History, Heritage, and Healing: A Case Study on Public-Private Relations in the Evolving Significance of the Calhoun Monument in Charleston, South Carolina

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Abstract

The statue of John C. Calhoun in Charleston, South Carolina was removed in June, 2020, despite legal protections the South Carolina Heritage Act of 2000 offered to war monuments in public spaces. This paper aims to answer the following question: what does the removal of the Calhoun Monument, in spite of the legal protection offered by the Heritage Act, reveal about the relationship between public and private spheres in the development and preservation of historical collective memory related to the Civil War and the Confederacy? This paper divides the history of the monument into three eras, attempting to understand the interplay of public and private spheres of each era in imbuing the icon with a particular significance and meaning. Firstly, the analysis of the Historical Era investigates the monument's significance in its early years as imbued by the Charleston public, the private organization that funded the monument (the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association), and the state. Next, an analysis of the Heritage Era utilizes news coverage to examine how bringing the monument under governmental, public control with the Heritage Act effected the significance of the icon and its place in the city. Lastly, the project dissects the Healing Era, the time from the icon's removal until the present. The analysis of this period attempts to understand the effects of the monument's removal in Charleston and South Carolina since this past June. The results of the qualitative analysis of these three eras reveal a transition in the significance of the icon from a statue conveying a message of intimidation to Black Charlestonians to a central symbol in assorted political and social movements. This case study on the Calhoun statue's creation, protection, and eventual removal provides insight into the highly symbolic nature of Confederate monuments and their evolving role in American society.

Introduction

From the time that I could stay up on two wheels until transferring to a middle school across the bridge, each day I adorned the required white shirt and khaki pants, packed my dark blue backpack (featuring a fearsome shark), clambered aboard my teal bicycle and made my way to school. My route took me down my street, past the house on the corner where George Washington once stayed, and through the College of Charleston campus. I turned onto Meeting Street, where the Quaker Meeting House once stood, and relished the downhill streak. At the corner, I turned onto Calhoun Street and two blocks later, I reached my destination.

Each day, my path took me down the street named for the infamous Secretary of War, U.S. Senator, Vice President, and ardent defender of slavery. Throughout my youth, John C. Calhoun's likeness stood on a massive pillar on this throughway, at the edge of Marion Square. He gazed across the Charleston skyline, weathering every hurricane or protest that might try to remove him from his place of prominence. This past June, however, seventeen hours of work concluded as city crews lay the statue on a truck bed and took him to parts unknown.[1]

Figure 1: Alford, Grade. The John C. Calhoun Statue Is Lowered from Its Perch in Marion Square. June 23, 2020. Photograph. https://www.postandcourier.com/news/john-c-calhoun-statue-taken-down-from-its-perch-above-charlestons-marion-square/article_7c428b5c-b58a-1

[1] Hobbs et al., "John C. Calhoun Statue Taken Down."

Figure 2: Statue of John C. Calhoun Prior to Removal. October 24, 2006. Photograph. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c9/Charleston_marion_square3.jpg.

Less than five years following Calhoun's death, Mary Amarinthia Snowden gathered eleven women in her mother's drawing room to form the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association (LCMA), elect officers, and make plans to raise funds for the creation of an icon dedicated to the late South Carolinian.[2] Thirty years later, in April 1887, the initial representation of Calhoun was unveiled, as "Dixie" played among the celebrations. The monument was located in a conspicuous area of the city, which Roberts and Kytle describe in specifically racial terms.[3] Adjacent to the monument lay both the original Citadel, the arsenal created mainly for policing the enslaved people of Charleston, and the Neck, the area of the city long populated by the majority of Charleston's free African Americans. The placement of a monument to Calhoun in this location, "signaled the centrality of Calhoun to Charleston, while providing the city's black residents with yet another reminder of its racial politics."[4] In locating the monument in this particularly prominent area of the city, the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association heralded the icon's fraught position throughout its time standing in Marion Square.

Less than twenty years after the unveiling, the monument was replaced with a new representation of Calhoun. Several times throughout my youth I remember hearing that the replacement, with the new memorial situated atop a large pillar, was a direct result of vandalism from black Charlestonians; a similar tale was related in sociologist Karen Fields' oral history project with her grandmother and longtime resident of Charleston, Mamie Gavin Fields.[5] While such reports have not been corroborated, there is historical record of great disdain and mockery from Charleston's African American community towards this icon.[6]

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[2] Ladies' Calhoun Monument Association, Cuningham, and Lamar, *History of Calhoun Monument*.
[3] Roberts and Kytle, "Looking the Thing in the Face," 658.
[4] Roberts and Kytle, 656.
[5] Fields, "What One Cannot Remember Mistakenly."
[6] Fields, 49.

In the time since the icon's inception, the Calhoun monument and its place within the city have only become more divisive and central to discussions on race and racism in Charleston. The statue was a source of great strife following the racially motivated murder of nine Black individuals in the Mother Emmanuel AME church in 2015.[7] While this tragic event was a catalyst for the state government transferring the Confederate flag from the statehouse grounds into a museum, it did not result in the removal of other Confederate icons, despite protests and vandalism of such monuments across the state.[8] Furthermore, local governmental discussions about the Calhoun monument flared following Joseph P. Riley's retirement after forty years as the city's mayor. The new mayor, John Tecklenburg, attempted to make his mark on Calhoun's likeness in 2017, proposing a plaque to provide context to the statue.[9] After long local debates on city council and other areas of the city government, however, a consensus could not be reached regarding the exact wording of the plaque, and the project was abandoned.[10]

While debates have raged across the city, state, and country regarding the place of Confederate icons in American society, the outcomes of such discussions in South Carolina are tempered by a legal statute protecting Confederate icons located on public ground: the South Carolina Heritage Act. Enacted in 2000 in a compromise to relocate the Confederate Flag from the statehouse dome to a pole on the capitol grounds, the act dictates, "any monument, marker, memorial, school, or street erected or named in honor of the Confederacy or the Civil Rights Movement located on any municipal, county, or state property shall not be removed, changed, or renamed."[11] Despite this statute, however, the Calhoun monument *was* removed in summer 2020, following widespread protests against police violence and racism across the country.[12] Mayor

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[7] Munday, "Vandal Quotes Obama."
[8] Behre, "After Confederate Flag."
[9] Darlington, "Charleston Mayor Calls."
[10] Darlington, "Charleston History Commission Wrestles."
[11] Wilkins, South Carolina Heritage Act of 2000, 1.
[12] Hobbs et al., "John C. Calhoun Statue Taken Down."

Tecklenburg announced his intention to relocate the monument at a press conference in mid-June.[13] He addressed the Heritage Act in this announcement, arguing that the statute did not apply because the Calhoun monument was not a war memorial.[14] Approximately one week later, Charleston City Council voted unanimously to remove the icon, and crews began removing the statue the following day.[15]

That this icon was taken down, despite the legal protections of Confederate icons embedded in state law, raises a pressing question: what does the removal of the Calhoun Monument, in spite of the legal protection offered by the Heritage Act, reveal about the evolution of the relationship between public and private spheres in the development and preservation of historical collective memory related to the Civil War and the Confederacy? Contained within this guiding research question are a number of considerations: the role and aims of the Heritage Act and other legal statutes protecting icons in public spaces, the evolving significance of monuments and their relationship to governmental and private institutions, and the ways in which southern states are reckoning with their histories of slavery and racism. At a time when a variety of icons in public spaces have been called into question and concerns about who is worth memorializing have come to a head, examining these three areas through the lens of the Calhoun Monument in Charleston, S.C. should help to illuminate the role of monuments in American society and what place, if any, they have in the country's future.

South Carolina is not unique in its protection of Confederate iconography; seven states across the U.S. have enacted such statutes (AL, GA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA) and four other states have proposed similar laws in recent years (TX, FL, KY, LA). South Carolina is distinctive, however,

[13] Smith, "'Take It down': Calhoun Monument Will Be Moved from Marion Square, Charleston Mayor Says."
[14] Nuyen, "Crews Begin Removing John C. Calhoun Statue In South Carolina."
[15] Nuyen.

in how early this law was enacted, only outdated by Mississippi's 1972 statute.[16] In states with these laws, it would seem, debating the future of Confederate imagery and their place in American society is fruitless: the vast majority of such monuments in such states are here to stay for the foreseeable future. Moreover, while examining the goals in instituting Confederate Monuments is well trod territory in academic research, with many concluding that the erection of these monuments during the height of the Civil Rights Movement suggests political and racial motives behind recalling figures that fought for slavery,[17] these icons were not simply placed with these motives and then forgotten. Little scholarly research has explored how the symbolic nature of these monuments has evolved since they were first erected. These legal statues, and the circumstances around when monuments have been removed seem essential instruments of the state in shaping public debate around questions of race, history, etc. Utilizing the Heritage Act as a means to understand the changing symbolic nature of the Calhoun monument, among other Confederate icons in South Carolina, will enhance scholarship on Confederate imagery in the American South, acting as a case study to provide insight into the evolution of the role of similar monuments since their initial placement and the position of the state in shaping this developing significance.

Furthermore, this paper investigates the current political culture of Charleston, SC and the state on the whole, examining the changing understanding of this southern state with regard to its long history of slavery and racism. That over forty percent of all enslaved Africans who were brought to North America were taken through the city,[18] and that the Civil War began at Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor, highlights the key role of this place in some of the most atrocious periods of American history. Understanding and grasping the part of Charleston and of South Carolina in the American slave trade, the Civil War, etc. (and the memorialization of these historical

[16] Booth and Jamie, "Whose Heritage?"
[17] Booth and Jamie.
[18] Battle, "Africans in Carolina."

events in this area) is essential in proceeding to a more just and equal community capable of healing from the sins of the past. Examining the Calhoun monument and the Heritage Act through this project will provide insight into how the City of Charleston and the state, on the whole, are cognizing their role in American history and American slavery. Moreover, this project will indicate how individual citizens, private organizations, and governmental institutions view this progress towards reckoning with South Carolina's past, developing a comprehensive understanding of the part Confederate icons play in how Southern cities progress towards, or away from, racial equality.

In addition to these topics, attempting to grasp the symbolic role of Confederate icons in Southern American cities, the direction of this project calls forth a larger, more theoretical question: what is the role of government, in general, in dictating how citizens understand and remember their society's past? Part of the position of the state, legal scholar Sanford Levinson articulates, is to utilize public space to formulate a cohesive consciousness among its people, no easy task in societies undergoing great political, social, or cultural change.[19] As opposed to the descriptive question, asking the existing role of Confederate monuments and the statutes protecting them, this normative question offers insight into how policymakers *should* approach the divisive topic of representing a particular historical collective memory in public spaces. In other words, this topic provides some insight into the role of Confederate monuments (their removal, their protection, etc.) in helping to heal a city, state, and country that is continuing to reel from its past of slavery and genocide.

To answer my guiding research question and these three topics, I utilize a qualitative approach, examining primary source documents, correspondence, news articles, quotations, etc. to understand the evolving symbolic nature of the Calhoun monument from its initial placement, through the enactment of the Heritage Act, and its eventual removal in summer 2020, to the present day. These methods reveal the highly complex intersection of grassroots movements, private organizations, and

[19] Levinson, *Written in Stone*, 7.

governmental entities in imbuing the Calhoun monument with an evolving significance in questions on race and racism, historic preservation, and the relationship between state and local governments. Sweeping legislative acts to protect or remove such icons, therefore, fail to acknowledge the unique symbolic aspects of each individual monument in an urban public space. Producing genuine, concrete progress in reckoning with southern history and the South's current social and political climate requires more than merely displacing a hunk of metal and stone. Before examining these sources, however, a comprehensive background on the history of the Heritage Act is essential to fully understanding this law's role in changing the position of Confederate iconography in South Carolina.

Historical Background on South Carolina Heritage Act

Fully grasping this topic requires an understanding of the complex relationship between the public and private spheres in the development of the South Carolina Heritage Act. The Democratic Legislature of South Carolina began flying the Confederate flag atop the South Carolina statehouse dome in 1962, with the touted motive of commemorating the centennial of the start of the American Civil War.[20] Despite this publicized motive, critics of the flag have often highlighted the symbol's rise in prominence in the 1950s and 1960s, in tandem with desegregation's spread across the country, as indicative of the flag's use as a tool of racial intimidation.[21] The icon's place in the South Carolina landscape was notably questioned in 1994, as a Republican non-binding referendum found that three-fourths of voters supported the flag.[22] Following this referendum, tensions around the Confederate flag grew, with black ministers and the NAACP both threatening a boycott if the flag was not removed. In October 1999, the NAACP finally issued a tourism boycott of the state, voting unanimously to force the South Carolina state government to remove the flag or risk losing

[20] Taylor, "The Complicated Political History of the Confederate Flag."
[21] Booth and Jamie, "Whose Heritage?"
[22] Taylor, "The Complicated Political History of the Confederate Flag."

an estimated $280 million in tourist revenue from African American travelers each year. Following this intense economic pressure from the NAACP, the two houses of the South Carolina General Assembly agreed to transfer the flag from the statehouse dome to a pole on the statehouse grounds. With the flag's relocation, South Carolina became the last state to remove the icon from atop its governmental seat.[23] The NAACP, however, was not satisfied with the displacement of the flag, and did not lift the boycott until the flag was completely removed from the statehouse grounds in 2015.[24]

While South Carolina politicians eventually gave into the pressure of the boycott in transferring the flag, the icon's movement was coupled with the protection of war memorials in all public spaces.[25] Since its inception, the act has thwarted a number of attempts to remove or manipulate existing icons, with the state legislature only genuinely debating the future of two Confederate icons since the law was passed over 20 years ago.[26] Aside from the Confederate flag's total removal from the statehouse grounds in 2015, the act prevented changes to a segregated world war memorial in Greenwood, SC that identified each soldier as "white" or "colored." While a judge ruled in favor of Greenwood residents, who sued for the right to change the privately owned monument, the state argued that changing the statue would threaten the efficacy of the Heritage Act and prevented the placement of new plaques.[27]

The Heritage Act is embedded deeply into South Carolina law, requiring two-thirds of each house to repeal.[28] While there are those who have continued to challenge the act's placement in South Carolina law, like the newly organized non-profit coalition Repeal the Heritage Act, little to no traction has been made in prompting honest debate among state lawmakers.[29] Some headway has

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[23] Hettena, "NAACP Boycotts Tourism."
[24] Associated Press, "NAACP Ends Boycott."
[25] Wilkins, South Carolina Heritage Act of 2000.
[26] Smith, "SC Heritage Act Stands in Way."
[27] Blinder, "Change to Segregated Monument."
[28] Wilkins, South Carolina Heritage Act of 2000.
[29] Smith, "SC Heritage Act Stands in Way."

been made, however, with legal challenges to the Heritage Act. In June 2020, the state's Attorney General Alan Wilson wrote that the act was constitutional, though the two-thirds supermajority requirement was not.[30] Furthermore, in an August letter to the Supreme Court of South Carolina, Wilson asked the court to take Original Jurisdiction and determine the constitutionality of the Heritage Act.[31] No further progress has been made in challenging the Heritage Act on legal grounds, however, so it remains a forceful player in ensuring the protection of Confederate icons in South Carolina.

Review of Literature

American sociologist Nathan Glazer remarks in his text, *We are All Multiculturalists Now*, on the shift in American society from a melting pot defined by assimilation into a society marked by diversity and multiculturalism. This shift, he writes, "raises the general question of how we are to understand our nation and its culture. What monuments are we to raise (or raze), what holidays are we to celebrate, how are we to name our schools and our streets?"[32] Glazer's text questions how our multicultural community, with vastly varying views of particular historical events, is capable of developing a consensus in remembering and understanding our nation's past. This question also lies at the center of Sanford Levinson's book, *Written In Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies,* wherein Levinson calls upon Glazer's work to dissect the place of Confederate monuments in public spaces within American society. "States always promote privileged narratives of the national experience and thus attempt to form a particular kind of national consciousness," Levinson writes, "yet it is obvious that there is rarely a placid consensus from which the state may draw."[33] Public space, in Levinson's view, is often a tool utilized by those with political power to impart a particular

[30] Wilson, "Dear Representative Burns," June 25, 2020.
[31] Wilson, "Re: Jennifer Pinckney, Howard Duvall, and Kay Patterson vs. Senate President Harvey Peeler, House Speaker Jay Lucas, and Governor Henry McMaster," August 13, 2020.
[32] Glazer, *Multiculturalists Now*, 78.
[33] Levinson, *Written in Stone*, 7.

historical narrative with particular political purpose. While America is not undergoing a regime change, the multicultural nature of our society produces many of the same questions about the uses of public space as those facing sharply delineated changes in political power and regime. The vast collection of Confederate monuments across the American south, according to this view, plays an even more complex role in our society than in those facing changes in regimes, wherein the line between heroes and villains is often more clear cut, at least when it comes to sending a particular political message.[34] The exact political repercussions or general aims of the construction or destruction of various Confederate monuments are far less obvious.

John Winberry noted the complex nature of these monuments in his 1983 article, among the earliest attempts at the project of documenting and analyzing Confederate monuments across the South. In the course of this research, Winberry noted a shift in the placement of these monuments: while cemeteries were the most common location for these icons prior to 1900, a transition occurred in the 20th century as more Confederate statues were erected in courthouse squares and other urban locations.[35] The crux of Winberry's research lies in attempting to determine why this trend developed. Why did Southern society transition from placing Confederate icons in cemeteries to erecting them in urban public spaces?

The first possible explanation Winberry proposes is the desire to preserve the memory of Confederate veterans as many began to succumb to old age and death.[36] As those who fought in the war began to die, there may have been a move to ensure they would not be forgotten by future generations. Secondly, the monuments could have acted as a celebration of the rebuilding of the South.[37] Rather than acting as a memory "of long past events," the icons may have acted as "a

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[34] Levinson, *Written in Stone.*
[35] Leib and Webster, "On Remembering John Winberry," 11.
[36] Leib and Webster, 12.
[37] Leib and Webster, 12.

symbol of the transition of the South from an alien conquered region to a distinct but equal part of the nation."[38] Instead of harkening back to the war that left the South in ruins, the monuments could be seen as an assertion of the distinctive, diverse nature of Southern heritage and culture.

Thirdly, Winberry, argues, the shifting placement of these monuments could be a reflection of the Lost Cause movement. Described by C. Vann Woodward as "a cult of archaism, a nostalgic view of the past,"[39] the Lost Cause movement is an idealized view of the Civil War as a just quest for liberty and the preservation of a valuable Southern identity.[40] Fitzhugh Brundage articulates the use of such monuments in constructing a historical narrative of the Civil War. "Because memories are transitory," Brundage writes, "people yearn to make them permanent by rendering them in physical form. By erecting monuments or marking off sacred places, groups anchor their memories in space and time."[41] The monuments, then, become the physical representation of the Lost Cause and white, Southern identity.

Lastly, Winberry asserts that the construction of these monuments may be explained as a response by white Southerners to the Populist movement of the late nineteenth century, which sought to unite poor whites and African Americans.[42] Building upon Winberry's theory, Webster and Leib connect the rise of Populism to the Lost Cause movement in general, suggesting the proliferation of this conception of the Civil War was connected to a specific political goal of ensuring Democratic control of the South.[43] Democrats responded to the growth of Populism, Brundage agrees, "by claiming for themselves the mantle of defenders of the Confederate tradition against [Populist] threats."[44] This final explanation suggests that the Lost Cause movement and the

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[38] Winberry, "Lest We Forget," 115.
[39] Woodward et al., *Origins of the New South*, 154.
[40] Winberry, "Lest We Forget," 116.
[41] Brundage, "No Deed But Memory," 8.
[42] Leib and Webster, "On Remembering John Winberry," 12.
[43] Leib and Webster, "On Remembering John Winberry."
[44] Brundage, "No Deed But Memory," 13.

placement of Confederate icons were part of a specific political goal designed to divide poor whites and African Americans and ensure victory for the Democratic party.

"No one of these four possible explanations for the Confederate monument is adequate or complete in itself," Winberry argues,[45] suggesting construction of these monuments was likely motivated by a complex array of reasoning that is not clearly attributable to only one of these four goals. Furthermore, the initial placement of these monuments was often *not* a top-down political process; icons were not erected by powerful governmental agencies for clear-cut political reasons. The vast majority of these monuments, Brundage clarifies were proposed and funded by private organizations like the Daughters of the Confederacy or the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association (LCMA), which had diverse motivations and connections to official governmental entities.[46] The murkiness of these relationships between state actors and private organizations lends credence to Winberry's understanding of these monuments as encapsulating an intricate significance that is difficult to pinpoint precisely.

The Heritage Act, however, represents a departure from this bottom-up approach to the conception of Confederate icons, acting as de jure protection of such monuments across the state. Regardless which explanation or combination of explanations for their placement is most accurate to the Calhoun monument and other Confederate icons in South Carolina, their continued existence is guaranteed in state law for a particular political reason.

Methods

This project will aim to answer the following question: what does the removal of the Calhoun Monument, in spite of the legal protection offered by the Heritage Act, reveal about the relationship between public and private spheres in the development and preservation of historical

[45] Winberry, "Lest We Forget," 118.
[46] Brundage, "No Deed But Memory," 10.

collective memory related to the Civil War and the Confederacy? There are three central sub-questions related to this topic that require individual attention to develop a comprehensive answer to this research question:

1. How do public and private spheres interact in the initial placement of the Calhoun monument, imbuing it with a particular political and social significance?
2. How did the enactment of the Heritage Act affect the interplay between public and private spheres, changing the icon's symbolic role in Charleston, SC?
3. What does the icon's removal and the effects of this action reveal about the statue and the Heritage Act's continuing importance in Charleston and South Carolina?

These three sub-questions neatly divide the topic into three central eras. For each of these time periods, I assessed the interplay between public and private spheres; the creation, preservation, and evolution of historical collective memory related to the Confederacy and American slavery; and the symbolic importance of Confederate icons. I have titled these three periods the Historical Era, the Heritage Era, and the Healing Era.

The Historical Era

The Historical Era runs from 1854 to 2000, encompassing the time between the first meeting of the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association and the enactment of the South Carolina Heritage Act. In examining this era, I utilized primary source historical documents, scholarly literature, and news coverage to examine the interplay between public and private spheres in imbuing the Calhoun Monument with a particular importance prior to the state enacting legal protections. I focused my analysis on the primary source document, *A History of The Calhoun Monument at Charleston, S.C,* an 1888 text by Clarence Cuningham compiling meeting minutes from the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association, speeches from the monument's unveiling ceremony, anecdotes from individual members of the association, etc. I further utilized the oral history project

of sociologist Karen Fields to provide insight into the perspective of Charleston's black community toward the icon. The details contained in these documents were compared to secondary literature, particularly the research of historian John Winberry, to develop a complete picture of the circumstances of the icon's initial placement.

I opted to focus my analysis on the monument's significance at the start of this era, rather than conduct a comprehensive analysis of the entirety of this period. Analyzing the role of the Calhoun monument during the Civil Rights Era in Charleston, for instance, could likely be an entire research paper, on its own, and such an analysis is beyond the capabilities of this project. That the icon was maintained and preserved throughout this period, however, suggests that the significance imbued by the public-private relationship at the monument's inception remained more stable during this period than in the mere twenty years between when the Heritage Act was enacted and the icon was removed. Moreover, there is a great deal of literature, as previously discussed, articulating the significance of Confederate monuments outside of laws protecting these icons. Focusing extensively on a particular monument, prior to the enactment of the Heritage Act adds little to the bulk of existing knowledge on Confederate icons. My analysis of the Heritage period, therefore, focused on assessing the circumstances around the icon's initial placement, describing the intersection between the public and private spheres in creating a monument to John C. Calhoun, and analyzing these forces that imbued the icon with a particular significance.

Moreover, some may be concerned that this project could prove skewed; there may be a unique quality to the Confederate monuments included in academic research, as opposed to those that have gained far less attention. By utilizing scholarly literature to inform my analysis of this era, some may argue, this project may overlook insight that could be gained from commonalities or differences between the Calhoun monument and icons lacking significant study. While these are fair concerns, there is a limit to this project's ability to include icons that have not been studied by other

researchers, as there is simply no database containing information on every Confederate icon in South Carolina. While the Southern Poverty Law Center has attempted to compile such a list, their report on Confederate monuments admits that their database is far from comprehensive.[47] Without such a list, the vast majority of available information focuses on icons which have gained some attention either from academic research or from journalistic articles. Investigating the Calhoun monument and other icons that have gained some academic attention, however, should prove fruitful, given the novel approach of this project in examining these memorials through the lens of the South Carolina Heritage Act.

The Heritage Era

The Heritage Era is the period between the enactment of the Heritage Act (2000) until the icon's removal (2020). In my analysis of this period, I primarily utilized news coverage from the Post & Courier, assessing public statements from private organizations, public officials, and individual citizens related to the Calhoun monument and the Heritage Act. I utilized these analyses to develop an understanding of the perceived significance of the icon during this period, as focused under three primary themes: the icon's role as a symbol of racial discord, the prevention of the repetition of past sins, and the pride and sadness of southerners in relation to Southern history and culture.

The Healing Era

The final era, which I have (perhaps overly hopefully) titled the Healing era, encompasses the time from the icon's removal to the present (March, 2021). In analyzing this era, I articulated some of the continuing developments in Charleston and South Carolina since the Calhoun statue was taken down, attempting to understand how the removal has changed the icon's significance and discussions of history and race. This analysis primarily focused on the relationship between the state government, the Charleston city government, and private groups, with each party now attempting to

[47] Booth and Jamie, "Whose Heritage?"

exert or regain a degree of control. Since this period is still ongoing, my inclusion of an analysis of this period in the findings section of this paper is limited. While I could utilize this period as an opportunity to make predictions about the future of the icon's significance in Charleston or on future developments in collective historical memory in the city, such speculation seems fruitless without the opportunity to compare the circumstances of this icon's removal to the removal of other Confederate statues. Since such a comparison is beyond the scope of my research, as my project focuses on the Calhoun monument, I will instead utilize insight gained from previous periods to offer recommendations and commentary on the ongoing effects of the statue's removal and how Charleston and South Carolina may move forward now that the icon has been taken down. I will articulate potential avenues for the state to reckon with its history of injustices while commenting on the steps that have been taken, to date, to come to grips with the city's history. The bulk of this analysis, therefore, will be saved for the concluding section of this paper, wherein I will present my views on this era and offer potential insight into how other researchers may pick up where I left off in assessing this period.

Findings

My examination of the Calhoun monument is divided into three central eras: the Historical era, the Heritage era, and the Healing era. Each of these periods in the history of the statue involve their own complex relationship between the public and private spheres, imbuing the monument with a particular significance.

Historical Era

My analysis of the Historical Era (1854-2000), encompassing the period between the initial decision to institute a monument to John C. Calhoun and the enactment of the South Carolina Heritage Act. As previously articulated, my analysis is primarily focused on the early part of this era, attempting to gain insight into the relationship between public and private spheres during this period

and the role these spheres played in imbuing the Calhoun icon with a particular significance at the time of its inception.

The Ladies Calhoun Monument Association first met in 1854, laying plans to raise funds for a monument to the South Carolina statesman. In the first few weeks of their work, "the money…flowed in; and came not from the Eldorado Mines of the millionaire, but, with few exceptions, from the limited source of one dollar subscriptions."[48] This quotation seems to remark on a general feeling love of Calhoun felt by South Carolinians and other Southerners, that was not confined to a particular class or socioeconomic status; at the very least, this quotation points to some sort of general support for the project, indicating that the monument was not one individual's pet project but a project that was approved by the masses. This fact is further supported the text's articulation of funds gained to date from the first meeting of the Association until the onset of the Civil War, as outlined in Figure 3.

Fairs in the City of Charleston	$11,071 81
Concerts in the City of Charleston	2,195 31
Lectures in the City of Charleston	563 00
Legacies from residents of the City of Charleston	600 00
Collections and donations in the City	5,709 00
Charleston District	578 25
All the other Districts of South Carolina	3,737 54
From persons, residence unknown	66 30
Donations from State Senators	102 00
Donations from Prof. Rivers	1,000 00
Donations from other States	491 50
Interests and dividends	9,399 92
Total	$35,514 63

Figure 3: Funding Sources for Ladies Calhoun Monument Association, as found in, A History of the Calhoun Monument at Charleston, S. C. Charleston, SC: Lucas, Richardson, printers, 1888.

The connection between public and private can be clearly seen in this figure, with donations coming from assorted South Carolina residents, academics at public institutions, and politicians. Moreover, the fact that public officials gave money to the cause of erecting this statue reveals that

[48] Ladies' Calhoun Monument Association, Cuningham, and Lamar, *History of Calhoun Monument*, 6.

the icon received some degree of support from the state government. Public officials, however, were not responsible for the placement of an icon to Calhoun. On the topic of private groups erecting statues that were widely supported, Brundage writes, "because of the prevailing narrow conception of state obligations in the South, citizens necessarily looked to self-appointed groups in the public sphere to meet needs that officials were either unable or indisposed to address."[49] That the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association was founded long before the economic devastation of the Civil War yet still operated, not as a means to advocate and provide funding for the state government to create a monument to this public official, but to develop this statue, themselves, lends credence to Brundage's interpretation. During this period, private organizations were presupposed to have greater capabilities to erect monuments of particular significance in public spaces, at least in the American South. The powerful role of the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association in nearly every aspect of the icon's initial placement suggests that this particular private entity seemed to have the greatest control over the monument during this era. In originating the concept, the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association was responsible for the statue's location and design; examining these choices, made at the inception of the icon, helps to reveal the aims of the LCMA in the institution of this icon. Where the icon was placed, what it looked like, how it was presented and discussed, etc. helps to illustrate why the association worked so diligently to create a monument to John C. Calhoun.

The plans for a statue, made in the initial meetings of the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association after Calhoun's demise, were stymied by the 1861 outbreak of the Civil War at Charleston Harbor's Fort Sumter.[50] Despite the great losses incurred by the American South throughout this conflict, however, the Association was able to preserve the vast majority of these

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[49] Brundage, *Southern Past*, 7.
[50] Ramsdell, "Lincoln and Fort Sumter"; Ladies' Calhoun Monument Association, Cuningham, and Lamar, *History of Calhoun Monument*.

funds. In a particularly illuminating section, the text details the process of the Association's Treasurer, Mrs. M.A. Snowden, and her sister sewing bonds into their skirts to protect the LCMA's funds from Northern forces. In describing this incident, the text states:

> [The women] were told by their mother's maid, a negro slave, that she was delighted the soldiers did not get the things sewed up in the garment…The faithful creature, acting upon her own high instincts of honesty, kept the secret. To this incorruptible, though unlettered daughter of African descent, all honour is due, for honesty, though not an object of reward, is a thing to be especially honoured, when the very air is putrid with the dishonesty of those who claim to be high up, not only in the scale of learning, but of gently-dealing and humane-teaching civilization—yea, of those whose official position placed them at the front ranks of that highest and mightiest of races which calls itself Caucasian.[51]

This passage provides significant insight into the reasoning behind the icon's initial placement. Moreover, that this text was published in 1888 provides clues to the significance it gained in the early stages of the monument's existence, providing a full picture of both how the association wanted the icon to be viewed and the actuality of its significance in these initial years.

Timelessness and Moral Purpose

Firstly, it is notable that the women allegedly prized the funds collected by the LCMA above their own wealth and property. This indicates the high regard these women felt for the association and its goal of memorializing Calhoun. The women's positive view of the association's work, in other words, was not confined to the perceived benefits of the icon had it been created prior to the dramatic social and political changes instituted by the American Civil War. Rather, the importance these women placed on the funding, even as most every aspect of their lives felt threated, suggests that they viewed the LCMA's task as positively benefitting society at any time; the importance of the Calhoun Monument to the LCMA was not confined to the specific political atmosphere prior to the American Civil War. This perception of the icon as timeless may point to a sense in which the placement of the icon was seen as a moral necessity for the individuals involved. While other

[51] Ladies' Calhoun Monument Association, Cuningham, and Lamar, *History of Calhoun Monument*, 14.

literature has focused on the institution of Confederate icons as a direct response to a particular political action threatening dominance of white individuals in southern society (like the Civil Rights Movement or desegregation), this passage indicates that, to a certain extent, the icon was viewed by its creators as eternally important to American society, apart from any particular social or political movement at the time.

Racist Motivations

The racist language explicitly contained in the previously mentioned passage, referring to the white race as "highest" and "mightiest," provides some clues to the racial attitudes of the organization's patrons and the individuals who chose to write about the icon's history in the late 19th century. While the icon's initial placement may not have been specifically tied to one political or social movement, in particular, the monument is certainly not devoid of racist implications. Moreover, these implications were, of course, not lost on the city's African American population. The racial motivations and connotations of the icon's placement and location is articulated by Mamie Gavin Fields in the following passage from Karen Fields' oral history:

> Our white city fathers wanted to keep what he [Calhoun] stood for alive. So they named after him a street parallel to Broad…And when I was a girl, they went further: they put up a life-size figure of John C. Calhoun preaching and stood it up on the Citadel Green, where it looked at you like another person in the park. Blacks took that statue personally. As you passed by, here was Calhoun looking you in the face and telling you, "…you may not be a slave, but I am back to see you stay in your place."[52]

In this passage, Fields describes the city's African American community as considering the monument as erected to ensure the subjugation of Black Charlestonians by harkening back to the antebellum South and the racist ideals of one of the state's most prominent political figures. The city's Black population, however, did not take this attempt at intimidation lying down, according to Fields. She states, "We used to carry something with us, if we knew we would be passing that way in

[52] Fields, "What One Cannot Remember Mistakenly," 48.

order to deface that statue – scratch up the coat, break the watch chain, try to knock off the nose…Children and adults beat up John C. Calhoun so badly that the whites had to come back and put him up so high, so we couldn't get to him."[53] Karen Fields was unable to corroborate her grandmother's reasoning as to why the statue was moved atop a pillar, where the monument stood until its removal in 2020. There are references, however, to a derisive nickname for the statue, "Calhoun and he wife," causing great unhappiness among white Charlestonians.[54]

Each of these examples suggests that the statue, even in these early days, was a rallying point for small acts of rebellion against an oppressive system. Black people, including children, responded to this system by attacking the statue physically and metaphorically. Moreover, even if the initial reasoning behind the statue was not explicitly racist, that the response to Black people mocking and vandalizing the original statue was to create a new icon on a tall pillar suggests that the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association, at the very least, was far from apologetic with regards to the perception that the icon was intended to send a racist message. Rather, the LCMA responded by creating a new statue that could not be subject to these same acts of rebellion. While the statue may not have been erected in direct connection to a particular racist political motive, the icon did carry a message to the city's Black population that was not rejected by the monument's creators.

Lost Cause and Populism

Though I previously argued the initial placement of the icon was not directly tied to a particular political or social movement towards racial equality, the passage, written after the American Civil War, does seem to highlight the importance of the icon's continued existence and its evolving role after emancipation. In utilizing the enslaved woman as a literary device to juxtapose "those who claim to be high up," the quotation seems to highlight the perceived lack of honor,

[53] Fields, "What One Cannot Remember Mistakenly," 48.
[54] Fields, 49.

justice, and fairness of certain public officials during this era. The text could be understood as drawing a distinction between the honor and honesty of the enslaved woman and the perceived lack of honor, justice, and fairness in public, governmental officials of the North. This interpretation signals a connection to the Lost Cause movement which, as previously discussed, Winberry characterized as one of four potential explanations for the establishment of Confederate icons in public, urban spaces in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[55] This text relating the history of the monument, in other words, could be understood as attempting to disseminate a view of the antebellum South as a just society that was eradicated with the defeat of the Confederacy. Calhoun represented this ideal, as a significant political figure who touted the institution of slavery as good for all involved. Invoking this individual may represent an attempt to regain this mythos of the pre-war South with its mighty ideals.

The above anecdote could, however, be interpreted according to a different of Winberry's potential explanations: the rise of Populism. In other words, this quotation could utilize specifically racial language to create a rift between poor whites and Charleston's Black population in an attempt to prevent class solidarity. "Those who claim to be high up," according to this interpretation, could be referring to public officials in the Populism movement who, in attempting to foster class unity, betrayed the racist ideals of antebellum South Carolinian officials, like Calhoun. While the plans for the statue were initiated prior to the Civil War, abolition, the Fifteenth Amendment, or the rise in Populism, the text detailing the occurrences of the Ladies Calhoun Monument association was published in the late 19th century. This passage, therefore, could be pointing to a novel importance for the monument's preservation that corresponded with this specific political movement. While the statue did not seem to be initially placed in connection to a particular political or social event, the use of the icon in the text to signal discontent towards political figures at the time hints at the

[55] Winberry, "Lest We Forget."

symbolic political role the statue would play in the Heritage Era, once control over the monument transferred into the hands of the state government.

Heritage Era

During the Heritage Era, control over Calhoun's monument transferred into the hands of the state. In my analysis of news articles from the Post and Courier, I determined that maintaining and preserving the Calhoun monument under governmental power affected the perceived significance of the icon, changing its value from how it was viewed at the time of the monument's original creation. The symbolic value ascribed to this icon encompasses three major themes: the icon's position as a symbol for racial discord, as a symbol for the importance of historical preservation for the sake of preventing repetition of sins of the past, and as a symbol for the complex relationship between shame and pride felt by Southerners toward their history. The nature of the icon in these three respects, I argue, represents a change in the icon's significance from the Historical Era.

Symbol of Racial Discord

In analyzing Post and Courier articles from the Heritage Era, I noticed a great many articles discussing the Heritage Act in relation to questions of racial unity and reconciliation. Shortly after the act was passed, State Senator Robert Ford (D – Charleston), who sponsored the bill to remove the Confederate flag from the statehouse dome, stated, "What the Senate did wasn't just a good compromise, it was a super good compromise. When you can get those Senators who love the Confederacy to agree to take the flag down, you've accomplished a miracle. This was a beautiful day for South Carolina."[56] This quote seems to suggest that the successful removal of the Confederate flag, along with the passage of an act to protect other Confederate icons was generally viewed as a success, rather than as an unfortunate compromise. This idea is further echoed in a May 2000 Post

[56] The Post and Courier Editorial Staff, "`Respectful Resolution' Brought down the Flag."

& Courier editorial stating, "Reason and good will have prevailed. Thanks to the General Assembly's historic performance of its duty Thursday, South Carolina now can move into the future without being burdened by residual recriminations about the past."[57] The Confederate flag, in other words, was the primary symbol across the state for the racial strife and the state's struggle in reconciling its painful history. Removing the Confederate flag, was seen as a monumental achievement, offering the state a chance at racial reconciliation. Moreover, this quotation indicates that the law protecting other Confederate icons was not seen as a barrier to the racial harmony promised by the flag's removal.

Removing the Confederate flag, however, was clearly not the end of racism in South Carolina as is evident by the prominence of the flag in the social media posts of the perpetrator of the Mother Emmanuel shooting in 2015.[58] Despite that the relocation of the flag did not result in dramatic changes in racist sentiments in South Carolina, my investigation across different articles suggested feedback to the compromise was viewed positively in both public and private spheres, at least in mainstream media within the state. While some asserted that simply moving the flag onto the statehouse grounds and off the dome was not a strong enough move, there seemed far less pushback against the enactment of the Heritage Act than as the era progressed.

As the Heritage Era continued, I saw smatterings of debates related to the Calhoun monument and other Confederate icons across the state, including the previously mentioned segregated war memorial in Greenwood, SC and the Statehouse statue to former South Carolina governor and proud white supremacist Ben Tillman.[59] The Confederate flag, despite hopes to the contrary, remained a source of great public discord and a symbol of the racist history of the state. In a 2015 op-ed in the Post & Courier, Citadel alumnus J. Scott Barlow wrote, "I understand that the

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[57] The Post and Courier Editorial Staff.
[58] Frances Robles, "Dylann Roof Photos and a Manifesto Are Posted on Website."
[59] Trainor, "Historic Columbia Looks to Contextualize Complicated State House Monuments."

South Carolina's 'Heritage Act' prevents the administration from removing the flag, and the flag's removal alone will not solve the Citadel's race relations woes. But removal of the flag would be a large, symbolic step in the right direction."[60] In this passage, Barlow articulates an evolved view of the flag, distinct from many published views from earlier in the era; he recognizes that removing the flag is not the total solution to the racial problems of the Citadel or the City of Charleston, but views this action as a means of demonstrating an attempt to move towards racial equality and reconciliation.

That this op-ed was written in late 2015 is even more revealing, due to its proximity to the June 2015 shooting at the Mother Emmanuel AME Church. With Dylann Roof's prominent, publicized appreciation for the Confederate flag, grassroots movements gained traction in their attempts to remove the Confederate flag from a variety of public spaces.[61] Moreover, that prominent, Black South Carolina State Senator Clementa Pickney was among those murdered at Mother Emmanuel seemed to lead state officials to feel they had no option other than to remove the flag from the statehouse grounds. The removal of the Confederate flag from various places of prominence, due to the icon falling out of favor as a result of its connection to this atrocious act, I argue, prompted the development of a new symbol of racial inequality for South Carolinian political debates and protest movements to rally around. In Charleston, this focus shifted to Calhoun's likeness.

The Calhoun monument's place as the primary symbolic barrier to racial reconciliation in Charleston is particularly evident in the Post & Courier's reporting on a faceoff between protesters and counter protesters in Marion Square. The article includes the following particularly interesting passage:

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[60] Barlow, "PC Editorial / Opinion."
[61] Booth and Jamie, "Whose Heritage?"

> One African American protester, Kenya Skipper, took the empty microphone left on the podium and preached to the Calhoun defenders that the reason why he disagreed with the monument is because it didn't represent love. "I don't care about the statue," he said. "All I care about is the heart that beats in your chest...There is a wrong side. But people aren't going to open their ears unless I come in here and speak about love first." A white man dressed in an USA jersey came up and shook his hand and embraced him.[62]

While Skipper stated that he did not care about the statue, that he is in Marion Square protesting suggests that the statue does contain some significance to him. In stating that the monument does not represent love, Skipper indicates that he views the statue as representative of both hatred and racism. He sees that the elimination of racial animosity and violence as possible; this statue is symbolic of an outdated social and political system based upon the subjugation of Black people. Moreover, the inclusion of this moment in the article describing the clash of protesters highlights the centrality of questions of racial division in the publication's views on the statue. That this moment of apparent racial reconciliation was included in the article, in other words, indicates that the editors of the Post & Courier view this occurrence as worth reporting and of particular interest to their readers.

In addition to reporting on instances of racial unity connected to the Calhoun monument, I further noted that quotes from public officials in the Post & Courier were often related to how removing or manipulating these icons may or may not mirror actual changes in racist attitudes or systemic racism in the city. Keith Warring, a Charleston city councilmember elected in 2011, was among the several Black city councilmen who voted against the plaque proposed by Mayor John Tecklenburg in 2017 to add context the John C. Calhoun statue. "I have never seen those fundamental changes [racial unity] take place because of a plaque,"[63] Warring stated, according to a Post & Courier article by Abigail Darlington. This sentiment seems to indicate that merely adding

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[62] Novelly, "Calhoun Monument Defenders, Counterprotesters Face off in Marion Square."

[63] Darlington, "Black Charleston City Council."

context to the icon does not necessarily correspond to changes in racial attitudes. In the same article, Darlington articulates the sentiment of Charleston City Councilman Robert Mitchell, another of the Black councilors who voted against the plaque, who seems to echo Warring's attitude:

> He [Mitchell] said he was arrested practically in the statue's shadow near King and Calhoun streets at age 14 while participating in a civil rights demonstration. He was arrested 24 more times during other protests, fighting for desegregation. He sees the Calhoun statue as a symbol of the racist ideology he has fought so hard against. "I've been in this struggle a long time,' Mitchell said. 'Those feelings for me can't change, regardless of the wording...because of what he stood for at the time."[64]

In this passage, Mitchell clearly indicates a perception that his fight for racial equality is hindered, to a certain extent, by the Calhoun statue, though he does not portray the statue, itself, as the barrier. The monument in Mitchell's quote is symbolic of systemic racial issues in the city. Providing context to the statue or removing the icon, under this interpretation, does not eliminate the racism in South Carolina. Eliminating the icon would only eliminate that *particular* symbol. Without genuine moves toward racial equality, new symbol would simply take the statue's place, as in the case of the removal of the Confederate flag.

Despite these attitudes of Black city councilors in 2017, the vote to remove the statue in 2020 was unanimous. William Dudley Gregorie, a Black Charleston City Councilman stated, "This is a historical moment in our city, and I don't want 100 years from now to show that I did not take a stand as an African-American…Let's do the right thing."[65] This quote suggests that, while removing the statue may not help to drive the elimination of racial disparities in Charleston or South Carolina, eliminating this particular symbol of racial discord does have some merit. Charles Tyler, President of the National Action Network's Charleston Chapter, was, similarly, reported as saying, "It [the

[64] Darlington.
[65] Darlington.

removal of the Calhoun Statue] was joy to my heart,"[66] indicating that the removal of this icon did have a particular, positive significance to some individuals.

This new significance may be tied to the notion that, while new approaches to racial issues do not necessarily stem from changes in Confederate monuments, evolving notions of these icons can act as a reflection of an individual (or a community) growing a greater understanding of the struggles of Black people in America and attempting to listen to the wants and needs of the city's Black community. Charleston City Councilman Harry Griffin, who voted against the slavery apology issued by the City of Charleston in 2018, is quoted in an article as saying, "The suppressed anger or hurt, I see that now two years later…I can see how a statue, while it is a piece of rock, can be a symbol for all that is wrong in our city."[67] Griffin, in the article, articulates that conversations with people of color on questions of race revealed the symbolic nature of Confederate iconography, leading him to vote in support of the Calhoun statue's removal. While the icon's removal, therefore, may not result in racial reconciliation or the overnight elimination of racial inequality in Charleston, taking down the statue signifies to some that racist attitudes are changing in a positive way.

Historical preservation in Two Parts

In addition to the icon's status as a symbol for racial divisions in Charleston, discussions related to removing various Confederate icons in the Heritage Period often centered around questions of preserving history in two respects: preventing the repetition of past sins and ensuring the preservation of southern history.

Preventing repetition of past sins.

[66] Floyd, "Charleston Forum Survey Finds Racial Divide on the Handling of Controversial Statues."
[67] Porter and Bartelme, "Calhoun Monument to Be Removed."

In his Post & Courier column in 2017 Brian Hicks wrote, "History can be most instructive to anyone who studies it honestly. Instead of erasing it, we should learn from it."[68] His sentiment, here, articulating that Confederate iconography should be utilized as a learning tool rather than removed completely, was often echoed in the Heritage Era. Regarding his plan to add a plaque to the Calhoun statue in 2017, Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg stated,

> He [John C. Calhoun] was an advocate for slavery…Most people who are calling for the statue to be removed know that. But it doesn't say that at the statue, and it's part of the whole story. Some of that story isn't pretty…Some of it is very ugly, but it is part of where we came from and we need to learn from history and not fall into repeating something that we shouldn't.[69]

In this passage, Tecklenburg remarks on his plan to add context to the Calhoun statue by adding a plaque that details Calhoun's accomplishments alongside his racist views on slavery. Tecklenburg's sentiment, here, articulating a desire to utilize the Calhoun statue as a teaching tool, to remind future generations of the country's past sins and prevent future horrors like American slavery, was not uncommon during the Heritage Era, whenever questions arose about the history of the Calhoun statue or other Confederate iconography.

While there was little pushback to the importance of learning from past mistakes in the articles I read, the use of the Calhoun monument, specifically, as this teaching tool was often questioned. James Johnson, state president of National Action Network stated, "Many of the city's Confederate monuments were put up during the Jim Crow era and do not serve to educate the public on history…It [the Calhoun Monument] was put up in black folks' face to send a strong message: This could happen again,""[70] Johnson argues against the use of the icon as an educational tool, asserting that the icon's original intention was to intimidate the city's Black population rather

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[68] Hicks, "Hicks Column: History Needs Context, Not a Complete White-Washing."
[69] Behre, "Charleston Looks at Amending - Not Removing - Its Confederate-Era Monuments."
[70] Yee, "SC Group Wants to Strengthen Heritage Act, Put Toppled Monuments Back Up."

than to serve as a reminder of the atrocities of slavery. This notion of utilizing the statue to learn from past sins was further questioned by Willi Glee, a member of Mother Emmanuel AME Church at the time of the shooting. "History is still in the history book,"[71] she stated, suggesting that the icon is not the only way for future generations to learn about the sins of the past. In each of these cases, the origins of the monument and the time period it represents are seen as unassailable barriers to utilizing the statue in a more positive way. An essential aspect of why some view the statue as incapable of turning into an educational tool, is likely that the icon has been standing for so long and yet Charleston still struggles with racial inequalities and violence. Though some saw adding context as a means to spur genuine reckoning with the painful aspects of Southern history and culture, significantly lacking from these discussions was a conversation on what exactly this reckoning would look like. Moreover, even the need for such a reckoning was not always acknowledged, as in discussions about the right of southerners to appreciate their history.

Reclamation of southern history and culture.

I witnessed an interesting debate within the articles I analyzed regarding the intersection between pride and sadness when it comes to southern history. Following the removal of the Confederate flag in 2015, U.S. Senator Tim Scott (R – South Carolina) stated, "I don't think there should be another look on this [the removal of the John C. Calhoun and Wade Hampton statues from the state capital], to be honest with you…The South has a rich and provocative history which includes a lot of things that were good and a lot of things that were not."[72] In this passage, Scott articulates a sense in which southerners have a right to their history, even if much of this history is painful. This statement is particularly notable given that Scott is a Black U.S. Senator advocating for the right of southerners to memorialize a history fundamentally based upon the subjugation of Black

[71] Floyd, "Charleston Forum Survey Finds Racial Divide on the Handling of Controversial Statues."
[72] Behre, "After Confederate Flag, Statues and Monuments Also Getting Second Look."

people. Scott's statement is further echoed by the position of Brian Hicks, as presented in his Post & Courier column. Hicks writes, "South Carolina has a storied and complicated past, and taking down monuments will not erase that. Instead of celebrating past injustices, these monuments could commemorate and put history into context with accompanying plaques written by actual historians."[73] Hicks suggests, here, that the removal of these monuments is an attempt to erase the atrocities of South Carolina's history; these attempts are fruitless and cannot reverse the horrors of American slavery or any other painful aspect of southern history.

These statements of both Scott and Hicks echo the position of Eugene Genovese, as presented in the preface of his text, *The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservatism*. In this text, Genovese writes the following:

> The northern victory in 1865 silenced a discretely southern interpretation of American history and national identity, and it promoted a contemptuous dismissal of all things southern as nasty, immoral, and intellectually inferior. The northern victory did carry out a much too belated abolition of slavery. But it also sanctified northern institutions and intentions, which included the unfettered expansion of a bourgeois world view and the suppression of alternate visions of social order. In consequence, from that day to this, the southern-conservative critique of modern gnosticism has been wrongly equated with racism and white supremacy.[74]

Genovese describes a process, starting at the conclusion of the American Civil War, by which Southern culture, history and identity was systematically dismissed and rejected. While there are, certainly, racist and horrendous moments throughout the history of the South, in other words, Genovese implies these instances have been utilized to deny Southerners of the right to recall their history or regain certain positive aspects of southern culture and political life. "The people of South Carolina are entitled to their complete history the parts that give us pride as well as sadness,"[75] writes Post and Courier editorial writer Robert Behre. Removing Confederate statues like the Calhoun

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[73] Hicks, "Hicks Column: History Needs Context, Not a Complete White-Washing."
[74] Genovese, *The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservatism*, xiii.
[75] Behre, "After Confederate Flag, Statues and Monuments Also Getting Second Look."

Monument, Behre implies, denies South Carolinians of this right to remember all aspects of Southern history, including the most atrocious moments.

Notable in these comments, however, is the lack of reference to the right of Black South Carolinians to their history or to the violence implicitly contained within the history being memorialized. Fitzhugh Brundage describes statements from Jerry Baxley, of the Southern Party of Virginia, and Shelby Foote, an American writer, historian, and journalist, that echo the feeling described in these quotations that Southern Americans are systematically denied the right to their history. About these statements, Brundage writes the following:

> Baxley, a polemical provocateur, and Foote, a noted man of letters and interpreter of all things southern, define "southern" heritage similarly. Both presume that the Confederacy was the crucible of southern identity and that white heritage and southern identity are synonymous. The adjective 'southern' apparently does not apply to African Americans who live south of the Mason-Dixon line. Moreover, by this definition, southerners have been unable to interpret the collapse of the Confederacy as anything other than a defeat.[76]

Brundage, in this quotation, seems to harken back to the myth of the Lost Cause. He seems to argue that the notion of remembering the antebellum south, the Civil War, and the Confederacy as valuable parts of Southern history that has been denied to Southerners through accusations of racism and white supremacy is a sort of mythology based upon denying Black southerners a right to their own interpretation of past events.

This particular interpretation of the South and of Southern history as a mix of pride and sadness that has been systemically hidden from the masses, I would argue, is directly attached to the economic welfare of this region, particularly in Charleston. "The past has become a valuable commodity and is one of the South's largest wealth producers,"[77] Brundage writes, describing the sense in which the South is often, mistakenly, viewed as a place more rich in history than other areas of the country. How Charleston, South Carolina, like the entirety of the American South, is

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[76] Brundage, *Southern Past*, 1.
[77] Brundage, "No Deed But Memory," 18.

presented to the rest of the country is of particular economic importance. If Confederate icons are removed and the South truly reckons internally with its history, the economic benefits of the accepted southern historical narrative go away. This notion is further articulated in an editorial by R.L. Schreadley, former executive editor of the Post & Courier. Schreadley writes, "We have an argument of sorts brewing in Charleston. What words do we want visitors to see on a pedestal supporting the tall, dominating statue of John C. Calhoun on Marion Square? What's been written there for more than a hundred years? Or what do some want to write there in its place? My advice, for what it's worth, is let well enough alone."[78] The importance of the image that Charleston presents to the outside world in Schreadley's argument for the preservation of the Calhoun statue, suggests that these tangible reflections of Southern history in public spaces are an essential aspect of the economic gain southern cities like Charleston obtain from the particular historical narrative presented to tourists. Now that the statue has been removed, however, the significance of the icon related to racial unity, the need to learn from past sins, and the claiming of southern history and culture are disrupted, potentially paving the way for a more complete historical reckoning.

Healing Era

In a Post & Courier article reporting on the unanimous decision of the Charleston City Council to remove the Calhoun statue, the paper quoted Councilman Robert Mitchell, one of the three Black councilmembers. Mitchell stated, "I know how the city of Charleston was all that time in the '50s. When we talk about heritage and peace coming together, it wasn't like that, it didn't happen…Now is the time, now we need some healing process."[79] Mitchell's quotation articulates the hopeful result of the removal of the Calhoun statue in Charleston, viewing the icon's displacement as an opportunity for the city to heal from its past including its role in slavery and the Civil War and

[78] Schreadley, "History in the Making -- and Breaking."

[79] Porter and Bartelme, "Calhoun Monument to Be Removed."

its long history of racism. While this stage is still ongoing, making investigation into the significance of the icon, the interplay of public and private, or the success of this goal of healing difficult, I have already seen this new era imbuing the Calhoun monument with a new significance that differs from the past two eras and deserves special attention.

The most significant change I saw after the monument's removal was the vast increase in discussions of the importance of the democratic process with regard to the Heritage Act and Confederate statues. During the Healing Era, those with political power on the state level often viewed examples of protesting and defacing other Confederate monuments as a significant breach of democratic due process. Caroline Anderegg, South Carolina Governor McMaster's campaign spokesperson, stated, "The governor strongly believes the way that democratic process played out is one of the most important factors in how South Carolina healed in a time of pain…That process is required by the law, and the governor believes that any individual or group that chooses to circumvent or ignore the rule of law by removing or defacing any historical monument for any reason must be prosecuted."[80] Attempts from private groups and individual citizens to make their (often literal) mark on various Confederate icons by means outside of the democratic process, were met with significant disdain on the state level. According to the Post & Courier, state representative Bill Taylor (R-Akin) stated, "In South Carolina, heritage roots run deep and must be protected from the small minority."[81] This line reinforces the position of many public officials on the state level that individuals and private organizations aiming to utilize these statues in protest ought to do so within the bounds of legality. These reactions of state officials, condemning certain protest groups, could be seen as an attempt to regain a degree of control, since protestors and the City of Charleston

[80] Yee, "SC Group Wants to Strengthen Heritage Act, Put Toppled Monuments Back Up."

[81] Coello, "S.C. Monument Supporters Call to Defund Cities That Disobey Heritage Act."

threatened the power of the state government in criticizing, vandalizing, and removing the icon that would seem to be protected under state law.

The notion that, since the removal of the Calhoun statue, the state government has felt pressured to re-exert their power over municipalities and individual citizens is further bolstered by various proposals in the state government that would institute harsh penalties for local governmental officials and municipalities who attempt to remove or amend Confederate monuments. Bill Taylor, for instance, proposed a bill this past January whereby "any local politician who votes to take down a historic monument would be immediately charged with a misdemeanor and suspended from office."[82] In another proposal, officials voting to remove monuments would be fined $25 million.[83] While Taylor admitted that his bill proposal was mostly symbolic, and that he did not expect for it to become law, these instances are clear demonstrations of state officials attempting to threaten local politicians in an attempt to regain control.

These actions from the public sphere are further backed by some in the private sphere, most notably in a comment from Brett Barry, president of American Heritage Association, an organization of individual citizens "who simply recognize the value of our history and its importance in maintaining a free society and the American culture itself."[84] In the article containing Anderegg's statement, Barry is quoted as saying, "All decisions about monuments are to be made by representatives of the people in the state Legislature and not by lawless groups."[85] This sentiment, that the power to control Confederate icons ought to be left in the hands of the state government, seems reflective not of an actual view that the power of the state government needs to be bolstered. Given that he is part of an organization dedicated to preserving monuments, Barry's statement is

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[82] Wilks, "SC Republicans Draft Harsh Penalties for Local Officials Who Take down Historic Monuments."
[83] Wilks.
[84] American Heritage Association, "About Us."
[85] Yee, "SC Group Wants to Strengthen Heritage Act, Put Toppled Monuments Back Up."

better understood as a private group supporting the state government for the sake of a particular political goal, as they knew the Republican legislature is more inclined to prevent statues from being removed or defaced. Furthermore, little reference is made in any of these defenses to the relative newness of the Heritage Act in comparison to the statues or to the fact that these monuments were often placed by private organizations acting outside of governmental due process.

These sentiments are, however, not echoed by everyone in the private sphere. In an article by the Post and Courier's Editorial Staff, the paper took the following stance:

> There's no question, either, that it's outrageous for the Legislature to tell elected city and county councils what they can and can't name the streets and buildings that they fund - or what they can do with the monuments that they erected and have to pay to keep up. We're not interested in the wholesale relocation of monuments or rechristening of roads and buildings, but we are extremely interested in city and county councils being allowed to make the decisions about how their cities and counties operate - even when we disagree with their decisions.[86]

While the staff supports democratic due process, in this statement, they take the position that the Heritage Act hinders the capability of local municipalities to determine what is best for the citizens in their area. The editorial further states, "Our Legislature should repeal or at least amend the law, to allow cities and counties to make decisions about who to honor and how on their property. That is simply none of the Legislature's business."[87] These comments suggest that the Heritage Act is an overexertion of state governmental power, preventing local governments from acting as they see fit and doing what is best for their citizens. These comments suggest that the statue's removal has spurred a power struggle, of sorts, between state and local governments. Who will emerge victorious and how that victory will affect other Confederate monuments or the Heritage Act remains to be seen.

Conclusions

[86] Editorial Staff, "Editorial: It Shouldn't Take a Court Order to Let Cities Rename Roads, Remove Monuments."
[87] Editorial Staff.

Throughout my analysis of these three eras, the intersection of public and private spheres played out in various ways with respect to the Heritage Act and the Calhoun Statue, revealing how these two spheres work in tandem or in opposition to create and preserve a particular view of Charleston and South Carolina history. In the Historical era, the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association worked tirelessly to raise money and erect a statue to John C. Calhoun. While the funding sources of the icon illustrated a sense of widespread popularity for the project, including support from within the state government, the onus for establishing a memorial to Calhoun lay firmly within the private sphere; the populace did not expect the state government to take charge of the project and establish a monument through governmental action. My analysis of the Historical Era suggests that the placement of the Calhoun monument was not a direct response to a specific political or social movement at a given point in time, though the statue did convey a particular message to Charleston's Black population. The racist attitudes of the members and supporters of the Ladies Calhoun Monument Association suggests that, whether this message was intentional or not (though intentional seems more likely), the connotation that the statue was designed to support the subjugation of Black people was not condemned by those who created the icon. Moreover, as the era progressed and new social and political movements with racial elements emerged (i.e. Populism and the myth of the Lost Cause), supporters of the icon seemed to ascribe a significance to the statue in relation to these movements. While the icon did carry a particular significance in these early years of the statue's existence, the monument's meaning was considered as sending a message from one particular group to another group rather than from a private entity to a public entity or vice versa. The control of the icon was firmly rooted in the private sphere, as were the recipients and interpreters of its significance.

The icon's significance within the Heritage Era represented a departure from these early days of the Calhoun monument's existence. While the previous era was defined by control over the icon

lying in the hands of a private organization, with the significance of the statue relating to a relationship between groups of individuals, the transition of power over the Calhoun statue into the hands of the state seemed to lead to a more strictly political significance of the icon during this time, most notably in its role as a rallying point for protests against racism and racial violence. While the Confederate flag was a sticking point for these debates leading up to and in the years following the enactment of the Heritage Act, the racist murder of nine Black individuals at Mother Emmanuel Church contributed to the flag falling out of favor and losing widespread support. With the removal of the flag from the statehouse grounds, the longtime symbol of racism and white supremacy in South Carolina began losing its place of prominence and esteem. A new symbol of these challenges appeared for Charleston residents: the Calhoun monument. Following the removal of the flag, the icon took center stage in discussions on race and racism within the city. While Black Charlestonians did engage in small acts of rebellion by vandalizing and mocking the initial iteration of the Calhoun monument, these actions seem more reflective of individual reclamations of power over particular racists (like Calhoun) than a cohesive protest strategy against an entire governmental system complicit in the economic, social, and political oppression of Black people. As racial disparities and racism grew less overt, while remaining highly systemic, the need for a tangible symbol to point to in critiquing the status quo grew, and the Calhoun statue took on this essential role.

In addition to this key position as a symbolic barrier to racial equality and a focal point of protests and political movements, the icon took on various debates related to historic preservation when protection to Confederate monuments was codified into the Heritage Act. Among some of those who recognized the painful, atrocious aspects in much of Charleston's history, the icon represented the importance of learning from past mistakes. The icon became a symbol for the atrocities of the past and, some argued, was valuable in serving as a reminder to prevent such atrocities from occurring again. This view, clearly, represented a dramatically distinct significance

from the circumstances of the statue's original creation as a means to memorialize an ardent defender of slavery. This view was contrasted with those who valued the icon as symbolizing the denial of the right for southerners to memorialize their history. Removing the statue, some argued, would be reflective of the nation's systematic rejection of southern history and culture.

As the entire nation, including Charleston faced widespread protests against racism and police brutality, however, the icon's place in the city was called into question. Tecklenburg, in an dramatic exertion of the power of local government, quickly worked to have the statue removed. The statue's displacement, has resulted in intense backlash, as state officials and private groups attempt to re-exert control. Similar instances of backlash to unilateral moves to take down Confederate statues have been well documented,[88] with some arguing that the best course of action is leave these icons alone. Whether removing, amending, or ignoring these statues and monuments is the best course of action I cannot say; we may not know the full effects of the Calhoun statue's removal for many years. This move does seem to reflective, however, of a positive progression in Charleston towards a more complete understanding of its history and racial politics. For instance, the creation of the Special Commission on Equity, Inclusion and Racial Conciliation, designed to "eliminate institutionalized racism in the City of Charleston,"[89] in direct connection to the removal of the Calhoun statue, provides some degree of hope that tangible progress towards racial equality may be made. At the very least, it illustrates the sense that city officials view an attempt to work towards eliminating systemic racism as politically and economically viable, a fact that certainly has not always been true.

Ultimately, however, the Calhoun statue is a mere symbol; removing this icon does not mean that Charleston will reckon with its past in a truly productive way, beyond that needed to ensure

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[88] Reiff, *In Praise of Forgetting*; Levinson, *Written in Stone*; Katz, "Unrest in Virginia."
[89] "Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Conciliation."

steady tourism revenue. Determining which moves are concrete results of effective advocacy from private organizations and grassroots groups and which are simply symbolic acts that do not correspond to tangible change is key to understanding the place of Confederate monuments in American society and to working towards a more just society that is capable of reconciling the past. My research revealed that, since the relocation of the Confederate flag in 2000, southern society seems to be developing an evolving awareness of the need for the removal or manipulation of Confederate symbols to be accompanied with concrete, progressive action. How Charleston, among other cities, will succeed in the touted goal of reckoning with its past and creating a more equal community remains to be seen and requires future investigation.

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