the Lincoln Memorial. The Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, which commemorates the murder of 168 men, women, and children in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building by the white nationalist Timothy McVeigh, also names and pictures every victim at the museum.

Similarly, the National September 11 Memorial and Museum in New York City inscribes the names of 2,983 victims on 152 bronze parapets on the two square reflecting pools that mark the footprints of the Twin Towers. In addition, color photographs of the victims are displayed in the museum's In Memoriam gallery, which also features family photographs, oral remembrances, and rotating selections of personal artifacts.

In contrast to the archival detail of such memorials, which seeks to remember every individual involved, the Holocaust memorials designed by Rachel



Michael Arad, reflecting pool with names of victims inscribed on surrounding parapets; National September 11 Memorial & Museum, New York City, dedicated September 11, 2011.

Whiteread and Peter Eisenman take a seemingly opposite approach. The "Nameless Library," Whiteread's site-specific memorial in the Judenplatz of Vienna for Austria's 65,000 lost Jews, is a cast concrete inverted library. It has doors with no handles or hinges, and books with spines turned away from the viewer, as if to create a world of untold sagas and stories, which remain nameless. This is the ultimate loss of history, the silencing of whole generations, their unwritten futures sealed in concrete as an unknown and unknowable archive of knowledge and experience. On three sides around the base of Whiteread's structure are engraved the names of the forty-one death camps where Austrian Jews perished.

The unknown archive is not just about the destruction of the futures of thousands and what they might have written, discovered, created, and composed. The memorial also evokes the destruction of books as the destruction of the past. It recalls the burning of the great Library of Alexandria in ancient Egypt, the Imperial Library of Constantinople burned by Crusaders, the monastic libraries destroyed by Henry VIII, the burning of Maya codices by conquistadors, the destruction of libraries in Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Lebanon, and Timbuktu, and, not least, Nazi book burnings.

As if to underscore this idea, underneath Whiteread's Holocaust Memorial are the ruins of a medieval synagogue, whose existence was unknown and only discovered when construction on the memorial began.[36] In 1421, eighty Jews committed suicide by barricading themselves inside the synagogue and burning it down rather than renounce their faith. This occurred after two Jews were

Rachel Whiteread, Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial (aka Nameless Library), steel and concrete; Vienna, Austria, dedicated in 2000.

Detail of books, Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial.

found guilty of "blood libel" and a thousand Jews were killed or expelled from Vienna by the Catholic Church and its followers.[37] The Nazis marched into Vienna on the anniversary of the burning of the synagogue, some five hundred years later. Whiteread's memorial thus maps one memory site onto another, mediating the meaning of each and calling into place, through the blank pages of the closed books, the untold stories and histories of the Jews who perished both half a millennium earlier and in the Holocaust. Whiteread's initial plan to inscribe the names of Vienna's 65,000 lost Jews was not carried out because, it turned out, no such comprehensive list of names exists—another kind of forgetting by the state.

In the same way, Peter Eisenman's "Field of Stelae," which became the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe near the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, signals the unwritten legacies of the millions of Jews who were lost. With its undulating field of some 3,000 gray stone pillars varying in height from one and a half feet to ten feet, the memorial recalls anonymous headstones, caskets, and ancient stelae, becoming stand-ins for the bodies themselves, as do the steel slabs of the lynching memorial. The lack of names suggests the vicissitudes of memory itself. Called a "monument of shame" by Bjoern Hoecke, a spokesman for the far-right Alternative for Germany Party, it seems likely that a similar sense of shame is evoked for white nationalists in the United States by the national lynching memorial in Montgomery, and that this is, at least in part, behind the opposition to the monument.

Peter Eisenmann, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, with 2,711 concrete slabs in a grid pattern; Berlin, Germany, dedicated in 2005.

Eisenman's and Whiteread's memorials are often regarded as countermonuments and negative-form designs that in themselves remember nothing specific, yet they paradoxically act as countermemories to a history of forgetting and become sites of resistance to lost memory on behalf of the millions murdered. By their very dependence on anonymity, they invite a form of historical memory that encompasses the enormity of the destruction. Eisenman's field of blank gray stones and Whiteread's unreadable library point to the cultural losses that are impossible to quantify, both past and future.

Yet the accretion of thousands of names in the end has a parallel effect, also producing an overwhelming sense of collective absence and loss. Through individual naming or a sea of blankness, these concepts of the memorial project suggest an equivalent impact, one that engages our disconnection from the past by calling into place a history prone to denial or forgetting and by recognizing the enormity of the loss. As James Young asserts, the job of such memorials is to "articulate this terrible loss without filling it with consoling meaning."[38] The Montgomery lynching memorial combines these two methods of the memorializing project, the known and the unknown, representing the void of loss without attempting to fill it with redemptive or consoling meaning, while resurrecting the names of those whose names have not been lost and thereby concretizing the loss, shaping what is remembered and how it is remembered for the future.

Mainstreaming White Supremacism

Trump's immigration war against Muslims and Central Americans and his objection to accepting immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador, and unspecified countries in Africa because they are "shithole countries," while endorsing the acceptance of immigrants from countries such as Norway, is yet another example of eugenicist and white supremacist ideology intent on rolling back the gains of the civil rights era. At stake is the attempt to define who can be an American citizen and who is not qualified to have that right, a battle that began at the Union's inception with the fight over freedom versus slavery.

In a penetrating essay, the writer Pankaj Mishra argues that it's not just the United States but the entire western Anglophone world, where whiteness has ruled without question, which is in full-scale panic mode. Concerned about the rise of "black and yellow races" more than a century ago, nineteenth-century racist pseudoscience about the inferiority of nonwhite peoples helped forge a theory of "higher races" by politicians and pundits in Britain, the United States, Australia, and Canada. Contemporary fear of the decline of white power, which, writes Mishra, has now "reached its final and most desperate phase," led President Trump to declare, "The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive," meaning, by "the West," white power.[39]


Day

IMMIGRATION BILL IS SIGNED BY PRESIDENT; JAPANESE BAN BECOMES EFFECTIVE ON JULY 1

READY FOR BONUS PAYMENT

President, However, Issues Statement in Which He Expresses Disapproval of Action of Congress

GIVES REASONS FOR SIGNING THE BILL

If Exclusion Provision Stood Alone, Says the President, He Would Have Disapproved It

SPENDING MONEY RECKLESSLY; SON ASKS FOR RELIEF

Waterbury Woman Raises $1,000 to Give Second Husband.

The Immigration Act of 1924, aimed at restricting immigration from southern and eastern Europe, which included the Asian Exclusion Act, banning Japanese immigrants.

The mainstreaming of white supremacism in English-speaking liberal democracies today must be understood in the context of more than a century's worth of global migration and racial mixing. For fearful ruling classes struggling to contain the mass discontent caused by early industrialization and globalization, it was necessary to forge an alliance between "rich and powerful whites and those rendered superfluous by industrial capitalism," as Mishra notes. Excluding, blaming, and degrading nonwhite peoples became a way of marshalling the loyalty of and offering dignity to those who were marginalized by economic and technological shifts. Eugenics, aimed at "improving" the genetic quality of a population, became popular, and Australia adopted a "White Australia" policy that restricted "colored" migration for most of the twentieth century.[40]

The United States adopted its own highly restrictive immigration law whereby immigration quotas were based on country of origin. The Immigration Act of 1924, which included the National Origins Act and the Asian Exclusion Act, restricted immigration based on perceived racial desirability. It was aimed at southern and eastern Europeans, especially Italians, Slavs, and Jews, who were not considered "white." It severely restricted Africans and outright banned Arabs and Asians (aiming at the Japanese since the Chinese were already banned under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882). It greatly limited immigration overall and prevented thousands of Jews, including Anne Frank and her family, from escaping to America during the Holocaust. The racial theories promoted by eugenicists and social theorists, aimed at preserving what was called the "Nordic" race, informed this legislation, which became the basis for the official ideology of Nazi Germany.[41]

Enacted at the height of the Jim Crow era, this restrictive immigration law prevailed until the civil rights era, when Congress repealed the per-country quotas in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. No longer based on race and national origin, the new system emphasized family ties to American citizens and residents, so that people already admitted could sponsor their relatives overseas through a process Trump calls "chain migration." Others have come as refugees or in search of jobs or higher education through the diversity visa lottery, a 1990 program for underrepresented nationalities.

Conservative members of Congress who supported the family-based preferences in 1965 believed this system would bring more Europeans into the country; instead, more Latin Americans and Asians came, as well as people from Africa and the Caribbean, along with some Europeans. The total number of immigrants has grown overall in recent years, greatly alarming conservatives who fear that a disturbingly high proportion of the American population will be foreign-born. In response, the Trump administration wants to emulate the immigration law of 1924 by barring immigrants from majority black and Muslim countries and ending "chain migration" and the diversity visa lottery. For the Trump administration, the reigning criterion for American citizenship appears to be native-born, Christian whiteness.

The backlash to immigration is thus a reaction to the "browning" of America, with Trump's restrictive proposals aimed at countries that were once subject to colonial domination. At the same time, he has strengthened U.S. government support for Israel, which Mishra aptly describes as "the world's last active settler-colonialist project." The struggle for racial equality is therefore also a struggle for the rights of citizenship. Do refugees fleeing war, climate change, poverty, and persecution have the human right to immigrate to the United States? Should America serve as a haven for the persecuted and oppressed? Is national citizenship itself becoming an increasingly obsolete category as millions of refugees roam the earth looking for a safe haven? What does it mean for global refugees to have no citizenship anywhere and therefore no human rights?

It appears to mean that anything can be done to them: they can be incarcerated, fenced out, separated from their children, and left to drown on the high seas or die of thirst in the desert.

"Very Fine People"

Race is still the most volatile issue in America. For the state, blackness is a threat that must be contained and controlled, as demonstrated by the regular killings by police of unarmed black men and women with virtually no legal repercussions. Although the police keep no count, others who do record the killings estimate that approximately one hundred black Americans *per month* since 2013 have died at the hands of police in near daily assaults, totaling more

than a thousand deaths per year, according to the website Killed by Police. Today, as in the past, police serve as front-line defenders of a racist capitalist system that is built on the repression of the poor and the nonwhite in the service of a tiny, wealthy elite, the only ones to whom the police are accountable. For the wealthy elite, black protest against racist oppression is not a democratic right but a form of terrorist violence.

Even the popular Marvel film *Black Panther*, while promoting black pride and empowerment, nonetheless delivers a conservative political message. The antagonist who must die is the one who is angry and wants to fight the oppression of black people everywhere; the protagonist who vanquishes him and becomes king of a mythical black nation in Africa is the one who wants peace and accepts the status quo. He does nothing more radical than open an outreach center in Oakland, California, a weak homage to the real Black Panthers who originated there. But they fought for black equality and an end to de facto segregation, police brutality, and the military draft, as well as founding community social programs. They were ultimately destroyed by the FBI's counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO) led by J. Edgar Hoover, which surveilled, infiltrated, harassed, and criminalized the party, and assassinated Panther leaders Mark Clark and Fred Hampton as they slept in their beds.

Racial discrimination continues today in jobs, housing, health care, and education, contributing to the triple oppression of class, race, and gender for black women. It continues through the disproportionate imprisonment of black men and the everyday harassment and murder of black people by police on the streets of American cities. It continues through cold-blooded racist killings by white supremacists. As the legacy of slavery and segregation, black oppression remains the foundation of racist capitalist America, even when a black president occupied the White House. In an example of racist indifference to the education of African Americans, a Federal District Court judge dismissed a class action lawsuit filed by black students at troubled schools in Detroit by ruling that "access to literacy," which he also described as "minimally adequate education," was not a fundamental right. He made this ruling despite conceding that conditions in some Detroit schools were "nothing short of devastating."[42]

The police victimize black women in uniquely gendered ways, and their deaths do not conform to the pattern of black men who are shot during traffic stops or stopped on sidewalks.[43] The officer who arrested twenty-eight-year-old Sandra Bland in Texas for failing to signal while changing lanes, for example, made her get out of the car and slammed her head into the ground. Three days later, she was found hanging in her jail cell. While the police claimed suicide, her family and friends rejected that explanation. They wondered why an inexplicably high level of THC was found in her bloodstream and a "pasty white discharge" was found at the entrance to her vagina, according to the autopsy report. Was she drugged and raped while in custody and lynched to silence her?

Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old black woman found hanging in her jail cell in Waller County, Texas, on July 13, 2015, three days after being abused and arrested for failing to signal a change of lanes. In July 2015 alone, five black women died in police custody.

Bland's family filed a wrongful death lawsuit and settled out of court for 1.9 million dollars, while the officer who arrested her was indicted only for perjury, a charge later dropped in exchange for his agreement to end his law enforcement career. Waller County, where the arrest and death occurred, had among the highest numbers of lynchings in the state between 1877 and 1950, according to EJI's report *Lynching in America*.[44]

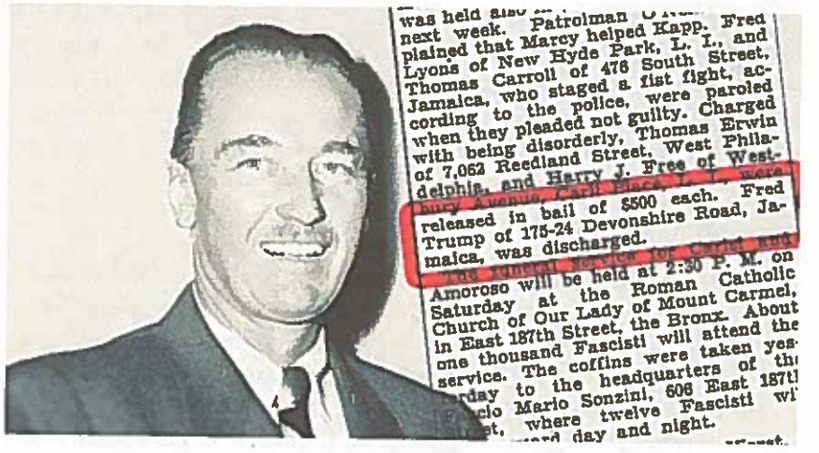
The national media regards the killing of black people not as an effect of the racist state but as the result of individual aberrations: in the case of white nationalists, stemming from "mental illness," in the case of the police, requiring greater "sensitivity training." Yet everyone knows that an afternoon workshop on sensitivity training will not end racism in America, as racism is embedded in our institutions and as the incidents of whites calling the police on innocent black people minding their own business continue to multiply. Examples include the white Starbucks manager who called police on two black men who sat down in a Philadelphia shop and were arrested for trespassing, or the white neighbor in Sacramento who called police on a black teen holding a cell phone in his grandmother's backyard. Police shot the teen dead. Or the white Yale student who called police on a black female classmate napping in her dormitory's common area. A month earlier the white student had called police on another black student to whom she said, "You're making me uncomfortable. I don't feel safe around you. You're an intruder. You need to leave, you need to get out."[45] There is nowhere black people can feel entirely safe.

This is the legacy of a history of enslavement, lynching, segregation, and criminalization. Individual psychology flows from institutionalized racism, which in turn has led to the widespread impoverishment of American blacks and their forcible segregation at the bottom of the economy. Racism has turned the American dream of upward mobility through hard work into a bitter joke for most people of color and poor working people generally, who instead find themselves in a downward economic spiral. Even wealthy and accomplished blacks are as vulnerable as poor ones to racial profiling and harassment, as when Harvard University professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. was arrested at his front door in Cambridge after a neighbor reported him trying to break into his own home.[46]

Former Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan David Duke credited Trump with inspiring the Charlottesville "Unite the Right" rally, where Heather Heyer was killed, in an interview with the *Indianapolis Star*: "This represents a turning point for the people of this country. We are determined to take our country back. We are going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump. That's what we believed in, that's why we voted for Donald Trump because he said he's going to take our country back and that's what we're going to do."[47] Loath to alienate his base, Trump refused to denounce the white nationalist rally, instead condemning the violence "on many sides." He further reached out to white supremacists by claiming they included "some very fine people."

Perhaps Trump had in mind his own father, Fred Trump, one of seven men arrested on Memorial Day in 1927, when a thousand white-robed Klansmen

White supremacists march with torches in Charlottesville, Virginia, in "Unite the Right" rally; August 13, 2017. (Anadolu Agency/Getty Images.)



was held also ... Patrolman ... Fred next week. plained that Marcy helped Kapp. Lyons of New Hyde Park, L. I., and Thomas Carroll of 476 South Street, Jamaica, who staged a fist fight, according to the police, were paroled when they pleaded not guilty. Charged with being disorderly, Thomas Erwin of 7,062 Reedland Street, West Philadelphia, and Harry J. Free of West- ... were released in bail of $500 each. Fred Trump of 175-24 Devonshire Road, Jamaica, was discharged.

... Amoroso will be held at 2:30 P. M. on Saturday at the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in East 187th Street, the Bronx. About one thousand Fascisti will attend the service. The coffins were taken yesterday to the headquarters of the ... Mario Sonzini, 606 East 187th ... where twelve Fascisti ... day and night.

Fred Trump arrested at rally in Queens and released on $500 bail; June 27, 1927, *New York Times*.

marched through a Jamaican neighborhood in Queens, New York, inciting a brawl with a hundred police officers. They were protesting "Roman Catholic police of New York City" whom they accused of assaulting "native-born Protestant Americans."[48] Fred Trump was also notable for his racial discrimination against potential tenants in the real estate and construction business his son now runs. In 1973, the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division sued Fred Trump and his company, including Donald Trump, for refusing to rent apartments to black people after the Urban League sent black and white testers to apply for apartments he owned. Only whites got the apartments.

Neo-Nazis turned up at campaign rallies and the Republican National Convention in support of Trump, and his election to the presidency in 2016 greatly invigorated neo-Nazi and white supremacist movements. It also generated a plethora of books, television shows, films, and comics on the subject of parallels between Trump and Hitler. Hitler admired the slaughters that took place in Europe, such as the Armenian genocide, but he was truly inspired by America and its enslavement of African Americans. He was also encouraged by the doctrine of Manifest Destiny and the mass murder of Native Americans, which has been compared to the doctrine of *Lebensraum* by which Hitler justified his assault on Europe, and was further influenced by the racist ideas of Henry Ford and Charles Lindbergh, the American eugenics movement, and American race laws.[49]

California's eugenics program of forced sterilization directly inspired the Nazi sterilization law of 1934. Likewise, the American government first used the fumigating agent Zyklon-B to "disinfect" Mexican immigrants as they crossed the border. It was licensed to an American company by the German company IG Farben, which later supplied a modified version to Auschwitz for

gassing Jews to death. Hitler praised American restrictions on immigration following the Immigration Act of 1924. Since entering office, Trump has been compared repeatedly to Hitler, most of all by the American Nazi Party and the Ku Klux Klan, who were enthused and emboldened when he hired the proudly racist, Hitler-loving Steve Bannon as his first chief of staff.

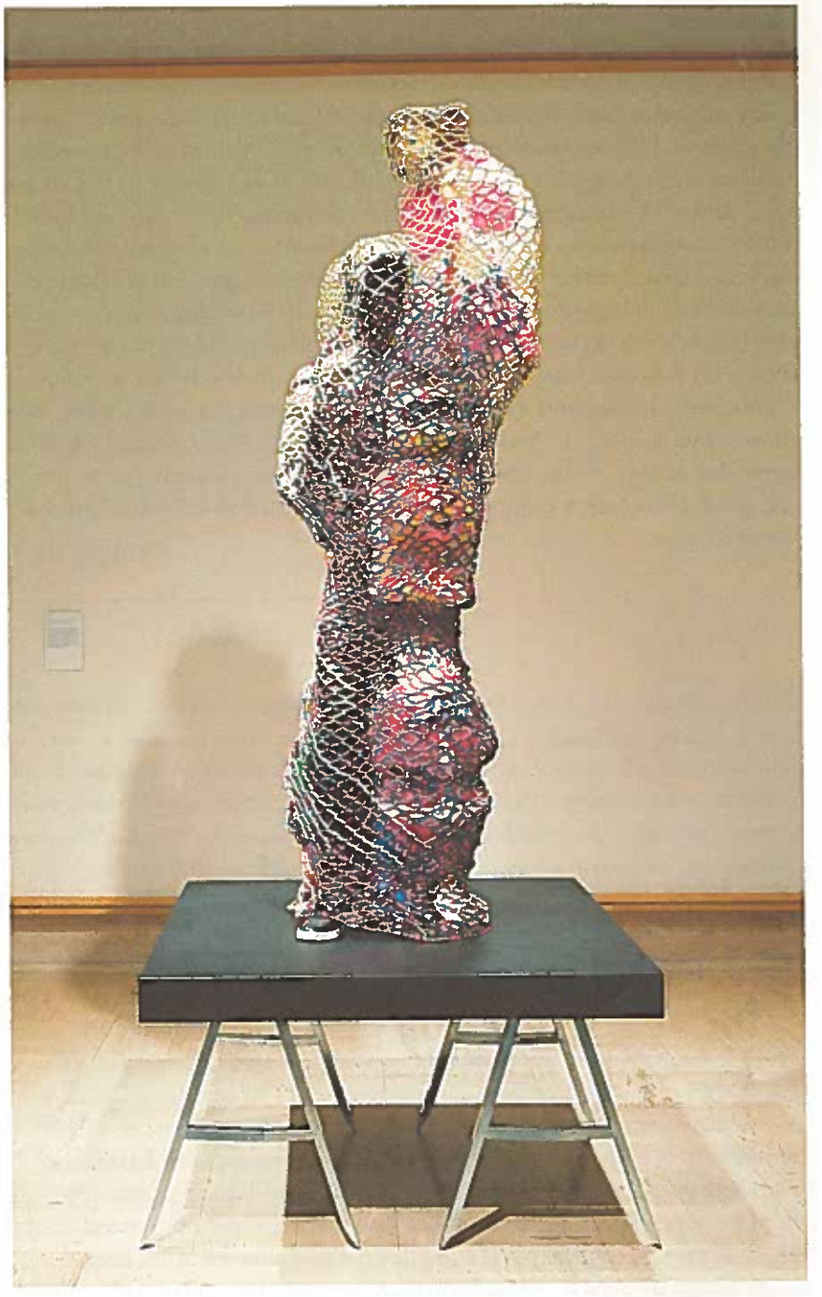
Reasserting Blackness

The steel columns at the lynching memorial and the jars of soil in the Legacy Museum signal not only the long history and widespread geography of lynching, but also the invisibility of most of its victims. Yet sometimes invisibility is a useful strategy as an act of self-preservation and the assertion of personhood.

The vicious police beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles in 1992, one of the first such episodes caught on videotape, led to massive protests when a jury acquitted the officers involved. African American artist Nick Cave responded to the national outrage by developing ornately colorful, oversized, full-body costumes called Soundsuits that disguise and transcend ordinary identity. Allowing the wearer to assume a larger-than-life magical persona, the Soundsuit reads as a racialized figure of excess that resonates with African masquerade and Mardi Gras. Inside a Soundsuit, one is enchanting, impervious, and dazzling, expressing a form of resistance to the daily oppression of racial discrimination and violence through a form of invisibility. The Soundsuit obscures and thereby protects individual identity while asserting a joyful and confident selfhood in fantastical form.

One Soundsuit, however, eschews such celebratory vibrancy. In *TM 13*, Cave evokes both the killing of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of his killer, the same events that helped inspire Dylann Roof's murderous rampage in Charleston. The sculpture takes the form of a black man in a hooded sweatshirt with symbols of childhood such as a Santa Claus figure, a teddy bear, and an angel strapped to the figure and partially obscured by beaded netting, as if Martin were caught in the mesh of his own innocence and desire for a normal life. In this misshapen form, from which only a sneakered foot emerges, the oppressive constraints that transform blackness into a cage suggest the subjugation and precariousness that continue to characterize the condition of black life in the U.S. today. In the context of Trump's America, this work also evokes the caging of children taken from their parents at the U.S.-Mexican border by U.S. immigration authorities.

As Edward Said observed, "Collective memory is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning."[50] The Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice opened at a crucial time in U.S. history. They perform a necessary act of commemorative vigilance that serves as an "unforgetting" of black history and counternarrative to



Nick Cave, *TM13*, 2015, mixed media including blow molds of Santa Claus, a teddy bear, an angel, netting, and metal. © Nick Cave. (Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.)

disbelief and to the ideology and values of the Confederacy. They also function as a counterforce to a wildly resurgent and desperate white supremacism that has produced a rising tide of hate crimes in the United States and abroad.

By emplacing black history, the museum and memorial strike a blow against the culture of silence that has existed around lynching, just as contemporary reenactments of a quadruple lynching in Moore's Ford, Georgia, in 1946 break that silence. The reenactments, which have taken place since 2005 and include whites as well as blacks, offer public legitimation of black memory and history through a confrontation with the past.[51] It is not just a question of recognizing and acknowledging the enormity of the thousands of lives lost, but also a question of how we understand the world today and what kind of world we want to live in. As historian James Grossman said of Trump's opposition to removing Confederate monuments from public view as "erasing history," when such monuments are altered, "You're not changing history. You're changing how we remember history."[52] The way we interpret and bestow meaning on events in the present and future originates with our construction of cultural memory about the past.

4

"Let the World See What I've Seen"

Mamie Till's great accomplishment in 1955 was to turn a quiet American lynching into a cause for national outrage and mourning, especially for the nation's black population. When she had the sealed coffin holding the remains of her slain fourteen-year-old son opened and held a four-day public viewing to which tens of thousands of people came, it was an emphatic protest against the racist killing and the entrenched racism that for decades countenanced the lynching of black people. Mamie Till encouraged publication of the funeral photographs, saying, "I couldn't bear the thought of people being horrified by the sight of my son. But on the other hand, I felt the alternative was even worse. After all, we had averted our eyes for far too long, turning away from the ugly reality facing us as a nation. Let the world see what I've seen."[1]

This courageous act of exposure by Emmett Till's mother succeeded spectacularly. The photos of Till's terribly disfigured face as he lay in his casket, formally dressed in a white shirt and black jacket, deeply shook the nation. It galvanized so many young black people that some called it the Emmett Till generation; many wrote about its emotional effect on them, and thousands became impassioned activists in the civil rights movement. Mamie Till helped burn the image of her son's tortured face into national cultural memory, helping to mobilize the country's fight for black civil rights, which also brought the sympathy of many whites to her side and to the cause of civil rights.