

IMAGES OF SLAVERY, IMAGES OF OURSELVES:
The Public History of Slavery and Regional Identities

A SENIOR THESIS

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Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree
Bachelor of Arts

The Colorado College
Colorado Springs, Colorado

April/ 2016

Slavery is one of the most enduring and significant stains on the historical conscience of the United States. It has been extensively studied in academia, however representations of slavery are conspicuously absent from museums, memorials, and other public sites. This paper will explore the absences and incompleteness of slavery in America's public history by analyzing the historical development of sites representing slavery. Through historic plantation museums, Civil War memorials, and Lincoln statues, a larger narrative is revealed which is deeply uncomfortable with the implications of slavery on regional identities. Debates around the proper display and characterization of slavery are actually indicative of larger questions of Northern and Southern identity and these regions' need for a historical record which cleanly aligns with their own self-image. For this reason, engaging with the history of slavery, especially in a public and highly visible manner such as exhibition or monument-building, remains a highly controversial undertaking. Neither the South nor the North has been able to directly confront and reconcile slavery with a celebratory narrative of their pasts. Historian Michael Kammen said, "Historians become notably controversial when they do not perpetuate myths, when they do not transmit the received and conventional wisdom, when they challenge the comforting presence of a stabilized past."¹ Depicting slavery fully and truthfully disrupts a stabilized regional, but it is necessary and vital work to confront the racial exclusion of the past and present.

Because of these difficulties, sites dedicated to the remembrance and analysis of slavery are few and the narratives they tell are often incomplete or white-washed. It remains politically dangerous to advocate for critical examinations of slavery in public sites. Historians, museums, and national parks which have tried to shift to a more inclusive representation of the American past have elicited public outcry for engaging in "revisionist" history, political correctness, and

¹ Kammen, Michael, "History as a Lightning Rod," *OAH Newsletter* 23 (1995), 6.

leftist, anti-American sentiment. These critics oppose the inclusion of slavery into more traditional historical narratives and feel as if their own heritage and identity is under attack. In response, they deny the pertinence of slavery and attempt to erase its presence in the historical narrative.

Despite the tendency towards denial and erasure, a handful of museums and monuments have formally engaged with the history of slavery. However, many of the sites do something comparably damaging by minimizing and re-characterizing slavery. Some sites paint slavery in a less harsh light, which can be subtly seen in the decision to call slaves “servants” or more directly by emphasizing narratives of loyalty and affection between master and slave. These sites also minimize the importance of slavery by delineating appropriate times or places to discuss slavery, often sidelining the experiences of slaves in favor of military, cultural, or political history. This implies that slavery can be kept separate from a larger regional history or minimized as regrettable but certainly not indicative of our national heritage.

These interpretations are harmful in general but their presence in museums, monuments, and public sites powerfully dictates what we consider “official” history. Public commemoration hold a position of unique historical authority and public attention, therefore giving them a hegemonic ability to define the role, span, and impact of slavery and the very character of the American past. Prominent institutions such as the National Park Service and the Smithsonian have been grappling with their civic and educational responsibilities in displaying slavery. For the most part, they decided to adopt a critical presentation which embraces debate and dissonance. However, these curatorial decisions have not always been positively received. Public scandals surrounding the reinterpretation of American history, such as the *Enola Gay*

Controversy at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, speak to the anger which can erupt when people feel that their perception of the past is being threatened.²³

Civil War monuments have generally told celebratory narratives of the past, featuring heroic figures and acts which represent national ideals. These monuments to the greatness of the America past and present are what public historian Edward Linenthal categories as “temples.”²⁴ Can the issue of slavery fit into this model? Can slavery be truly incorporated into celebratory narrative? What are the dangerous of presenting slavery in this manner? Linenthal urges for a shift to museums as “forums” where debate and difference can be displayed and analyzed. This concept of a multi-faceted and discourse based exhibition, also known as “New Museum Theory,” has been embraced by public historians and museum professionals.⁵ However, the public, as well as politicians, are often suspicious and outright hostile to these more ambiguous histories.

The topic of American slavery has been extensively studied by academic and popular historians, yet there is a gap between the discourse of academic historians and the content most people learn through textbooks, word of mouth, and public sites. The last several decades have brought a renewed public interest in slavery, bringing the conversation out of academia into a more political and highly visible sphere. Controversies such as reparations, the display of the Confederate Flag, and revisions to Civil War sites have highlighted the issue of slavery and forced many to question received edicts about our regional and national identities. Though the

² Pitcaithley, Dwight, “A Cosmic Threat: The National Park Service Addresses the Causes of the American Civil War,” In *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, edited by James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, (New York: New Press, 2006) 169-186.

³ Linenthal, Edward and Tom Engelhardt, ed. *History War: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*. (London: Macmillan, 1996.)

⁴ Linenthal and Engelhardt, *History War*, 22.

⁵ Marstine, Janet, *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction* (Hoboken: John Wiley& Sons, 2008).

intersection of slavery and public history is a less studied aspect of the developing historical discourse about the role of slavery in the United States, robust scholarship has emerged from a range of fields, including museum studies, history, race and ethnic studies, and memory studies. These scholars are interested in the role of commemoration and representation on our ideas about slavery. This essay will weave together the developing literature from various fields to understand historical and contemporary dimensions of representing slavery in U.S. museums and memorials.

As early as the advent of the Civil War, thinkers and leaders recognized the power in controlling the narrative around slavery. Frederick Douglass spoke of the importance of historical memory and urged blacks to remember the Civil War as a conflict over slavery.⁶ W.E.D. DuBois lamented the historical amnesia and politicking which allowed for white America to deny slavery's central function in the Civil War and erase black existence from the nation's consciousness.⁷ Both of these early black thinkers recognized the powerful implications of misremembering slavery and the Civil War, but it is only in the past fifty years that academics have formally considered how memory and commemoration function in order to create a sense of collective consciousness.

The idea of the power of memory, commemoration, and forgetting were not seriously explored until the advent of memory studies which emerged after, and largely in response to, the Holocaust. The most foundational conception in this field was that of collective memory, which argues that a group of people have a sense of the past which extended beyond their individual experiences and thus creates a group consciousness.⁸ Tragic pasts in particular have the ability to

⁶ Blight, David, "For Something beyond the Battlefield: Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for the Memory of the Civil War," *The Journal of American History* 75 (1989): 1160.

⁷ DuBois, W.E.B., *The Souls of Black Folks* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1961) 7.

⁸ Halbwachs, Maurice, *On Collective Memory*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

influence this collective memory, which helps explain the lasting influence of slavery and the Civil War on American identity.⁹ While individual memory is shaped by interpersonal relationships and lived experiences, collective memory is formulated through more intentional acts of statecraft, such as public education, national holidays, and museums and monuments. By articulating a certain historical narrative in these authoritative and legitimizing venues, nations, regions, and organizations can exert a large degree of influence over collective memory, thereby shaping the past and present in ways which are beneficial to their own interests.

In the 1990s, several historians and sociologists began analyzing memories of slavery and the Civil War in relation to these theories. A majority of the scholarship focused on Southern dimensions of slavery and representations. In *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* David Blight argues that race was the central determinant in how Americans chose to remember and forget the Civil War. Driven by a desire for reconciliation over racial healing, the white South constructed a narrative of soldierly honor and sacrifice called the Lost Cause, which eliminated slavery as the central premise of the War.¹⁰ Where slavery has not been eliminated in the South, it is made benevolent with the image of the Mammy and the black Confederate soldier.¹¹¹²¹³ In *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, Michael Kammen elaborates on the idea of national reconciliation. He argues that

⁹ Vinitzky-Seroussi, "Unpacking the Unspoken: Silence in Collective Memory and Forgetting," *Social Forces*, University of North Carolina Press: 2010

¹⁰ Blight, David, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009)

¹¹ McElya, Micki, *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America*, (Cambridge, MA: University of Harvard Press, 2007) 204.

¹² McElya, Micki, "Commemorating the Color Line: The National Mammy Monument Controversy of the 1920s," in *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscape of Southern Memory*, eds. Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003)126.

¹³ "In Search of a Useable Past: Neo-Confederates and Black Confederates" in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, edited by James Oliver Horton, Lois E. Horton, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.)

contestation creates memory whereas agreement fosters forgetting, explaining how the relative consensus in regards to the Civil War has allowed for slavery to be largely eliminated from Southern history.¹⁴

Moving from a more general approach to Southern culture, several scholars have looked specifically at the formal presentation of the Southern past to found in museums, historic plantations, and Civil War memorials. In *Representation of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*, Jennifer L Eichstedt and Stephen Small survey plantation museums across the South. Based off of their experiences they find that through focusing on the material culture of the Antebellum South and the “servant” as an aspect of this tradition, plantation museums idealize a certain “moonlight and magnolias” aesthetic of Antebellum planter class which ignores the horrors of slavery and asserts the civility of a way of life supported by strict class and racial hierarchies.¹⁵

Art Historian Kirk Savage brings the lens of memory and race to memorials in his 1998 work, *Standing Solider, Kneeling Slave: Race, War, and Monument in the Nineteenth Century*. Savage views the Civil War and the transition from slavery to freedom resulted in as the most cataclysmic event of United States history and argues that through a surge of unprecedented monument building, society attempted to build consensus and create resolution.¹⁶ Similar examinations of the Southern Monumental landscape have been undertaken which focus on more

¹⁴ Kamman, Michael, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*

¹⁵ Eichstedt, Jennifer and Stephen Small, *Representation of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002) 12,

¹⁶ Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slave: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America*, Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1997.

specific angles such as the role of women's commemorative organization, heritage tourism, and a recent memorials to prominent black figures in a formally white commemorative landscape.¹⁷¹⁸

Lori Holyfield and Clifford Beacham integrate Civil War sites into the framework of memory studies. They interpret different pertinent sites as either multi-vocal or fragmented. Multi-vocal sites are where people with multiple perspective can commemorate a shared history in the same space. Fragmented sites only allow the perspective of one group, thereby preventing individuals with different historical interpretations from ever interacting with each other or with shared commemorative spaces. In relation to slavery, fragmented sites are largely oriented along racial lines. Holyfield and Beacham found that segregation remained in many of the historic plantations they visited which were orientated towards white visitors and provided few meaningful ways to explore the relation of these sites to slavery.¹⁹

While work on Southern identity and slavery is robust, the scholarship on the interaction of slavery and Northern identity is much more sparse. The traditional narrative of the North and slavery has generally focused on abolitionism. Most of the public sites in the North, such as Lincoln memorials and the Shaw Memorial, represent the region's role in Emancipation.²⁰²¹ Historian Joanne Pope Melish argues that the North, specifically New England, focused on abolitionism in order to create distinctive New England nationalism which reimagined the region as historically free. This narrative enabled the North to present itself as morally and politically

¹⁷Mills, Cynthia and Pamela H. Simpson, *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscape of Southern Memory*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 5-8.

¹⁸McGraw, Marie Tyler, "Southern Comfort Levels: Race, Heritage Tourism, and the Civil War in Richmond" in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, edited by James Oliver Horton, Lois E. Horton, 151-69. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

¹⁹ Holyfield, Lori, and Clifford Beacham. 2011. "Memory Brokers, Shameful Pasts, and Civil War Commemoration". *Journal of Black Studies* 42 (3). Sage Publications, Inc.: 436-56.

²⁰ Katie Mullis Kresser. "Power and Glory: Brahmin Identity in the Shaw Memorial."

²¹ Chadwick Hansen, "The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Black Infantry as a Subject for American Artists," *The Massachusetts Review* 16 No. 4 (1975): 745-759.

superior to the South. Through not acknowledging Northern complicity in slavery, New England was able to cement racial hierarchies which were being threatened through the process of gradual emancipation and position black New Englanders as “permanent strangers” who could never claim full citizenship or regional belonging. The result is New England, and the North as a whole, has been able to successfully dissociate itself with slavery and in doing so with black people as a whole.²² Under this framework, slavery was omitted from the collective memory, not because slavery did not occur or affect the North, but because it was a formulated strategy of historical amnesia.²³

However, considerable progress has been made in the North in acknowledging and commemorating ties to slavery. In 1991, the discovery of the African Burial Ground in downtown Manhattan sparked a renewed examination of slavery in the North. In 2006, the New York Historical Society featured an exhibit inspired by this discovery entitled *Slavery in New York* whose goal was to explore slave life in New York in a way which allowed visitors to identify with enslaved peoples.²⁴ Universities and corporations as well as museums and governments have undertaken examinations of their ties to slavery which resulted in critical thinking surrounding the significance of apologies, reparations, and commemoration.²⁵ This trend of critical examination of Northern complicity with slavery indicates that the North is willing to question its historical claims of innocence. Museums and memorials have played an important role in this awareness, by incorporating slavery into an “official” history of the North

²² Melish, Joanne Pope. *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998

²³ Farrow, Anne and Joel Lang and Jennifer Frank, *Complicity: How the North Prolonged, Promoted, and Profited From Slavery* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006) 1-3.

²⁴ Richard Rabinowitz, “Eavesdropping at the Wall: Interpreting Media in *the Slavery in New York* Exhibition”

²⁵ Max Clarke and Gary Alan Fine, “‘A’ is for Apology: Slavery and the Collegiate Discourses of Remembrance- the Case of Brown University and the University of Alabama,” *History and Memory*: 22 no. 1.

where it before had been invisible. The development in museum exhibition is promising and indicates that the North may be ready to confront slavery honestly and without the sanitizing claims of regional morality.

This paper will analyze the development of commemorative representations of slavery in order to understand how slavery compliments or complicates a sense of regional identity. The first chapter will examine representations of slavery in the South through the image of “loyal slave,” Civil War memorials, and historic plantation houses in order to understand how slavery functions in relation to the Lost Cause narrative and conceptions of the Antebellum South. The second chapter will investigate depictions of Lincoln, black soldiers, and slave cemeteries in order to discern the relationship between emancipation, slavery and Northern identity. This paper is not interested in whether the North or South is more culpable for the institution of slavery. Both regions were involved and benefited from slavery in very fundamental ways. Instead, this paper explores is how each region has represented their involvement with slavery in dramatically different ways and what these differences reveal about how slavery and race fit into mainstream conception of Southern and Northern regional identity.

The history of slavery has been minimized or denied in American museums or memorials, because commemorations of slavery continue to pose a threat to important aspects of our regional identities. Because of these threats, there continue to be many questions and controversies about how to incorporate the history slavery into a mainstream Northern or Southern narrative. For so long, these regions have relied on the distortion of slavery to articulate their identities. In order to engage with the history of slavery fully will require both the North, South, and the nation to face ugly truths about their pasts and their selves. With the opening of the Smithsonian National Museum of History and Culture in the fall of 2016, these

interpretations take on an even greater significance. The models provided by regional interpretation are poised to inform how the entire nation remembers slavery.

The issue of slavery has never been limited to the past. Representations of slavery continue to define the status and citizenship of black people. Therefore, a more vigorous public investigation of the history slavery holds the potential to begin correcting harmful stereotypes, racist ideologies, and exclusionary regional identities. Museums and monuments are one of the most powerful ways that both the North, the South, and the nation as a whole can begin the process of reckoning with slavery and through doing so more incorporate Black Americans into the past and present of the United States.

Chapter 1 Disgracing Whose Ancestors? Representing Slavery Among Confederate Heritage in the American South

In the American South, the past appears inextricably bound to the present. Tales of Confederate sacrifice, antebellum life, and “Moonlight and Magnolias” are still considered distinguishing aspects of what it means to be Southern. However, this collective memory, which is controlled by white elites, has largely omitted the presence of slavery and in doing so has functioned to present Southern identity as exclusively white. Historian Fitzhugh Brundage views the popular conception of the Southern history as intentional, saying that, “the Historical South isn’t the consequence of some innate regional properties, but decades of investment, labor, and conscious design.”²⁶ By recognizing collective memory as an inherently selective process of integration, erasure, and negotiation, this chapter will explore the creation of Southern regional identity through depictions of slavery in monuments, memorials, and museums. It will show how the omission and mischaracterization of slavery has functioned as an affirmation of Southern white regional identity and created a lasting legacy of racism and historical amnesia. This chapter explores the commemorative roots of the Lost Cause narrative and traces these themes to the present day in order to understand the lasting impact that a white, elite articulation of the history of slavery has had on Southern identity and explore productive means of engaging with slavery as an aspect of Southern history.

While Southern whites have long dominated the region’s historical memory, there has always existed an alternative black narrative of Southern history which has been relegated to the sidelines. In recent decades, commemorative sites have attempted to make black Southern

²⁶ Brundage, Fitzhugh ed. *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) 3.

history more visible. These sites highlight the role of blacks in the Southern past but separate them from the more dominant Lost Cause narrative both chronologically and physically. By doing this, the South has created a public history with an overarching narrative of white supremacy coexisting alongside a celebration of black rights. The result is both contradictory and insincere, stemming from an unwillingness to confront the reality of slavery embedded in Southern identity.

Reconstruction 1865-1877: Black and White Commemoration

In the aftermath of the Civil War, white Southerners struggled to make sense of the devastation of defeat and the upheaval of emancipation and Reconstruction. In the years immediately following the war, commemoration was concentrated in cemeteries. White southerners focused public attention on the graves of the Confederate dead in order to bring honor to their side of the conflict and attempted to silence any sympathizing with the Union dead, going so far as to physically prevent Blacks from decorating the graves of Union soldiers.²⁷

Simultaneously, newly freed black Southerners attempted to place themselves within an American historical memory and forge a future for themselves.²⁸ Under the eye of Northern soldiers, black Southerners were able to promote their own version of Southern history through prominent parades and festivals, especially Emancipation Day celebrations. These parades celebrated black labor, soldiers, and democratic participation, asserting black liberty and equality. While these displays may not be considered memorials in a strict sense, they allowed black people to control and reshape prominent public spaces in order to display their historical

²⁷ Clark, Kathleen, "Emancipation Day Celebrations," in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. William Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 111.

²⁸Clark, "Emancipation Day Celebration," 109.

narrative, therefore serving the same theoretical purposes as memorials, albeit less permanent. On parade days, blacks effectively controlled public spaces, such as city squares and streets, which had once been highly regimented areas for them. Black control of these spaces was such that white residents could not stand to be in town during these demonstrations and often left for the countryside, upending the power structure of Southern public spaces which were once dominated exclusively by whites.²⁹ Blacks even altered monuments, decorating the Washington Monument with evergreen and displaying a calico flag on the statues of George Mason and Thomas Jefferson. These gestures incorporated the Founding Fathers into a larger narrative of freedom and emancipation, foreshadowing the incorporation of slavery and emancipation into the Southern monumental landscape which would finally become permanent after the Civil Rights Movement. These actions indicate a deep awareness for the power of civic space, and monuments in particular, to display control and dictate a version of memory which legitimizes such control. White Southerners ridiculed but also recognized black commemorative displays as a threatening counter narrative, but because of the protective presence of Northern soldiers there was little that they could do to prevent these displays. However, black commemorative freedom and the multi-vocal discourse it enabled about the Southern past would soon be eliminated, giving white Southerners control of the region's commemoration of slavery and historical consciousness more generally.

The Southern past became sharply racialized. Whites viewed emancipation as the fall from a more dignified and racially delineated past. Blacks celebrated emancipation as the start of a new life and departure from the darkness of slavery. Considering the divergence of these two conceptions of slavery, it is little wonder that public commemoration of the Civil War and the

²⁹ Clark, "Emancipation Day Celebration," 124.

Antebellum period would find it impossible to incorporate both viewpoints into a shared civic space and would come into competition. The resulting battle for control over the historical memory of slavery was an expression of competing claims by whites and blacks to power and legitimacy as Southerners and citizens. More so than any other method of control, the memory and meaning of slavery held the power to dictate which people, what time periods, and what style of life were truly Southern, at the exclusion of the rest. Out of this understanding, the Lost Cause narrative was created which defined the Southern past as white, honorable, and elite, which intrinsically though not explicitly included slavery as a defining aspect of authentic Southern experience.

Reconciliation 1880-1920: The Lost Cause as Southern Memory

The Lost Cause narrative formed after Confederate defeat as a means of protecting white Southern pride and depicting the Confederate cause sympathetically. The key elements of the Lost Cause narrative were state sovereignty, the valor of war, and the dignity of traditional Southern life through which white Southerners justified the Civil War and imbued the conflict with purpose and honor.³⁰ In this context, there became very little place for the experiences of black Southerners or slavery itself. In the initial monument building efforts, blacks were entirely invisible. However, the creators of the Lost Cause mythology realized that they needed some way to reconcile slavery and black people with a narrative which glorified the experiences of the white elite. In order to do this it was necessary to address the issue of slavery in two, somewhat contradictory manners.

³⁰ Blight, David, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 6.

First, the Lost Cause claims that the Civil War was not about slavery at all. White Southerners argued that the central issue of the war was actually the defense of state's rights which were being infringed upon by Northern legislation, of which attempts to control slavery was only one infraction. Southern heritage groups such as the Confederate Memorial Literary Society when so far as to claim that through secession, the South has actually been defending the ideals of the American Revolution.³¹ The Lost Cause narrative is highly skeptical of the North's genuine interest in abolition and pointed out alternative economic incentives for Northern aggression. The idea of slavery as peripheral to the Civil War and an excuse for Northern control was extended into criticism of Reconstruction, which many white Southerners detested as an unjust use of federal power aimed at eliminating traditional Southern society and imposing black supremacy.³²

Though the Lost Cause rejected slavery as meaningfully connected to the Civil War, white Southerners spent considerable energy defending the benevolence of the institution. Southern whites emphasized an idealized paternal relationship between slave and master, which they claimed to be more humane than that of free market labor.³³ Southern whites made arguments that masters cared for their slaves and provided them with sustenance and protection in exchange for easy work which suited slaves' simple nature. In exchange, slaves were happy and devoted to their masters in a non-coerced manner. They cared for their masters white children as if they were their own. They felt a deep pride in their work. Elite whites also made the argument that because some slaves continued to serve their masters throughout the Civil War, even following them into battle, it proved that slaves did not desire freedom and were content in their current

³¹ Hillyer, "Relics of Reconciliation," 50.

³² Hillyer, Reiko. "Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South". *The Public Historian* 33(2011), 37.

³³ Hillyer, "Relics of Reconciliation," 52.

position. Through these descriptions, white Southerners created an image of a natural and idyllic hierarchy of the races.

At the heart of this imagined natural hierarchy is the faithful slave. As simple, loyal, and content, the faithful slave is the most fundamental expression of white Southern racial ideals. They represent both the ideal and the only acceptable form of black behavior in Southern society. Amongst this broad trope, the Mammy had the most prominent presence in the Lost Cause narrative and in public sculpture. The Black Mammy represented the most acceptable version of blacks amongst plantation life. These women counter many arguments of the cruelty of slavery. They are household slaves whose tasks are to care for white children and the household, work which is often depicted as less brutal than field work. Additionally, household slaves often had more responsibilities and a longer lifespan at the plantation, leading to a depiction of them feeling pride in their work and affection for their master and his family. The Mammy is also an explicitly asexual figure, which serves as a counter to the history of sexual violence between master and slave. The Mammy is always depicted as homely. She is older and heavier with any femininity concealed by the iconic bandana worn over her hair. The idea that the Mammy cared for the white children of the plantation *as if* they were her children, implicitly denied that they in fact *were* her children. This distinction obscures the common occurrence of slaves bearing their master's children.

The idea of a natural racial hierarchy of white supremacy and black contentment made the legacy of Southern slavery less damaging, but it also helped to solidify contemporary racial hierarchies still very much alive in the South. The image of slavery as a benign institution justified the Jim Crow order which had been enacted throughout the South.³⁴ If blacks were

³⁴ Hillyer, "Relics of Reconciliation," 51.

happy and cared for under the structure of slavery, Jim Crow served as a logical continuation of that humane system. The image of a loyal slave and mammy provided a welcome alternative for whites throughout the country who were frustrated with race issues in the early twentieth century. In addition, this idealized narrative of slavery provided Northerners an alternative model for a multiracial society. Race riots, labor disputes, and urban unrest made white Americans nostalgic for an idealized racial past in which the “Negro Problem” was solved through white paternalism. They readily accepted the Lost Cause conception of slavery as evidence of a lost racial harmony. The contrast between narratives of happy and obedient slaves and free blacks who were increasingly depicted as freeloaders, murderers, and rapists, proved to many whites just how much society had been degraded since emancipation. Media stories and public fear about blacks committing violent crime, especially upon white women, articulated the white Southerners fears about the destruction of the racial order.³⁵ The contrast between the loyal slave of the Old South and the images of murderous free blacks highlighted what had been lost in Reconstruction and gave white Southerners fuel to advocate for its destruction.

This critique was essential because many white Southerners viewed Reconstruction as an egregious offense against the Southern way of life which was leading to the destruction of social order, as well as serving as a continual reminder of military defeat. Southerners harshly rejected Reconstruction. They viewed the presence of Northern troops and the enforcement of black civil rights as a direct threat to the social hierarchies which enforced white elite power as well as reminder of the defeat and devastation of the Civil War. The federal government recognized that the two goals of reconciliation and racial justice could not be simultaneously realized. If the federal government were to continue forcibly upholding black rights, the sectional scars of the

³⁵ Hillyer, “Relics of Reconciliation,” 52.

Civil War would never heal. So by 1872 efforts at Reconstruction were largely abandoned in favor of sectional *white* reconciliation. While earlier the North had been invested in upholding Southern blacks' newfound civic, economic, and political rights, the federal government now turned a blind eye to the plight of newly-freed blacks.

The shift in national mission were far reaching and affected legal, social, and commemorative structures. By 1892, the United States Supreme Court case of Plessy v. Ferguson decided that "separate, but equal" was the doctrine of the country.³⁶ This doctrine signified a formal segregation of the country's public spaces as well its collective memory. As Reconstruction came to an end, blacks lost the little civic power they had cultivated. Whites suppressed their Emancipation Day parades through violence and political action, thereby erasing the most significant threat to Southern white historical memory.³⁷ In its place, the UDC and other commemorative organizations set out to rebuild a positive image of the Confederacy through monuments and museums. While literature, rhetoric, and textbooks helped to craft a romanticized image of the Old South, public, permanent commemoration formalized the ideology of the Lost Cause thereby solidifying this version of collective memory for posterity.

The transition from Reconstruction to Reconciliation required a shift in regional and national depictions of slavery, emancipation, and the Civil War. Southern whites demanded that potentially controversial subjects related to the war be avoided in favor of extolling martial valor and sacrifice. Slavery, emancipation, and freed blacks had little space in the Southern commemorative landscape and were erased from the memory of the Civil War. Slavery was eventually reincorporated but only on terms which characterized the Antebellum South

³⁶ Krowl, Michelle. "In the Spirit of Fraternity": The United States Government and the Burial of Confederate Dead at the Arlington National Cemetery, 1864-1914." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 111(2003): 176.

³⁷ Clark, "Emancipation Day Celebrations," 125

positively: as a loyal slave and Mammy who were above all obedient, content, and adoring of their white masters. While Southern commemorative organizations never advocated for a return to slavery, they understood its pivotal role in formulating an idealized past in which racial hierarchy created order and white supremacy. Slavery was still avoided in the history of the Civil War itself, but a fantasy of it was presented as the antebellum way of life. Slaves now had a role in Lost Cause history, but only in confirming and supporting the ideals of the Old South.

The association of slavery with the Mammy image and the creation of the Lost Cause narrative more generally did not occur organically, but was an intentional shaping of collective memory forged by stakeholders which Lori Holyfield and Clifford Becham call “memory brokers.”³⁸ At the turn of the century, some of the most powerful memory brokers of Southern history were elite white women’s organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy and other “Southern Heritage” organizations. These groups were critical in solidifying the Lost Cause as the dominate narrative told in museums and memorials throughout the American South until the Civil Rights movement, with some variation. In fact, this narrative was so powerful that it successfully altered national interpretations of the Civil War, as is evidenced by the attempted National Mammy Memorials and the Confederate Memorial at the Arlington Cemetery.

Initially, these organizations erected monuments in cemeteries and other burial sites, but as time moved on they became more focused on the future of the South and a refocused their commemorative efforts on public civic spaces. White elites recognized the power of monuments to dictate historical memory and control power dynamics, and used them accordingly to both erase and glorify the presence of slaves in their history. Around the turn of the century, sites of public memory transitioned to the more central and political arenas of courthouse lawns and

³⁸ Holyfield and Becham, “Memory Brokers,” 439.

town squares, reflecting their role in shaping political authority in the present, rather than merely reflecting the past.³⁹



Figure 1 The Faithful Slave Memorial in Fort Mill South Carolina. Wallace-Sanders, Kimberley, *Mammy Figure Engraved of Faithful Slave Memorial in Fort Mill, S.C. June 15, 2009*. *Southern Memory, Southern Monuments, and the Subversive Black Mammy*, Emory University.

The Mammy had long been a staple of Southern literature, advertising, and mythology, but at the turn of the century there was an increased interest in depicting the Mammy in monumental form and thus solidifying her as the official image of slavery. Historical reenactments, museum images, and statues were erected to these child-like fabrications of slaves. The United Daughters of the Confederate was the main group leading the effort to erect a Mammy memorial. Smaller local memorials to the Mammy had already been built, such as the “Faithful Slave

Monument” in Fort Mill South Carolina, which was built in 1895 for the slaves who “had the fidelity to stay home during the years of the war.”⁴⁰ But the UDC now had more ambitious plans to erect a monument to the Mammy on a national platform, which would have the ability to permanently install the Lost Cause memory of slavery onto the National Mall.

³⁹ Bishir, Catherine W.. “Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past in Raleigh and Wilmington, NC 1885-15,” *Southern Cultures Inaugural Issues* (1993):143.

⁴⁰Murray, Henry Morris, *Emancipation and the Freed in American Sculpture*. Washington, D.C., Self-published, 1916, 118.

In 1904, when Mrs. G. Gilliland Aston proposed that instead of a monument to Southern women, the UDC should focus its efforts on erecting a memorial to “faithful slaves”, it was met with skepticism and dismissed.⁴¹ Critics responded that, “this is not the time for erecting monuments to the old slave-if there ever will be a time” and went on to focus on the narrative of black’s predatory sexuality.⁴² At this time the UDC still believed that complete absence from the historical narrative as well as the everyday was the only appropriate place for black life. However, others saw the usefulness in the depiction of a servile and loyal slave. However, Mary Solari, another UDC member, believe that a monument of this nature could, “tell the story to coming generations that cannot be taught the lesson of self-sacrifice and devotion of the slave another way.”⁴³ This statement reflects a belief in beneficial role of slavery to educate blacks in proper behavior and social standing.

The UDC understood that memorials had the ability to do more than simply ennoble the past, but could also create contemporary social structures that enforced white supremacy. The National Mammy Monument, if constructed, had the ability to edify a certain role for blacks in American life, in both a historical and contemporary sense. As the most prominent and authoritative display of blacks in a public space, the Mammy became representative of the entire black population. In edifying an image of racial hierarchy, domesticity, and Southern life, this proposed monument dictated the limits of black citizenship as well as everyday black life. This memorial represented a specific racial order in which blacks engaged in domestic work in order to support those who did have a civic function: whites, especially white women. By chaining black women to domesticity, white women could appear more fully citizens engaged in public

⁴¹ McElya, “Commemorating the Color Line,” 205.

⁴² McElya, “Commemorating the Color Line,” 206.

⁴³ McElya, “Commemorating the Color Line,” 207.

life.⁴⁴ The exclusion of black men from national recognition further emphasized the message of submissiveness and inferiority, as well as excluded blacks from any appropriate presence in American civic life. If built, the messages implicit in the National Mammy Memorial would become the official history of the United States. The UDC's fantasized racial past would become the authoritative narrative of slavery. Its depiction of black life would come to be the only appropriate means for black's to exist in the United States. Any contrasting historical narratives would now be viewed as illegitimate. The Lost Cause history would now be set in stone. By the 1920s, the South as well as the nation at large was ready for a National Mammy Memorial. Nationwide race riots, the Great Migration, and growing black political power caused



Figure 2 Updated Design for the mammy memorial with sculptor Ulric Dunbar. "A Disgraceful Statue," *Chicago Defender*, July, 14, 1923. From McElya, "Commemorating the Color Line," 210.

anxiety in whites.⁴⁵ Amidst this climate, the United Daughters of the Confederate offered an alternative vision of race relations with the Mammy figure. However instead of the casual depictions of Mammy in advertising, literature, and entertainment, their efforts to memorialize this figure of black servility and domesticity turned to the national public landscape. The UDC sought to make the Mammy the official depiction of blacks in national life by creating a National Mammy Monument in Washington, D.C. In 1923, The Senate passed a land grant for the National Mammy Memorial.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ McElya, "Commemorating the Color Line," 211.

⁴⁵ McElya, "Commemorating the Color Line," 208.

⁴⁶ McElya, *Clinging to Mammy*, 117.

Despite its successful passage in the Senate, the proposed National Mammy Memorial elicited an outcry from black press and activist organizations. These critics viewed the monument as not only obscuring the true violence of slavery, but condoning the contemporary violence against blacks. By erecting a monument to appropriate black behavior, any black people who differed from this representation were now deviant and dangerous to American society. Therefore, lynching and other forms of racial oppression were due punishments and necessary in order to restore “the order of things.”⁴⁷ Ultimately, efforts to erect a National Mammy Monument failed to pass the House of Representatives and the plot of land set out for her remained empty. However, the Mammy did not fade from commemorative consciousness.



Figure 3 Arlington Confederate Monument, Northeastern Frieze of Mammy. Sculpture by Moses Ezekiel. From Wikimedia Commons, user Tom1965

⁴⁷ McElya, *Clinging to Mammy*, 154.

While the National Mammy Monument was never constructed on the National Mall, the United Daughters of the Confederate successfully erected her image and message of servility in the Arlington Cemetery with the Confederate Monument where it continues to be honored annually by the President.⁴⁸ The image of the Mammy in the Arlington Cemetery was part of a larger gesture of sectional reconciliation in which President William McKinley promised Southerners that the Federal government would begin to care for the graves of Southern soldiers in the North. The graves of Southern soldiers had before now been cared for by private individuals or abandoned to a state of disrepair.⁴⁹ McKinley's decision meant that 267 soldiers would now be relocated and buried in the Arlington National Cemetery. But this decision indicated much more than those graves, it suggested that the nation was ready to view Southern soldiers and their sacrifice as equal to that of Northern soldiers. The moral center of the Civil War was fading from national memory and being replaced with the Lost Cause narrative of a faultless conflict with noble sacrifices on both sides

Immediately, Lost Cause organizations started advocating for a memorial fitting to this moment of "fraternal love."⁵⁰ A monument would allow white Southerners to define more exactly what this act of recognition of Southern loss meant on a highly-visible, national stage. The UDC fundraised for the monument and in 1914 it was unveiled. Moses Ezekiel, a Southerner and Lost Cause sympathist, was chosen to design and construct the monument.⁵¹ The end result was a 32 foot statue with metal reliefs depicting several allegorical female figures

⁴⁸ Cox, Karen, "The Confederate Monument at Arlington," in *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscape of Southern Memory*, eds. Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 149.

⁴⁹ Krowl, Michelle, "In the Spirit of Fraternity": The United States Government and the Burial of Confederate Dead at the Arlington National Cemetery" *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 2003: 111 (2). Virginia Historical Society: 151-86, 175

⁵⁰ Cox, "In the Spirit of Fraternity," 150.

⁵¹ Cox, "In the Spirit of Fraternity," 152.

representing the South, war, and death, different types of Confederate soldiers, and various scenes of how the war affected Southerners of all races and walks of life.

The relief contains two images of slaves: the Mammy, crying as a Confederate soldier hands her his child as he prepares to leave for war, as well as a young slave accompanying his master to battle, which the UDC identified as, "a faithful Negro body-servant following his young master."⁵² The two black figures in the Confederate Monument Arlington are placed in a role of service and submission to white Southerners as well as the Confederate cause. The black woman must care for a child that is not her own while its father goes off to fight in a war which, if successful, will maintain her enslavement. The black boy follows his white master, signifying that he is at once subservient but also choosing to participate in the Confederate cause. While slavery had been abolished for almost 50 years when this monument was erected, it preserves an image of blacks as perpetually and positively enslaved. The implications of these representations are extremely troubling for free blacks in the South, as well as the entire United States. By characterizing slavery as a positive past for blacks, these images implicitly critique and deny black emancipation.



Figure 4 Relief from the Arlington Confederate Monument of a black man marching with white troops. Sculptor Moses Ezekiel. Photo by Bob Crowell.

This monument is particularly pernicious because of its location at the Arlington National Cemetery. The national platform serves as a leveling ground for Confederate and Union soldiers who lost their lives and are buried there, because by burying them in a national cemetery it is implied that they all fought and died for a

⁵² Loewen, James and Edward Sebesta, eds, "The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader," (University Press of Mississippi: 2010) 374.

national cause. More specifically, the Confederate Monument has become a site of national commemoration which presidents have honored through sending a wreath annually since Woodrow Wilson.⁵³ In a 2009 letter, historians James Lowen and Edward Sebasta, along with a collection of other signers, urged President Obama to discontinue this practice of honoring the Confederate Monument.⁵⁴ This letter argued that, “the monument was intended to legitimize secession and the principles of the Confederacy and glorify the Confederacy. It isn’t just a remembrance of the dead... It was also intended as a symbol of white nationalism, portrayed in opposition to the multiracial democracy of Reconstruction, and a celebration of the re-establishment of white supremacy in the former slave states by former Confederate soldiers.”⁵⁵ Not only were the origins of this monument motivated by harmful historical revisionism and racism, it has lent credence to those who maintain these viewpoints in the modern day. Ultimately, President Obama continued the tradition of honoring the Arlington Confederate Monument, articulating how permanent ideas become once publicly memorialized and how difficult it is to contest the messages they contain, no matter how harmful.⁵⁶

The Rise of Heritage Tourism and the Antebellum Aesthetic 1920-1950

By the 1920s, heritage tourism became a significant shaper of Southern historical memory. With the rise of the automobile, Northern tourists began visiting the South *en masse* and tourism became a concern for businesses as well as Southern policymakers. In response, memorials and museums became sites which were focused on entertaining as much as edifying a

⁵³ Loewen, James and Edward Sebasta, “Dear President Obama: Please Don’t Honor the Arlington Confederate Monument” <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/85884#sthash.CJ8jRyyA.dpuf>.

⁵⁴ Loewen and Sebasta, “Dear President Obama.”

⁵⁵ Loewen and Sebasta, “Dear President Obama.”

⁵⁶ Korn, Majorie, “Obama will observe Confederate Memorial tradition despite petition.” Dallas Morning News, 2009.

Southern past. The result was a celebratory commemorative which emphasized the charm of southern architecture, landscape, and antebellum history. Once again, elite women's organization served an essential role and formulated a Southern historical memory.⁵⁷ The central focus of the tourism imagery was on a "Southern aesthetic" which had been carefully constructed through architecture, femininity, and domestic imagery. Slavery served as a foil for this aesthetic.⁵⁸ By depicting slavery through black laborers as well as Mammies, white civilization and white femininity was elevated in contrast to the primitivism of labor and the crudeness of the Mammy.⁵⁹ Plantation houses were the dominate focus of preservations efforts in this period. By centering the image of Southern heritage in the space of the home, a traditionally female domain, elite white women solidified their own importance in Southern history. Additionally, by preserving these mansions over the dwellings of poor whites or free and enslaved blacks, preservationists "infused the city's elegant albeit dilapidated mansions with a concept of history and of white privilege that encourage personal and familial memorialization as well as a sanitization of the violent reality of slave society's past."⁶⁰ The preservations and memorialization efforts of this era were distinctive form the Lost Cause narrative of earlier decades. The Southern white women behind most of this commemoration were not focused on "refighting the Civil War", but rather on cultivating a Southern aesthetic which reflected a harmonious, racially ordered antebellum past which placed white femininity at its center. In this

⁵⁷ Yuhl, Stephanie, "Rich and Tender Remembering," in *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscape of Southern Memory*, eds. Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 230.

⁵⁸ Brundage, *Where These Memories Grow*, 10.

⁵⁹ Yuhl, "Rich and Tender Remembering," 229.

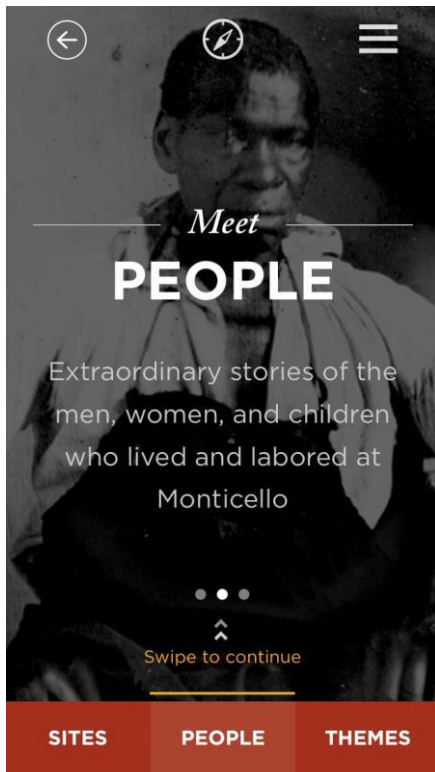
⁶⁰ Yuhl, "Rich and Tender Remembering," 242.

way, elite white Southern women created a profitable, public image which also emphasized their social status and racial hierarchies.⁶¹

In 2002, Jennifer Eichstedt, a sociology professor at Humboldt State University, and Stephen Small, an African American studies professor at University of California conducted an investigation of 122 historic plantation museums across the South and found that the celebratory, white narrative of the 1920s continued to be displayed in a majority of the sites they visited. They identified four different representational strategies that the sites used when depicting slavery and blacks, both free and enslaved, which were "symbolic annihilation and erasure," "Trivialization and deflection," "Segregation and marginalization of knowledge," and "relative incorporation."⁶² Many of these criticisms stem from the aesthetic construction of the Antebellum South forged in the 1920s are continued in contemporary historic plantations which emphasize decorative arts, such as furniture, silverware, textiles, in house. Plantation museums continue to be notoriously focused on "authentic" objects with traceable provenances, which

⁶¹ Yuhl, "Rich and Tender Remembering," 229.

⁶² Eichstedt, Jennifer and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*, Washington, DC, and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002, 10.



precludes many artifacts of slave life, which is notoriously unpreserved, from being included in tradition collections and displays.⁶³

Figure 5 Slavery at Monticello App from Monticello Website

Applying this set of criticism to, the historic plantation of Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, reveals the continuing difficulty of integrating slavery into the plantation museum which was designed to enforce notions of white supremacy and an idealized Antebellum past. Thomas Jefferson's primary slave plantation was opened as a museum in 1923 by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, amongst the wave of Southern heritage tourism of the 1920s. It was heralded for the beauty of its architecture and

gardens but recently the museum has been called to engage with its legacy of slavery.⁶⁴

Monticello has attempted have been made to overcome the deficit of material culture by depicting slave life through the less traditional mediums of "visual and documentary materials, audio programs, or staged performances rather than objects."⁶⁵ Monticello has also used excavation sites and recreated several slave quarters in order to give visitors a physical sense of how and where slaves lived at the plantations. In addition to these sites, Monticello created a

⁶³ Singleton, Theresa A.. "Facing the Challenges of a Public African-American Archaeology," *Historical Archaeology* 31 (3), 1997: 146.

⁶⁴ www.monticello.org

⁶⁵ Singleton, "Facing the Challenges of a Public African-American Archaeology," 147.

mobile app entitled “Slavery at Monticello.” This app is free to download and allows visitors to hear stories, meet individual slaves, and learn about slave activities around the property which are not told in the traditional tour.⁶⁶

With these advancements, African-American Archaeologist Theresa Singleton argues that the lack of traditional collections related to slave history are no longer a legitimate obstacle. However, the findings of Eichstedt and Small’s study argue otherwise. Their findings suggest that differences in presentation cause the public to interpret the validity and centrality of slave and black history as less so than better documented white history. White history is often presented more formally and black history is presented non-traditionally, leading viewers to not give it the same credibility.⁶⁷

In addition, while these tools provide Monticello with the opportunity to create a more multi-vocal historical site where the narrative of slave and master can be told side by side, but up to this point virtual exhibition tools have largely been used to create fragmented historical spaces. The physical spaces of plantation museum remain heavily focused on the activities of the white elite which occupied them while continuing to minimize and whitewash the experience of slaves on the plantation. Slavery is still maintained as separate from a more general history. Visitors must choose to take the tour or download the app on the history of slavery or they will encounter little about it. The result is that visitors who are not interested in slavery can continue to ignore its presence in the Southern past.

⁶⁶ National Public Radio, “An App Tells Painful Stories of Slaves at Monticello’s Mulberry Row,” 2015.

⁶⁷ Singleton, “Facing the Challenges of a Public African-American Archeology,” 151.

Civil Rights Movements and the 1960s

The production of historical memory is directly linked to the political and social power of a certain group, and their subsequent ability to produce monuments and sites of memory which enforce their version of the past. While Southern blacks had their own understanding of the past which they illustrated through various activities and organizations, such as black churches, schools, and civic groups as well as parades, Emancipation Day celebrations and oral histories, these narratives were largely unseen by the white population and did not formally confront white versions of the Confederate past. It was not until the 1970s with the advances of the Civil Rights era, that Southern blacks finally gained the political capital required to advocate for a more inclusive Southern history, one which included slavery and emancipation.⁶⁸The groundwork laid by the Civil Rights Movement paved the way for the political and economic control of the South to finally become meaningfully integrated by the 1970s. White and black businessman and politicians were eager to revitalize Southern urban centers and viewed tourism as way to do so. They believed that a modernized, more inclusive historic landscape would be a useful tool to attract diverse visitors.

The City of Richmond attempted this strategy when an alliance of black and white city leaders attempted to reinvigorate the city's heritage tourism by incorporating more black history. Richmond is largely considered the epicenter of the Lost Cause narrative and city leaders recognized its importance to their heritage tourism industry. Nonetheless, they believed that they could incorporate more black history without erasing its Confederate landmarks. They decided that the best way to attract new visitors would be to combine Civil Rights history and the Lost Cause narrative into one shared civic space. So in 1993, Richmond erected statue honoring

⁶⁸ Brundage, *Where These Memories Grow*, 11.

locally-raised black tennis star and civil rights activist Arthur Ashe on Monument Row. In doing this, city planners hoped that they could attract both white and black visitors as well as promote racial healing.⁶⁹ They did not foresee the controversy which would arise.



Figure 6 Statue of Tennis Player and Civil Rights Activist Arthur Ashe on Monument Row in Richmond, VA. Photo by Phil Raggan from Richmond.com

While the people of Richmond mainly agreed that they wished to create more black commemorative spaces, the decision to build the statue on Monument Row caused outrage because it would share a space with central figures from the Confederacy.⁷⁰ Until this point, Monument Row had been lined exclusively with statues

of Confederate heroes including J.E.B. Stuart, Jefferson Davis, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, Matthew Fontaine Maury, and Robert E. Lee. It was also in a dominantly white residential area filled with Colonial Revival style mansions, designed to reference the Antebellum South. The statue of Arthur Ashe ruptured the previously white, Confederate space previously defined on Monument Row. He was the only black figure on Monument Row as well as the only figure not involved with the Civil War. There was not analysis of his role in relation to the Confederate figures which surrounded him. Both black Richmond residents and white commemorative organization were unsatisfied with this attempt at integration. For white Southern heritage groups, the inclusion of slavery in spaces which have traditionally been celebratory of an idealized Southern past is an affront to Southern identity. Set amongst a landscape where Confederate statues and flags are still the dominant image, black critics felt that this effort was

⁶⁹ McGraw and Tyler, "Southern Comfort Levels," 157.

⁷⁰ McGraw and Tyler, "Southern Comfort Levels," 159.

not sincere and do not make sense in the context of the prevailing Lost Cause narrative. The debate sparked by the addition of Arthur Ashe serves as evidence that Southern black history couldn't be simply added to a dominantly Lost Cause historical landscape without a serious reevaluation of Southern history.⁷¹

The role of tourism in promoting depictions of slavery in museums and memorials also creates a conflict in which these portrayals must fulfill an entertainment as well as an educational role. The uncomfortable proximity of these two tasks led to nationwide controversy over a living history reenactment of a slave auction at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. Many criticized Colonial Williamsburg capacity to display this history as an institution primarily designed to celebrate early American history and entertain white audiences.⁷²Critic Jack Gravely believed Colonial Williamsburg was an inappropriate site for a slave auction reenactment because, "everything about Colonial Williamsburg is about the oppression of my people."⁷³ This quote highlights that the problem of representing slavery may be more deeply seated and slow to correct than expected. A study by James Horton and Spencer Crew showed that "museums with the most successful public programs in African-American history had a long term commitment to developing African American public programs."⁷⁴This suggests that superficial gestures toward black audiences by museums will not be successful and raises the question if slavery can and should be depicted whenever applicable.

In recent decades many Southern cities have created new monuments and museums which focus on Black Southerners and the Civil Rights Movement. The most notable examples

⁷¹ McGraw and Tyler, "Southern Comfort Levels," 159-160.

⁷² Woolfork, Lisa, *Embodying American Slavery in Contemporary Culture*. University of Illinois Press, 2008, 116-117.

⁷³ Krutko, Erin. "Colonial Williamsburg's slave auction re-enactment: controversy, African American history and public memory," 2003, 22,

⁷⁴Singleton, "Facing the Challenges of a Public African-American Archeology," 148.

are the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. These sites represent a significant change for the Southern commemorative landscape which had once been exclusively white. However, they are problematic within the larger context of public history which continues to celebrate the Lost Cause.

This is because Civil Rights commemorations are in no way conversant with the Lost Cause. They focus on a time period a century later and are therefore safely disassociated from slavery and the Civil War. Civil Rights sites and Lost Cause sites tell conflicting histories directed at distinct audiences and occupy separate physical spaces. The visitors and subject matter of Southern public history sites remain segregated along racial lines, with black visitors gravitating towards Civil Rights museums and white visitors attending Civil War battle sites and plantations. Vinitzky-Seroussi calls these type of sites “fragmented,” because they consist of “multiple times and spaces in which different discourses of the past are aimed at disparate audiences.”⁷⁵ The result of the fragmented Southern commemorative landscape is a region which is unable to confront itself. It is only when a site like Monument Row attempts to display both narratives side-by-side that the glaring contradictions of Southern historical consciousness become obvious and collapse beneath their own internal weakness.

The modern South’s attempts to incorporate black history with the Lost Cause narrative have ultimately been unsuccessful because the fundamental issue of slavery was never fully addressed. The Lost Cause narrative, though now recognized as a general Southern identity, was conceived as an affirmation of white supremacy which sidelined the black Southerner to an aesthetic and functional role. Though this is not a readily acknowledged tenet of the Lost Cause,

⁷⁵ Holyfield and Becham, “Memory Brokers,” 439.

it is a historical heritage which is premised on slaveholding and racial inequality. Until the South can recognize and reject this as wrong, it will be impossible to confront slavery or the racial tensions which have arisen from its legacy. While this analysis may seem pessimistic, it suggests that engaging with slavery may be the central first step towards integrating the Southern past and, through it, Southern society. Southern history has always contained both black and white narratives and they are more connected than the current commemorative climate suggests. By uniting these pasts in museums and monuments, the divisions so entrenched in Southern society might begin to fade.

Chapter 2: Imaging Emancipation and Discovering Slavery in the North

The reminders of slavery in the South are present in plantations, slave quarters, and slave markets even if monuments and museums remain silent. However, slavery is rarely as readily visible in the North. Most of the North's traditional and most well-known sites dedicated to slavery focus on the fight against it, highlighting the legacy of abolitionism, the Union's victorious and moral Civil War campaign, and the lives of free blacks. This chapter will analyze depictions of the North as a force of antislavery, exploring the creation and exhibition of this mythology since gradual emancipation. As scholarship, activism, and archaeological efforts have increased, the lengthy presence of slaves in the "free" North and the economic importance of slave-production long after Northern emancipation have entered public consciousness and posed challenges to the Northern identity and museums tasked with engaging in these complexities.

Since the 1990s, depictions of slavery in the American North have engaged in a more critical self-reflection of Northern participation in slavery and the systems and institutions that supported it. Two principal types of exhibitions stem from this reckoning. The first examines the North's economic ties to the slave trade and slave-produced products and the benefits which came from slavery: several universities and financial institutions researched their financial ties to slavery and made gestures of public reconciliation through official statements and memorials.⁷⁶ The second type of exhibition focuses on slavery and slave lives in the North which been forced into public consciousness by archeological discoveries, revealing a deeper history of slavery than many Northerners were aware existed before the late twentieth century. Through these two models of commemorating slavery, the North has begun to address its involvement with slavery in a painful but honest manner which provides hope for the ability of public history

⁷⁶ Clarke, Max, and Gary Alan Fine, "'A' for Apology: slavery and the Collegiate Discourses of Remembrance—the Cases of Brown University and the University of Alabama". *History and Memory* 22 (2010): 82.

to confront painful pasts and through that create a space for conversation and maybe even healing.

While there is obvious conflict between representations of slavery and representations of an idealized *white* Southern heritage, the relationship between the North and slavery is commonly seen as a victorious moral narrative. However, slavery was never an exclusively Southern enterprise. Slavery's duration and importance in the North was significant to both the economic and political development of the region. In the past decade, several historians have begun studying the role of slavery in North. Among these scholars is Joanne Pope Melish, who argues that a distinctive New England nationalism was created by reimagining the region as historically free in order to present the North as morally and politically superior to the South.⁷⁷ Melish takes a deeper look into slavery in New England and responds to prevalent claims that slavery was unnecessary, more benevolent, and extremely sparse and short-lived in New England. On the contrary, she demonstrates that slaves were present in New England since its earliest days as a colonial society. The daily life of enslaved people in New England did not fit the image of plantation slavery common decades later in the South, but they performed vital tasks in the household and various industries such as construction, lumber, and trade work. In addition to this, the trade in African bodies and products of slave labor were instrumental in creating the economy of New England. Slavery was a truly a national enterprise.⁷⁸

Emancipation in the North is a less clear-cut issue than the victorious Emancipation Proclamation freeing enslaved people in the South. The process of gradual emancipation throughout the North has muddled the true end date of slavery in the region. While every Northern state had some form of emancipation laws on the books by 1804, slavery

⁷⁷ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 3.

⁷⁸ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 7.

continued in many abbreviated forms until as late as the 1850s.⁷⁹ Through age-based exemptions and other loopholes, the lives of many “emancipated” persons changed very minimally. Melish argues that gradual emancipation was instrumental in creating a unique racial ideology and relationship between slavery and New England.⁸⁰

After gradual emancipation, New England made a concerted effort to distance itself from its slave past in order to establish itself as distinctive and morally superior to a South degraded by slavery. Historical amnesia about slavery also helped later New England to cement racial hierarchies threatened with the process of gradual emancipation by positioning blacks there as “permanent strangers” who could never claim full citizenship and did not belong in the region.⁸¹ This effort began before the Civil War and has characterized the historical narrative of slavery in the North ever since. The result was that New England was able to successfully dissociate themselves from slavery and, in doing so, with black people as a whole. Melish’s arguments suggest that slavery is not only an uncomfortable topic for the North, but it undermines many aspects of Northern identity. Public recognition that the North has not always rejected slavery poses a significant threat to New England’s self-conception as the birth place of liberty and the moral leader of the United States.

Within this theoretical context, this chapter will analyze how public commemorations of slavery have helped create and subsequently challenge the regional identity of the North. Through images of Lincoln, early monument building condensed slavery to the moment of emancipation and into a white Northern figure. Blacks were incorporated later as kneeling slaves about to be freed. Eventually, Black soldiers entered the commemorative landscape, giving them

⁷⁹ <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/freedom/history.html>

⁸⁰ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 88.

⁸¹ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 3.

an active role in the battle toward emancipation, but underlying none of the ways in which the North had failed to fight for them for centuries prior. For the next century, the North only acknowledged the ways in which it had fought against slavery in order to highlight its moral superiority to the South and therefore reinforce its national authority. In recent decades, exhibits and monuments have been created which engage with the North's slave past. These depictions are incomplete and do not demand the recreation of Northern regional identity, but in acknowledging a Northern slave past they create the possibility of true Black incorporation into the Northern past and present.

Lincoln the Emancipator: Depicting Northern Morality through the White Savior

Emancipation was an abstract concept for most Northern white abolitionists. It represented a moral progression from a state of national sin to a redemption in which black bodies functioned as little more than allegory. However, during Reconstruction, the symbolic imagery of emancipation encountered the physical reality of free blacks. The public was not prepared to embrace emancipation in the literal sense. That reality entailed more than a moral freedom from evil, but included the freedom, potentially even the citizenship, of blacks.

The colonization movement was a popular expression of the desire of Northern society to rid American society of free Blacks. This movement, most powerfully represented by the American Colonization Society, advocated for and fundraised to send free blacks back to Africa. The prominence of colonization movements in the North, even among former abolitionists,



Figure 7: Henry Kirke Brown Statue of Lincoln in Brooklyn, NY. From Robert Dennis Collection, New York Public Library

indicated the degree to which white Northerners interpreted a slave free society as a black free society.

The abstract ideology of emancipation expressed itself materially through monuments in public spaces across the North. In the decades following the war, the North acknowledged emancipation as the central purpose of the war in public commemoration. Ideas

about black freedom and what it

entailed were not decided by the Civil War, however, and remained highly controversial. In order to articulate the moral victory of emancipation without engaging with the messier business of freedom for Black Americans, Northern civic leaders created monuments excluding black figures. Emancipation was commemorated instead through white heroes and emancipators, particularly Abraham Lincoln. The widespread appeal of Lincoln as an emancipator as well as national conciliator as reflected in a wave of monumental images in the 1870's and '80's across the North and West. The most common early form of Lincoln monuments depicted Lincoln alone, often thinking about or writing the Emancipation Proclamation. Such a monument was constructed in 1869 in Prospect Park in Brooklyn, NY. In this statue Lincoln presents the image of a powerful and learned civic leader. The figure hold a scroll engraved with the Emancipation Proclamation and points to the words, "forever free."

Historian Kirk Savage notes the ideological effect of representing the idea of freedom within Lincoln and Lincoln alone. He argues that images of Lincoln create the impression that the process of emancipation occurred within the lifetime and because of the efforts of one man. This representation not only denies the efforts of generations of slaves and free blacks in their own emancipation but features blacks only as an abstract and visually unrepresented beneficiaries of emancipation. They are merely incidentals in the war of ideals fought by the North. Blacks are rendered unnecessary subjects of their own emancipation in favor of a more philosophical, abstract idea of the word.

Monuments of Lincoln generally depict emancipation as a finished process. Locating emancipation in a historical and literal figure locates it in the past. The problem with this type of depiction is that the nature of Black freedom remained extremely fragile for decades after the Civil War. As the Civil Rights movement would make clear a century later, emancipation did not mean equality or even citizenship for Black Americans. While Black leaders were realizing that the end of slavery marked the beginning of struggle toward true freedom, white Americans were closing the door on both progress toward racial equality and historical reflection on the continuing effects of slavery. I am not arguing that progress was halted due to Lincoln monuments, but rather these monuments reflected a popular sentiment of fatigue concerning race and edified a certain marker of progress for posterity. Monument building provided a powerful way for politicians and the public to symbolically mark a task accomplished, in order to pave the way for *national* reconciliation.



Figure 8 Thomas Ball Freedman's Memorial, Washington D.C. from American History Project

Slaves were eventually incorporated to Lincoln monuments, but in a way which articulated a clear racial hierarchy. The most famous of these statues is the Freedman's Memorial in Washington D.C. erected in 1876. This statue depicts Abraham Lincoln standing over and looking down at a kneeling freed slave, who holds his broken chain. Lincoln holds a copy of Emancipation Declaration and extends his other hand

above the freed slave. The two figures are depicted in starkly different ways. Lincoln is fully clothed and stands upright, making him double the height of the black figure. The black figure is naked except for a loincloth and he is crouched with one hand on the ground.

Although contemporary visitors may recognize the seated Lincoln of Lincoln Monument more than the image of Lincoln and the kneeling slave, the Freedman's Memorial was the original Lincoln memorial in Washington, D.C., therefore the first to articulate the *nation's* official memory of Lincoln and emancipation. The construction of this statue was a long and politically charged undertaking, and its development encapsulates many of the themes of representation, citizenship, and civic image which run throughout this essay.

The Freedman's Memorial was funded entirely by black donors, many of them former slaves. However, despite these pivotal financial contributions by Black Americans, the design

was approved and enacted by a white committee and artist, Thomas Ball. The all-white committee rejected designs by sculptors Harriet Hosmer and Clark Mills which entailed more intricate sculptural cycles which contained several black figures that moved from slavery to freedom. These multi-figure monuments might have offered a more complex and redemptive view of enslaved and free blacks, displaying the progression of black life in the United States. They were ultimately too expensive to be built.⁸² Black donors and leaders had little to no say in this decision-making process.

Instead, the design by Thomas Ball was selected because it contained only two figures, Lincoln and a freed slave, and was therefore less expensive to cast and told a more simple narrative. Ball made a few adjustments to the original design of the freed slave at the request of the committee and changed the figure from an idealized man to an individual freed slave, an actual man named Archer Alexander, and changed his hand to a fist in order to convey that the figure is breaking his own chains.⁸³ James Yeatman, the president of the Western Sanitary Commission tasked with selecting and erecting the monument, delighted in the changes, stating in a letter that the changes would, “bring the presentation nearer to the historical fact, by making the emancipated slave an agent in his own deliverance.”⁸⁴ The irony in this statement is that Archer Alexander was a former Missouri slave, meaning that Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation would have had no effect on his enslavement and while he is shown breaking his chains, the figure is able not rise from his knees into the full standing of a white man.⁸⁵ Asserting the monument as “historical fact” adds authenticity to a fabricated image. Savage rejects the

Commented [CN1]: And who was he?

Commented [CN2]: But that is important, right?

⁸² Savage, *Standing Solider*, 110.

⁸³ Savage, *Standing Solider*, 14.

⁸⁴ Savage, *Inaugural Ceremonies of the Freedman’s Memorial Monument to Abraham Lincoln* (St. Louis: Levinson & Blythe, 1876) 114.

⁸⁵ Savage, *Standing Solider*, 116.

changes made by the sponsors as meaningful, because the two narratives of the slave achieving his own freedom and a white man bestowing freedom upon him are contradictory. Ultimately, the fact that the black figure remains kneeling, naked, and shackled indicates him as less than a man.⁸⁶ While Lincoln alone conveys an erasure of the slave from the memory of emancipation, the Freedman's Memorial edifies a potentially more harmful image for Black Americans. In this image, the black man is made to kneel forever, never able to stand as a man in the eyes of his nation.

Frederick Douglass shared Savage's negative sentiments on the black figure which he revealed in his speech at the dedication of the Freedman's Memorial. His speech displayed a tension between Lincoln and Black Americans, complicating the meaning of Lincoln imagery. Douglass called Lincoln "preeminently the white man's president, entirely devoted to the welfare of the white man," and lists a series of decisions in which Lincoln failed to recognize black humanity, including the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act, the limited scope of the Emancipation Proclamation, and Lincoln's initial failure to allow black troops and subsequent failure to pay them equal wages as white soldiers.⁸⁷ Within this critique of Lincoln, Douglass calls attention to the service of "two hundred thousand of our dark and dusky people responding to the call of Abraham Lincoln, and with muskets on their shoulders, and eagles on their buttons, timing their high footsteps to liberty and union under the national flag," and in doing so places Blacks as active participants in the Civil War.⁸⁸ The image of black soldiers proudly fighting in the name of liberty and nationhood contrasts sharply with the image of blackness offered in the Monument. Douglass's soldiers are uniformed; Bell's slave is naked except for a loin cloth. His

⁸⁶ Savage, *Standing Solider*, 119.

⁸⁷ Douglass, Frederick, "Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln" (speech, Washington D.C. April 14, 1876), Teaching American History, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/oration-in-memory-of-abraham-lincoln/>.

⁸⁸ Douglass, Frederick, *Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln*

soldiers have muskets to fight for the end of slavery, whereas Bell's figure only has his bare hands and the benevolence of a white protector. The contrast between Douglass's black soldier and the image offered in the monument becomes even more conspicuous because the kneeling slave is never mentioned in Douglass's speech. Douglass' oration suggests that this monument is yet another statue of a lone Lincoln, rather than one of the only monumental representations of a black man in a public site.

Instead of calling attention to the Black figure in the monument, Douglass chooses to focus on the legacy he hopes this statue will create for the entire black race. While he emphasizes the pride he hopes subsequent generations will have in having erected such a monument, he concludes his speech on a more defensive note, stating, "When now it shall be said that the colored man is soulless, that he has no appreciation of benefits or benefactors; when the foul reproach of ingratitude is hurled at us, and it is attempted to scourge us beyond the range of human brotherhood, we may calmly point to the monument we have this day erected to the memory of Abraham Lincoln."⁸⁹ For Douglass, the Freedman's Monument is the ultimate lasting symbol of black gratitude, an essential key to black citizenship. Like the nearly-prostrated black figure receiving Lincoln's blessing, Douglass suggests that all Black Americans were aware that their status continued to depend on the benevolence of white society and was conditional on expressions of submission and appreciation. His statements connote resentment of the monument's depiction of Blackness but allude to the unfortunate reality it presented. Although he is free, the black man is still kneeling in American society.

Douglass' critique of the shortcomings of the Freedman's Memorial has been echoed since its creation, but it is worthwhile to consider the unique qualities of the monument and the

⁸⁹ Douglass, Frederick, "Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln."

development it indicates in public representations of slavery. Although the Freedman's Memorial depicts a paternalizing racial hierarchy, it features a Black figure, something no national monument had been able to do before. This development begs the question of why black bodies could appear prominently in monuments ten years after the Civil War, when they could not earlier. Savage does not fully consider the Freedman's Memorial the first national representation of a black figure, comparing it to Hosmer's and Mill's proposed design for the Freedman's Memorial, which featured a more complex and evolving image of the black slave becoming soldier.⁹⁰ He here argues that in the years immediately following the war emancipation was still ongoing, but was closed off and historicized by the Freedman's Memorial.⁹¹ I find this analysis flawed because it centers on monuments which were *not* built and thereby failed to enter the space of collective memory which commemoration constructs.

If the Freedman's Memorial is considered as the first formal national image of Black man, it reveals a powerful revival of the Northern antislavery narrative. This account positions Lincoln and, by extension, the white North, as the savior of African Americans as well as the nation. The black figure is freed but he is not able to fully become a man and his role as an American is not fundamentally reconsidered. This indicates that emancipation had not resulted in a new national vision of freedom, but had only rearticulated old abolitionist ideas about race and morality in a manner complimentary to the Union cause. In placing this monument on the National Mall, Lincoln and the kneeling slave became the official national image of the Civil War.

Despite the critique of Frederick Douglass and the absence of black voices from the decision-making process, black people's funding lent authenticity to this image and implied a

⁹⁰ Savage, 122

⁹¹ Savage, 128

certain degree of consent to the racial hierarchy it depicted. As a result, Ball's standing Lincoln and kneeling slave became the most commonly recognized image of emancipation. This image was recreated in Boston in 1879 and was featured on a 1940 stamp remembering emancipation.⁹² In this way, the image of Lincoln and the kneeling freed slave became the ubiquitous image of both slavery and Black freedom. Northern abolitionism was memorialized through the bodies of Lincoln and the emancipated slavery, thereby adjusting old racial and regional ideologies into a post-Civil War era. The Freedman's Memorial claimed the Civil War as a moral, Northern victory of which the Black man must be eternally grateful for and the South eternally ashamed. The story of the Freedman's Memorial illustrates the powerful way in which public commemoration often is the end, not the beginning of a conversation.

The Shaw Memorial: Emerging Black Agency

While the South was engaged in eliminating slavery from the narrative of the Civil War, the Shaw Memorial, dedicated in Boston, Massachusetts in 1884, reasserted the centrality of emancipation and the figure of the Black soldier. With its depictions of individualized black troops marching to fight for emancipation, the Shaw Memorial for the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment disrupted the conventions of Civil War commemoration. It combined the genre of great-officer monument, prevalent in the years immediately after the war, with the common-soldier monument, which had become popular with reconciliation. It resisted uniformity in its depictions of soldiers, and along with it the idea that every soldier shares the same cause and honor. Most notably, it depicted black soldiers. It was a military monument which rejected the inherent value of militarism, and instead focused on the civic values expressed through military service by Blacks in the Civil War.

⁹² Savage, 120

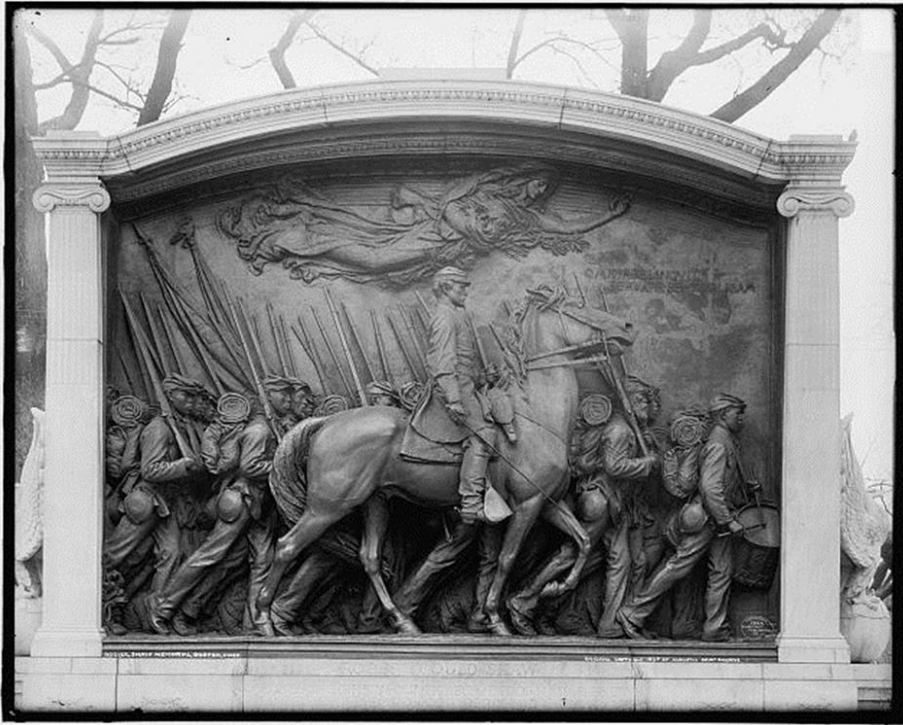


Figure 9 Shaw Memorial in Boston Commons

The nation, including the North, had altered its understanding of the Civil War since its conclusion in 1865. After the close of the Freeman's Bureau in 1872, the pretenses of racial equality were largely eliminated through Jim Crow legislation, widespread lynching, and disenfranchisement.⁹³ In 1896, just a year before the Shaw memorial's dedication, *Plessy v. Ferguson* decreed "separate but equal," thereby creating a formal system of racial apartheid across the nation. For an emergent population of free blacks, the promise of freedom fought for in the Civil War proved to be a still elusive ideal. Along with changing legal status of blacks, the

⁹³Blight, David, "The Shaw Memorial in the Landscape of Civil War Memory," in *Hope & Glory: Essays on the Legacy of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Regiment* eds. Martin H. Blatt et al (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 87.

landscape of memory on slavery and the Civil War had changed dramatically. The emancipation cause at the center of the war faded, or rather was erased, in favor of a reunited, white nation. Many prominent antislavery memory brokers such as Albion Turgee and Frederick Douglass fought against this re-characterization.⁹⁴ But by the 1890s, the landscape of commemoration seemed to suggest that regional reconciliation had led to the large-scale erasure of the matter of slavery from Civil War memory

However Boston resisted this narrative and instead depicted emancipation and Northern abolitionism in order to solidify a historical image of the North, and specifically Boston, as the “city upon a hill.” The idea of the city upon the hill, which originated in the sermons of John Winthrop, the Puritan leader of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, depicted Boston as a spiritual and moral example for the world.⁹⁵ Historian John Williams argues that this conception of New England continued to shape the region’s identity and expressed itself through abolitionism in the nineteenth century.⁹⁶ Abolitionists focused on New England’s history of antislavery efforts and linked them to the region’s Puritan forefathers, thereby incorporating antislavery into a longer narrative of civil disobedience for the sake of liberty which New England differentiated itself through.⁹⁷ This rhetoric elevated the North above the moral decay of the South, but several abolitionists also acknowledged that the stain of slavery tarnished the whole nation.⁹⁸ However,

⁹⁴ Blight, “For Something beyond the Battlefield,” 1157.

⁹⁵ Winthrop, John, “A Modell of Christian Charity,” 1630, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society (Boston, 1838).

⁹⁶ McWilliams, John, “New England’s Crisis and Cultural Memory: Literature, Politics, History, Religion 1620-1860, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 262.

⁹⁷ McWilliams, *New England’s Crisis*, 266.

⁹⁸ McWilliams, *New England’s Crisis*, 264.



Figure 10: William Lloyd Garrison Statue in the Boston Commons. Sculptor Olin Levi Warner. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

New England complicity with slavery lent urgency to emancipation which promised a means of regional redemption and fulfillment of a historical legacy.

Extending McWilliams analysis into the post-Civil War era, emancipation represented

the achievement of New England’s moral legacy. The region’s role in the Civil War, both militarily and ideologically, was powerful evidence for New England’s moral foresight and leadership. Monument building inserted abolitionists as well as Union soldiers into New England’s morally victorious historical legacy. Private donors began a series of campaigns to erect monuments to local abolitionists such as Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison between the years of 1874 and 1888.⁹⁹ These monuments, like the lone Lincoln Monument discussed earlier, used famous Bostonian abolitionists as a representation of Emancipation to the exclusion of blacks.

While the abolitionist monuments asserted Boston’s role in the antislavery efforts, they did not invoke antislavery as the cause and the ultimate success of the Civil War. Boston’s elites interesting in preserving the idea of the Civil War as a moral victory for the North turned to

⁹⁹ Brown, “Civic Monuments of the Civil War,” 138.

Shaw and the 54th Regiment as an ideal image of this ideology.¹⁰⁰ The Shaw Memorial dramatically rejected the prevalent national image of the Civil War as a faultless conflict fought over vague notions of honor. At a time when a majority of white Americans accepted the Civil War an inevitable conflict with heroic military valor on both sides, the Shaw Memorial reminded viewers of the moral issues at its center, emancipation, and who fought for its achievement. The Shaw Memorial emphasized what Frederick Douglass urged the nation to remember, that the Civil War was “a war between men of thought, as well as action, and in dead earnest for something beyond the battlefield.”¹⁰¹

Created by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, the 11 by 14 foot bronze relief depicts Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment, the first black regiment in the Civil War, marching to battle on Fort Wagner in South Carolina. This attack ended fatally for Shaw and 100 of the soldiers in the regiment, but has been remembered in popular culture through the Shaw Memorial, the blockbuster movie *Glory*, and numerous other poems, songs, and paintings. Shaw and his black regiment have come to be seen as martyrs for emancipation. In Saint-Gaudens reimagining of the procession before the attack, Shaw is shown seated upright on a horse with a sword in his hand surrounded by his troops marching in full uniform, carrying packs and guns beneath him. A Black soldier leads the group playing a drum and an American flag is carried in the rear, clearly indicating these troops as fighting for the United States. All of the men’s faces are stern and forward-looking. Above the procession, an allegorical woman floats holding a laurel branch and poppies.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Savage, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slave*, 192.

¹⁰¹ Blight, “The Shaw Memorial,” 84.

¹⁰² Shackel, “Public Memory and the Search for Power,” 389.

Several scholars have analyzed the Shaw Memorial from an art historical perspective, arguing that the visual hierarchy of Shaw mounted above his black soldiers marching on the level of his horse, reinforces a racist hierarchy. Charles Caffin argued in 1913 that the black troops displayed a “dog-like trustfulness.”¹⁰³ In 1990, art critic Albert Boime contested that Saint-Gaudens’s elevation of Shaw created a “visual ‘color line’ that guarded white supremacy.”¹⁰⁴ Critics have also noted that while Shaw’s face is modeled on photographs, the faces of the black soldiers were created from random black models, rather than available images of the 54th Regiment. Saint-Gaudens’ racist comments about these black models, whom he called “darkeys” who “furnished him with great amusement,” give further substance to critiques of the memorial as a racist work.¹⁰⁵

While the Shaw Memorial may retain some of the elements of racial hierarchy that characterized the Freedman’s Memorial, I argue that the images of the black soldiers creates a more full and nuanced depiction of the Black role in emancipation as well as a rejection of the evil of slavery which denied Black Americans full manhood. Though critics have repeatedly viewed the black figures as a “dark, determined mass,” this impression seems informed more by critics’ own racialized ideas than the actual soldiers depicted in the Shaw Memorial.¹⁰⁶ Close examination of the relief draws attention to the detail of each of the soldiers. While it remains unclear why Saint-Gaudens did not work from photos of the regiment, he took great care to distinguish his depictions of the soldiers by basing them off of black models. The result is a collection of figures whose differences in age, facial hair, and facial structure distinguish them as

¹⁰³ Caffin, Charles, *American Masters of Sculpture*, (Garden City, N.Y.; Doubleday, 1913) 11.

¹⁰⁴ Boime, *The Art of Exclusion*, 209.

¹⁰⁵ Savage, Kirk. “Race, Art, and the Shaw Memorial” 162.

¹⁰⁶ *The Century*; a popular quarterly Volume 0054 Issue 2 (June 1897) “*The Shaw Memorial and the Sculptor St. Gaudens. I. The History of the Monument*”.



Figure 11: Details from Shaw Memorial from the National Park Service

individuals. While we have seen that specific models can still be used to reinforce stereotypes in the Freedman's Memorial, the images of the 54th Regiment refuse to be constructed as foil to Shaw's whiteness. Their identity as free black soldiers reminds the viewer that they have freed themselves and

now march onward to emancipate the rest of the country.

In its individualized depictions of black men, the Shaw Memorial also engages with and critiques a larger tradition of the common soldier. By placing black men within this tradition, the Shaw Memorial represents that this conception of manhood and citizenship could transcend racial divisions as well. Placing the soldiers in full military uniform left the only distinction between them and a white soldier to be race, itself rendered meaningless by the democratizing conception of the common soldier. The idea of the common soldier gained popularity in monuments after the Civil War, overtaking more traditional "great-man monuments."¹⁰⁷ The common soldier image served as a universal symbol of honor and manhood transcending regional divisions. This imagery was a powerful tool in neutralizing the Civil War in order to pave way for reconciliation, which historian George Washington Williams noted in 1888, "the ineffable, mute eloquence of these soldier monuments is invaluable to the Cause of National Unity By placing black soldiers within this monumental tradition, the Shaw Memorial made a

¹⁰⁷ Savage, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slave*. 176

quiet yet forceful statement that Black Americans could achieve the common dignity of the soldier.

In this way, the Shaw Memorial alludes to and gains strength from the symbol of the

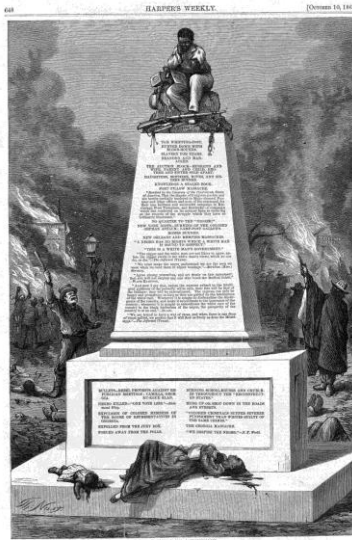


Figure 12 Thomas Nast, "Patience on a Monument" in Harper's Weekly (October 10, 1868): 648

common soldier, but rejects its premise of the innate morality of military service. While the white soldier fought for vague notions of nationhood and masculinity, the black soldiers fight for a specific goal of emancipation. Thomas Nast's striking print, *Patience on a Monument* (figure 4) speaks to dark irony of the common soldier monument as it relates to the black soldier and black lives during Reconstruction. The black man on top of the monument is suggested to be a soldier by his rifle and his bag marked *U.S.*, but he is not in any way dignified by his service. His clothes are torn, his

eyes are down cast, and the chains of slavery remain at his feet. The monumental shaft on which he sits on does not honor his service but lists the horrors inflicted on Black Americans. The black soldier is surrounded by a crowd of angry white figures, some of whom are identified as the KKK. At the bottom of the monument lie a murdered black woman and child whom he was unable to save. This disturbing image highlights the racial terrors which occurred across the United States, but also highlights the anomalous position of the black soldier in public monument.

The irony of this print becomes more apparent because at the time of its publishing in 1868 there were no monuments of black soldiers, and the prospect of a black soldier being depicted in such a manner would have been viewed as fictive.¹⁰⁸ Common soldier monuments were an exclusively white sculptural genre, and remained that way until the Shaw Memorial. Black historian George Washington Williams noted in 1888, “the deathless deeds of the white soldier’s valor ...are carve in marble and bronze. But nowhere in all this free land is there a monument to brave Negro soldiers.”¹⁰⁹ The black soldier was impossible to fit into the trope of the common soldier because his very race defined him as exceptional. His presence threatened to remind viewers that all soldiers in the Civil War did not fight for honor alone, but within a specific context of slavery and emancipation. By finally incorporating the black soldier into public monument, the Shaw Memorial rejects a generic idea of military service and in its place inserts a specific Union cause.

The Shaw Memorial has remained a vital aspect of Northern memory of the Civil War, as well as larger issues of race. In 1983 after Boston’s school desegregation conflicts, the relief was restored and the names of 281 black soldiers who died in the attack of Fort Wagner were added to the memorial as a symbol of racial healing.¹¹⁰ In doing this, Boston civic leaders emphasized the 54th regiment’s legacy of interracial cooperation as a precursor of contemporary racial issues. This addition also indicates a transition from the Shaw Memorial as associated with Colonel Shaw to a symbol primarily of the black soldiers of the 54th Regiment. This shift is part of a larger scale effort in Boston to incorporate the history of Black Bostonians into public

¹⁰⁸ Savage, *Standing Soldiers*, 175

¹⁰⁹ Williams, George Washington, *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* (1888; New York: Bergman, 1968), 328.

¹¹⁰ Blatt, Martin, Thomas J. Brown, and Donald Yacovone, eds. Introduction from *Hope and Glory: Essays on the Legacy of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Regiment*. 1.

commemoration which can be seen with the creation of the Black Heritage Trail in 1968.¹¹¹ The timing of the rededication and creation of the Black Heritage Trail mirrors efforts to commemorate the Civil Rights movement in the South and suggests a similar strategy of segregated public history. Public Historian Alfred Young calls this type of revisionist incorporation “add-on history.”¹¹² This transition speaks to the lasting resonance of public commemoration and the ways in which it can be re-contextualized in order to suit contemporary notions. The Shaw Memorial represents a step towards a more complete representation of Black Americans and the Civil War in public history, but it must be recognized as tool for creating a *white* Northern narrative of moral victory. In this way, the Shaw Memorial has crafted an idealized past of Northern moral victory brought around through interracial brotherhood and service, yet fails to acknowledge the history of Northern slavery.

Engaging with Northern Complicity: The African Burial Ground and the Slavery in New York Exhibit

Both the Freedman’s Memorial and the Shaw Memorial focus on a fight for emancipation, obscuring the North’s long-lasting participation in slavery. A majority of the commemorations of slavery followed this same model. In fact, the North’s participation in slavery was rarely been acknowledged in public history until 1991 when a massive slave cemetery was inadvertently uncovered by a construction project in downtown Manhattan. While building a new government office building and courthouse, the General Service Administration

¹¹¹ Young, Alfred F., “Revolution in Boston? Eight Propositions for Public History on the Freedom Trail,” *The Public Historian* 25 (2003), 20.

¹¹² Young, “Revolution in Boston?” 31.

uncovered several human skeletons.¹¹³ The subsequent excavation process was mired with controversy as delays, unprofessional handling, and lack of transparency drew accusations of deliberate racism and general ineptitude.¹¹⁴ As delays dragged on and construction continued on a portion of the site, the burial ground became a potent symbol for black New Yorkers of governmental failure to acknowledge the memory of the deceased slaves buried there and the history of slavery they represent. Eventually, the General Service Administration formed a partnership with Howard University to continue the excavation and conduct anthropological research on the excavated bodies.¹¹⁵ After more extensive archeological excavation, over 400 sets of remains were unearthed in what was found to be a cemetery for colonial-era African-Americans, a majority of them slaves. According to the National Park Service website, archeologists believe that the cemetery originally held 10,000 to 20,000 bodies which were buried from 1690 to 1794. This site would eventually become the African Burial Ground National Monument, declared a national park in 2006.¹¹⁶



Figure 13 Bodies from the Excavation of African Burial Ground, *New York Times*, Ozier Muhammad

The discovery of this massive slave cemetery came as a shock and a revelation for many New Yorkers who believed slavery to be an institution contained to the American

¹¹³ Rothstein, Edward, "A Burial Ground and Its Dead are Given Life," *New York Times*, February, 25, 2010.

¹¹⁴ R. R., "Bad blood at the burial ground," *New York Times*, September, 12, 1992.

¹¹⁵ Paterson, D. A., "It took a community to save burial ground," *New York Times*, August, 21, 1993.

¹¹⁶ Bush, George. "Proclamation 7984 - Establishment of the African Burial Ground National Monument", Feb 27, 2006.

South.¹¹⁷ However, historians had already known of the existence of this site due to a 1755 map which identified a site in lower Manhattan as the “Negros Burial Ground.”¹¹⁸ The lack of public knowledge of this site before its accidental unearthing, suggests that is only by chance that the lives of these New York slaves entered mainstream historical consciousness. The sobering realization of both Northern complicity in slavery as well the large-scale erasure of its presence from public life speaks to the ability for certain histories and peoples to be intentionally forgotten and emphasizes the powerful role of the public history in determining the historical record.

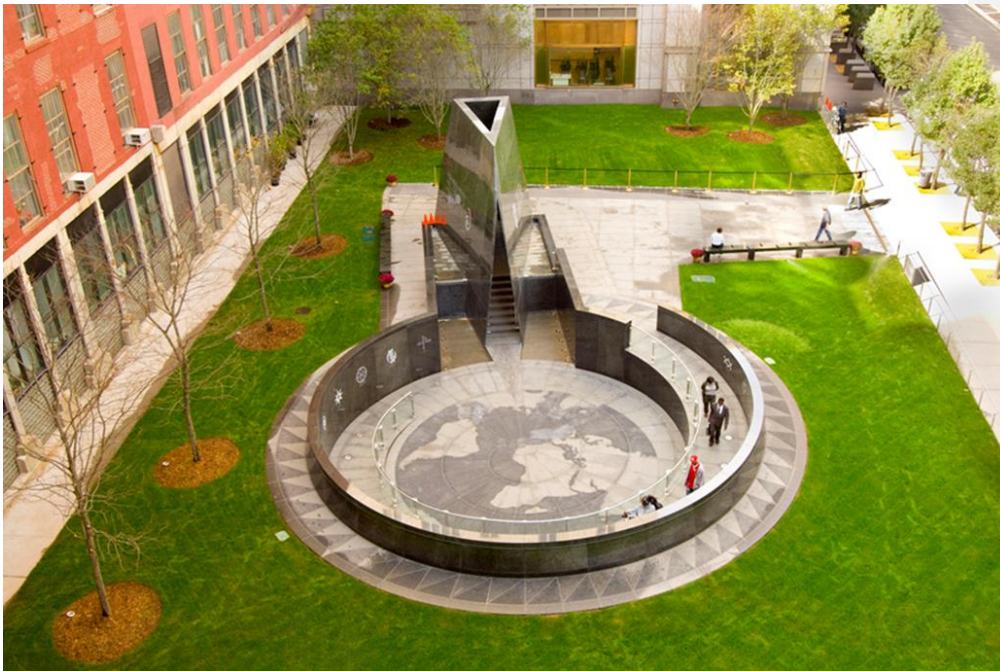


Figure 14 African Burial Ground Outdoor Memorial from above, 2007, National Park Service

¹¹⁷ “Honoring the Slaves of New York,” *New York Times*, October, 4, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/04/opinion/honoring-the-slaves-of-new-york.html>.

¹¹⁸ Rothstein, “A burial ground.”

Fourteen years after the initial discovery, a design by Rodney Leon was selected for the memorial.¹¹⁹ The subsequent memorial depart markedly from the sculptural representation of Black slaves and soldiers used in earlier monuments. The memorial does not rely on a military or civic sculptural tradition like the Freedman's Memorial and the Shaw Memorial, in fact it features no sculptural figures. It features a sunken circular space with a map of the world in its center and assorted African symbols on its walls. The map of the world centers on Africa and the Atlantic Ocean, invoking the memory of the slave trade and the Middle Passage. A 24 foot high chamber emerges from the court which is decorated with a *sanfoka* symbol. Inside the accompanying visitor center, which was completed in 2010, contemporary art, a recreation of a funeral service, and videography, help illuminate the lives of the enslaved peoples who might have been buried here.

Throughout the memorial and the visitor center the connection to Africa and African culture is emphasized. Through extensive excavation and study, archaeologists discovered several ties to African culture indicating a large degree of cultural continuity and careful burials. The bodies were in individual caskets and indicated a high level of regard for the buried dead.¹²⁰ Most distinctively, one of the caskets was decorated with a symbol which scholars identified as a *sanofka*, a West African symbol which means to "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten." This symbol was adopted as the central image of the accompanying memorial and visitors' center and the connection of New York slaves to their Africa heritage. However, more recent scholarship has thrown doubts on whether the symbol on the casket was actually a *sanofka*, pointing out that the earliest recorded use of the symbol was

¹¹⁹ B.L., "In remembrance of a burial ground," *New York Times*, December 19, 1993.

¹²⁰ D. W., "New York dig unearths early cemetery for blacks," *New York Times*, October, 9, 1991.

not until 1817.¹²¹ This contrary scholarship sparked a debate over how to engage with emotionally potent histories in factual yet empathetic ways. The African Burial Ground continues to embrace the *sanfoka* as its logo for its emotional significance to many visitors despite recent questioning, arguing that it is one of the “plausible meanings” that “most perfectly expresses the meaning of the site for many people around the world.”¹²² However by embracing the narrative of New York slaves being culturally African rather than American, the African Burial Ground risks creating a new celebratory narrative which continues to separate slavery and enslaved people with American identity. This debate forces the *public* historian to consider the responsibility of the museum and monument in creating a celebratory narrative of sensitive pasts. While many black New Yorkers

In the wake of the discovery of the African Burial Ground, the New York Historical Society opened the exhibit *Slavery in New York*. Running from 2005 to 2006, this exhibit aimed to tell the story of slavery in New York through the perspective of enslaved people. They followed the guiding principle which James Horton outlined as “slavery was not a slide-show in American history, it was the main event.”¹²³¹²⁴ Both of these principles indicate a major shift from the earlier Northern narrative of emancipation which is displayed through monumental representations of Lincoln and the 54th Regiment. Not only does the African Burial Ground and the *Slavery in New York* exhibit engage with slavery in the North, they position this institution as long lasting, economically central, and socially important to the region. *Slavery in New York* begins its narrative of slavery in the 1500s, emphasizing to visitors that slavery began centuries

¹²¹ Chan, Sewell. “Coffin’s Emblem Defies Certainty,” *New York Times*, January, 26, 2010.

¹²² Chan, “Coffin’s Emblem Defies Certainty.”

¹²³ Rabinowitz, Richard, “Eavesdropping at the Well: Interpretive Media in the *Slavery in New York* Exhibition,” *The Public Historian* 35 (2013)16.

¹²⁴ Horton, James, from “A ‘Main Event’ in Old New York,” Glenn Collins, *The New York Times*, September 27, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/27/arts/design/a-main-event-in-old-new-york.html?_r

before the Civil War and existed in New York up until 1827.¹²⁵ The African Burial Ground focuses on colonial era New York thereby reminding visitors that the enslaved people who were buried in the cemetery never achieved freedom. The Africa Burial Ground, through its lacks of connection to emancipation, exhibits a complete break with the Northern antislavery narrative and the regional moral identity it substantiates. In addition, the African Burial Ground and the *Slavery in New York* exhibition both focus on the experiences of enslaved people, rather than the accomplishments of a white leader, such as Lincoln or Shaw. This shift further displaces the idea of the white North as force of antislavery and returns agency to Black Americans.

In 2001 Brown University began an extensive self-examination of its ties to slavery called the University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, which sought to understand Brown's ties to slavery and foster critical debate surrounding the issue.¹²⁶ This committee explored the complex legacies of slavery within the University and its connected community ultimately issuing a series of recommendations which included "acknowledgement", "telling the truth in all its complexities", and "memorializing".¹²⁷ While this report did not result in the creation of permanent public commemoration, it presents a promising framework for the public history of slavery in the North.

Important first steps have been made in challenging the mythology of the North as a force of antislavery over the past several decades. Representations of slavery have been used to further conceptions about Northern white morality often at the exclusion of Blacks and their contributions. The *Slavery in New York* Exhibit, the African Burial Ground National Monument, and the rededication of the Shaw Memorial placed Black Americans and slavery into a more

¹²⁵ Rabinowitz, Richard, "Eavesdropping at the Well," 15.

¹²⁶ Clarke, "A is for Apology," 82.

¹²⁷ Clarke, "A is for Apology," 83-90.

central role in Northern history. However, these new sites remain periphery to the hegemonic images provided by the Freedman's Memorial and the Shaw Memorial. While there is a more general interest and success in depictions of slavery in the North than the South, these representations seem to remain outside the conception of a mainstream regional identity, as they do in the South. The result of this segmentation reaches beyond the bounds of history. Telling the full history of slavery in North is tantamount in order for Blacks to be seen as more than "permanent strangers" in the North.

Conclusion

Nearly one hundred and fifty years after the Emancipation Proclamation, the legacy of slavery remains a potent and misunderstood addressed aspect of our national psyche. Visual artist Barbara Riboud said, "Monuments are nations' exclamations, marks, their anchors, their seawalls, and their time-markers." Throughout this paper, I have explored the way in which museums and monuments have reflected and shaped our understanding of slavery in ways which are exclusionary and harmful. By displaying the context and motivation for monuments and museum representations of slavery, we can reveal the way they have upheld certain regional power structures. These representations tell us much about our ideas on race, slavery, and identity. But public site also have a positive potential. Just as commemorative sites perpetuated racist and exclusionary sentiment, museums and monuments must play a central role in correcting these ideas in order to create a more inclusive past. By understanding the histories that

we are currently telling about slavery, we can work to reveal the prejudices still implicit in regional identities and begin to tell new stories which may pave the way for a society that can talk about race, injustice, and inequality more openly.

In the American South, public history has sanitized and segregated slavery from Southern history at large. In an attempt to uphold dignity in the face of military destruction and an outlawed economic and social structure, white Southerners constructed the Lost Cause narrative which at once glorified and minimized slavery. Slavery was acknowledged in mainstream Southern history only if it complimented the actions and morality of an antebellum planter class. Because of this, blacks were characterized as contently obedient and childishly dependent, with the Mammy as the most popular embodiment of these values. Eventually, blacks were allowed more complete roles in the Southern past but not until the Civil Rights Movement. Even when blacks began to be commemorated for their work during the Civil Rights era, the role of slavery in the Southern past was not reconsidered. Instead these two images of blacks as happy slaves and blacks as political activists coexisted as jarringly contradictory aspects of Southern historical consciousness. In doing this, the Southern commemorative landscape has refused to confront the white supremacist tenets of the Lost Cause. While today there is more acknowledgement of the presence of black Southerners in museums and monuments across the South, it remains coupled with celebratory images of Civil War battle sites and plantations. Such inclusion cannot be meaningful until slavery is depicted in relation with the Civil War and the Antebellum South. Southern historical consciousness must recognize that its most treasured heritage and most shameful sins are two sides of the same coin. Thus far, the South has been unwilling to do so and the result is a regional identity riddled with contradiction and exclusion.

While the North's public history emphasized different aspects of slavery than the South's, Northern monuments and museums also only engaged with slavery in ways which complimented their mainstream historical narrative. In the North, this narrative was abolitionism. The North, especially New England, emphasized their strong historical ties to the abolitionist movement in order to position themselves as moral leaders of the nation. Through glorifying Abraham Lincoln, local abolitionists, and black Union soldiers, the North associated itself with emancipation and moral victory. However, this association did not require the North to view blacks as equals. Monuments emphasized the role of white Northerners such as Abraham Lincoln, William Lloyd Garrison, or Colonel Shaw in breaking the changes of slavery. Often, these monuments did not even include black figures and when they did they appeared as passive beneficiaries of white benevolence. By doing this the North could be viewed as advocates for emancipation, while avoiding the full implications of black citizenship. But most importantly, through emphasizing its role in emancipation, the North distanced itself from its own past of owning and profiting off of slaves.

While Northern participation in slavery and the slave trade did not enter the commemorative landscape until the turn of the 21st century, in recent years the North has attempted to undertake a difficult self-examination. Museums and monuments have been at the foreground of this process. The excavation at the African Burial Ground, the *Slavery in New York* exhibit at the New York Historical Society, and the formal apology by Brown University are all evidence of a new kind of narrative forming around the North's role in slavery. This narrative strives to confront the myth of Northern innocence in regards to slavery and give enslaved people a more complete presence in the Northern past. The new representation of

Northern slavery is far from perfect, but through museums and memorials it has already confronted our most difficult past in a permanent and public way.

In the fall of 2016, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture will open on the National Mall.¹²⁸ The museum will be the most prominent national commemoration of black life in the United States. Amongst a variety of other roles, it will articulate the most definitive statement on what slavery means for our country. The National Museum of African American History and Culture is sure to struggle with many of the same issues faced by Northern and Southerners in their representations of slavery. For a nation built on the ideal of freedom, slavery is a damning contradiction within American identity. Thus far, it has been minimized to a short-lived and geographically contained issue, but with the renewed scholarship on the fundamental role that slavery played for the entire United States, this evasion will no longer be satisfactory.

The Southern strategy of a racially segregated history has failed to meaningfully confront slavery and has left a region whose historical consciousness sustains harmful divisions. The abolitionist narrative relied on by the North created a region where blacks were denied any historical claims to citizenship and the legacy of slavery was never acknowledged. The National Museum of African American History and Culture must learn from the mistakes of both the North and the South. It is not enough to create a museum dedicated to Black Americans if it is situated in a larger commemorative landscape which denies and erases their role in American history. It will accomplish little to celebrate emancipation or the Civil Rights era before the public understands the underlying condition of slavery.

¹²⁸ Py-Lieberman, Beth, "Opening Day for the New African American History Museum is announced," February 2, 2016, Smithsonian.com.

The National African American History and Culture Museum will only be coherent, meaningful, and healing if it is brave enough to fully confront the United States' long history of slavery and integrate it into our mainstream historical consciousness. This will be an arduous and controversial undertaking but recent developments in Northern commemoration offer a positive model. Through unconventional use of objects and archives, a commitment to the perspective of the enslaved, and a willingness to confront the ugliest aspects of our history, the National African American History and Culture Museum has the potential to permanently alter how the United States represents slavery. The United States is a nation built on enslavement as much as freedom. It is time that our museums and monuments reflect that slavery is an integral rather than ancillary aspect of the American past.

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Faughnan 71

