Memorialising White Supremacy: The Politics of Statue Removal

A Comparative Case Study of the Rhodes Statue at the University of Cape Town and the Lee Statue in Charlottesville, Virginia

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Plagiarism Declaration

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree/ It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

In April 2015, the bronze statue of Cecil John Rhodes- notorious mining magnate, arch-imperialist and champion of a global Anglo-Saxon empire- was removed from its concrete plinth overlooking Cape Town, South Africa. This came as a result of the #RhodesMustFall (#RMF) movement, a movement that would see statues questioned and vandalised across the country. Two years later, fierce contestation over the hegemonic narrative told through the American South's symbolic landscape erupted over the proposed removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, resulting in the deaths of multiple people in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Increasing research on the removal of Rhodes and the removal of Confederate statuary has emerged in recent years. However, previous scholarship has failed to compare the wider phenomena of the calls for removal, from the memorialised figures to their change in symbolic capital, the movements' inception and its outcomes. There is subsequently a gap in the literature understanding what the politics of statue removal tell us about not only the American and South African commemorative landscapes, but the nations' interpretations of the past and societies themselves. Therefore, this thesis uses descriptive comparative analysis to compare two case studies where the debate over statue removal has surfaced most vehemently: Rhodes' statue at the University of Cape Town and Lee's statue in Charlottesville.

Ultimately, this dissertation finds that the calls for the removal of statues are part of a wider change in tenor towards understanding and disrupting prevailing hegemonic narratives of white supremacy, in both society and its symbolic landscape. The phenomena demonstrates that heterogeneous societies with pasts marred by segregation and racism are moving to reject and re-negotiate these histories and their symbols, a move that has elicited deeply divided, emotional responses. Despite waning attention to monument removals, the issue remains unresolved, contentious, and capable of re-igniting.

Keywords: Statues, White Supremacy, #RhodesMustFall, Charlottesville, Cecil John Rhodes, Robert E. Lee, Symbolic Landscape

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Acronyms

African National Congress (ANC)
African Methodist Church (AME)
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC)
British South Africa Company (BSAC)
Built environment and landscape committee (BELCom)
Confederate States of America (CSA)
Democratic Alliance (DA)
Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)
#FeesMustFall (#FMF)
Heritage Western Cape (HWC)
Klu Klux Klan (KKK)
The Lost Cause (LC)
The Monument Fund (TMF)
National Heritage Resource Act (NHRA)
National Heritage Council (NHC)
#RhodesMustFall (#RMF)
South Africa (SA)
Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV)
Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)
Student Representative Council (SRC)
Unite the Right (UTR)
United Confederate Veterans (UCV)
United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC)
United States (US)
University of Cape Town (UCT)
University of Virginia, Charlottesville (UVA)
Vice Chancellor (VC)
Western Cape Heritage Resources Council (WCHRC)

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1. Chapter One

On April 9th, 2015 at 17:37 a bronze statue of Cecil John Rhodes, notorious mining magnate, arch-imperialist and champion of a global Anglo-Saxon empire, was severed by crane from its concrete plinth overlooking Cape Town, South Africa (SA). The fall of the Rhodes statue, the result of the #RhodesMustFall movement (#RMF), catalysed what some called the 'Statue Revolution of 2015' (The Heritage Portal, 2015). During this campaign, dozens of statues around the country were vandalised, defaced, or torn apart. The same month two years later on a continent across the Atlantic, workers donning bullet proof vests and facial coverings began removing the Battle of Liberty Place monument in New Orleans, Louisiana, under the protection of snipers (Curtis, 2017). Over the following months, statues commemorating Civil War heroes Jefferson Davis, General P.G.T. Beauregard, and General Robert E. Lee would be dismantled across New Orleans to crowds deeply divided over the issue of removal (*ibid.*).

The monuments in New Orleans were the first statues to come down in the United States (US) as a result of a resurgence of questioning monuments dedicated to white supremacy, the Confederacy, and opponents of Reconstruction. While New Orleans was the first city to remove its most controversial monuments, it would not be the last. Since June 2015, more than 100 Confederate monuments around the country have fallen (Gunter et al., 2018). Many more statues are slated for removal but remain standing, the subject of deeply embroiled disputes over their removals. This is the fate of Charlottesville's statue of General Robert R. Lee, a statue whose proposed removal generated impassioned debate for over a year. This debate came to a brutal head on August 12th, 2017, when violence over the proposed removal of Lee's monument culminated in the deaths of three people.

1.1 Research Aim and Findings

Events unfolding in 2015 in SA and later in the US began to challenge the symbolic landscapes in both countries, giving rise to movements that would question the men, monuments, and narratives of histories embedded within the landscapes. The phenomena of calls for removal has been far from harmonious, playing out in what Barnabas (2016: 109) termed a "monumental debate", one igniting wider ideological debates across the globe.

Thus, the overarching aim of this thesis is to understand the calls to remove statues memorialising white supremacy and symbolizing "contested histories in public spaces" **(**Walkowitz & Knauer, 2009: n.p.). This will be done through the comparison of two case studies, the calls for removal of Cecil John Rhodes' statue from the University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa and calls for removal of General Robert E. Lee's statue standing in Charlottesville, Virginia, US.

Of particular focus will be the role both men and statues have played in the prevailing historical narratives of each country, and the continuing effects of these roles in light of changing tenor towards the commemoration of history and its 'heroes'. This thesis aims to understand how this change in tenor has contributed to the re-negotiation of the memory and legacies of Rhodes, Lee, and their monuments, affecting the symbolic capital of the statues and culminating in highly charged movements for their removals. Guiding the analysis of this research is the aim to make sense of what the phenomena's similarities and differences tell us about the psyches of two countries still grappling with histories of race-based oppression, discrimination, and violence. From the movement's inception, as well as the controversy, timeline, and discourse surrounding the issue of removal, what can comparing the politics of removal tell us about the wider issues of race and equality in South African and American societies?

Ultimately, this thesis finds that the re-interpretation of the memory and legacy of both Rhodes, Lee, and their statues has come about as a result of sweeping changes in tenor surrounding how multiracial and multicultural societies with pasts marred by racial segregation and discrimination understand and disrupt prevailing narratives of white supremacy embedded in both society and symbolism. The cognitive landscapes in both countries are changing, a result of shifting power dynamics, demographics, and time. People of colour in both countries are increasingly better positioned politically, socially, and economically, and thus are increasingly able to influence the telling and (re)telling of both past and present.

However, there has been a notable difference in the level of contention surrounding the removals and the number of removals themselves. This thesis looks at each country's engagement with post-conflict reconciliation processes as one possible explanation for these differences.

The calls for the removal of statues memorialising white supremacy can be understood as a rejection of narratives that have imparted legacies of oppression, dispossession and inequality. For some, these legacies have been projected onto the statues of Rhodes and Lee, transforming them from bronze works of art to inflammatory symbols of ideological division, or as Knudsen et al. calls them, "abjects" (2019: 240). This has made the politics of statue removal deeply divided and contentious, reflective of larger unresolved social and racial cleavages in the American and South African commemorative landscapes, interpretations of history and social realties, serving to disrupt present day notions of post-racial societies.

1.2 Methodology

This thesis draws off two empirical studies aiming to observe the calls for statue removal and generate knowledge about it (Given, 2008). The study is written in historical narrative form and investigated through comparative analysis (Lijiphart, 1971). As the phenomena discussed throughout this thesis are historically rich, context specific, and detail oriented, a configurative approach and thick description (Geertz, 1973) within the comparative analysis is used.

As Melinda Mills et al. (2006: 621) states, the value of comparative analysis lies in the fact that "comparisons not only uncover differences between social entities, but reveal unique aspects […] that would be virtually impossible to detect otherwise." Comparative analysis allows for the exploration of the issue of statue removal in order to "identify agreements and differences" (Neuman, 2006: 471) in the two case studies (Yin, 2003; Peters, 1998): UCT's Rhodes statue and Charlottesville's Lee statue. These case studies have been selected because they are representative of where the debate over statue removal has surfaced most vehemently and where it has generated the most attention and controversy, best exemplifying the nuances of the identified phenomena.

The findings included in the thesis were systematically gathered from a variety of primary and secondary sources and grey literature to form a desk-based qualitative study. The primary sources and grey literature utilised include both print and online based newspaper

articles, research reports, online blogs, research data, social media content, and reports and publications from national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations. The secondary sources include academic texts, biographies, peer reviewed articles, academic journals, print media published after the events explored in the thesis, and references books.

1.3 Limitations

The limitations of comparative analysis through case studies are well documented by leading scholars in the field, including the challenge of "many variables, small number of cases" (Lijphart, 1971: 685). Comparative analysis has also been criticized as "a discipline without logical, methodological, and linguistic discipline [which] cannot solve but only aggravate problems for oneself" (Sartori, 1996: 255). Peters (1998: 5) further problematises the method, detailing the trade-off between the "virtues of complexity and the generalization in comparison", while Hague and Harrop (2007) speak to the challenges of how the same phenomenon can mean different things in different countries, as meaning varies with context, creating difficulties in comparison. While acknowledging these limitations, I have concluded that employing descriptive comparative analysis with a configurative approach to explore, understand, and generate information about both the specific cases and the general phenomena of the calls for statue removal is the most compelling framework for this study. It allows for the similarities, differences, and nuances of the case studies to be highlighted while providing historical richness and a depth of information to further illuminate the calls for removal and the wider social, political, and cultural issues to which they point.

An additional limitation to consider is research bias**.** A researcher is impacted by their subjectivity, as even the most thoroughly researched piece is still an "interpretation of an interpretation" (Gee 2011: 122), and a reflection of positionality. I am a privileged, white, American woman which has shaped my experiences, knowledge, and the way I understand and relate to the world around me. This is especially true of my interaction with and understanding of 'race', a constant theme throughout this dissertation. However, as Hague and Harrop note, "The point is not to eliminate such bias as to be aware of its continual presence" (2007: 97). As a researcher I have done my best to acknowledge my bias and be mindful of it, and I believe this bias does not hinder the quality of information and analysis this thesis presents.

There is also the issue of data accessibility and word limitations to consider. Due to the topical nature of this thesis, accessing academic, peer reviewed articles on the calls for statue removal in the US was difficult, as many pieces were published as I was nearing the conclusion of this thesis. The review and inclusion of this more recent information would provide a good starting point for further research. Additionally, there are many other lenses that could have been applied during this dissertation, including gender and class. This thesis largely focuses on the (under)representation of race in the symbolic landscape as it pertains to the case studies, however the overwhelming imbalance of gender and class in this realm is equally problematic. As Savage (2018, n.p.) notes, ours is a "shrived history", one where "[w]omen, nonwhites, laborers, and others who did not advance the master narrative of progress defined by a white male elite had little place in the commemorative scheme".

1.4 Defining White Supremacy

Fundamental to this thesis is an understanding of the role the Rhodes statue at UCT and the Lee statue in Charlottesville had (and continues to have) in symbolising and reinforcing ideologies of white supremacy. The terms 'racism' and 'white supremacy' are often used interchangeably to emphasize the link between race-based discrimination and the privilege held by whites to perpetuate subordination and the status quo (Grillo & Wildman, 1996). For this thesis, I have chosen to use the term 'white supremacy'. Building from Fredrickson (1981) and incorporating Mills (2018), Martinez (2004), and Bonilla-Silva (2001; 2011; 2015), I argue that the term white supremacy is preferable in both the South African and American contexts as it more powerfully reflects the social realities and power dynamics embedded within the history of racial domination projects, including colonialism and slavery.

Furthermore, the colloquial interpretation of white supremacy is that of a social structure characterized by white domination, underpinned by white racism, with "color bars", "racial segregation" and "systematic and self-conscious efforts to make a race or color a qualification for membership in the civil community" (Fredrickson; 1981: xi). However, this temporally restricts the term to the historical epoch of *de jure* racism, bringing images of the antebellum South and apartheid South Africa to mind (Mills, 2018). It implies that for white supremacy to be fully realised it must *be self-conscious*, rooted in indisputable racism, reliant

on *colour bars* and legally condoned segregation (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). These are positions Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues are not commonly identified with or supported to such extremes today.

Thus, this thesis understands white supremacy as not merely a social system but a *historically* existent ideology, *systematically* perpetuated through reinforcing and interlocking *institutions* with far-reaching ramifications across multiple spheres. It is a system of exploitation and oppression of both nations and people of colour by European nations and 'white' people, seen through a 'racial frame' that dictates social reality (Feagin, 2010) and affects conceptions of history, memory, heritage, and identity.[1] As explored through this dissertation, the scope of white supremacy is significantly broader than commonly acknowledged in both time and space, with consequences continuing to be realised (Mills, 2018). Whether self-conscious or invisibly rooted, this social structure of the 'past' continues to perpetuate inequality and marginalisation in the present. Statues celebrating the hey-day of the Confederate and colonial eras and memorialising its heroes continue to stand, conspicuous reminders of the passive, continued acceptance of white supremacy.

1.5 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 introduces the research aims and focus of this thesis, discussing its overarching goals, methods, and limitations, finishing with a working definition of white supremacy. Chapter 2 presents the Rhodes case study, starting with section 2.1's discussion of SA's symbolic landscape: who has historically been represented, who has been excluded, and what function has this inclusion/ exclusion served over the duration of the nation's history. Section 2.2 details the statue's conception and inauguration, contextualising its construction and discussing the symbolism imbued within its (re)positioning. Section 2.3 discusses the life and times of Rhodes, highlighting his ideologies and legacies. The section concludes with how recently this legacy has been re-negotiated and re-interpreted in light of current socio-political climates. Section 2.4 traces the #RhodesMustFall movement and its culmination with the removal of Rhodes, while section 2.5 examines both the pro-removal and pro-preservation discourse surrounding the removal. The chapter concludes by examining if #RMF was a movement or simply a moment in history.

[1] Not exclusively, but emphasizing these points as they specifically pertains to this thesis.

Chapter 3 presents the Lee case study, opening with a discussion of the US Civil War and how the mythologization of the Lost Cause has impacted the US's symbolic and cognitive landscapes. Section 3.2 examines Lee's statue and its unveiling, investigating the socio-political context of the statue's erection and the symbolism imbedded within it. Section 3.3 provides a brief biography of Lee, investigating the enduring "Cult of Lee" (Connelly, 1978" n.p.) and his role both in the Lost Cause and wider historical narratives of white supremacy. The section ends with a discussion of how Lee's legacy has recently experienced a change in tenor, triggered in part by the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church massacre in Charleston, South Carolina. Section 3.4 explores the origins of calls for Lee's removal, tracing removalist demands through court cases and into the tragic events of August 12th, 2017, while section 3.5 discusses the removalist and preservationist arguments invoked during the removal process. Section 2.6 concludes with a discussion of the current state of the movement. The momentum behind the movement may be waning, but the larger issues behind the complex politics for removal are not.

Chapter 4 refreshes the analytical arguments made throughout the dissertation by bringing Rhodes and Lee side by side, with section 4.1 speaking to the similar roles Rhodes and Lee have occupied in their nation's memory landscapes, discussing the consequences of these roles. Section 4.2 argues the current change in tenor towards monuments is representative of larger, deeply rooted differences in interpretations of the past. Section 4.3 turns to the outcomes in the phenomenon, discussing Rhodes as an outlier in the removal movement for coming down, while Lee exemplifies both the contestation and legal battles many statues are embroiled in. Section 4.4 returns back to the research question guiding the dissertation, arguing calls for statue removals can be understood as a rejection of not only the statues themselves, but to the larger consequences of the memorialisation of white supremacy: increasing inequality, alienation, exclusion, and stunted transformation for black people in both the symbolic and lived realms.

Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation, asserting that despite waning momentum and attention dedicated to the issue of statue removals, the larger issues to which the phenomena speak continue to be contentious, unresolved, and capable of re-igniting.

2. Chapter Two: *"Amandla! Awethu!"*[2] Calls for the removal of the University of Cape Town's Rhodes statue

2.1 Context

"Racism is fundamentally a theory of history. It is a theory of who is who, of who belongs and who does not, of who deserves what and who is capable of what."

Matthew Frye Jacobson, 1998

As in other countries, memory in South Africa has been constructed through commemorative sights, "markers of the past" such as graves, statues, memorials, place names, and museums (Sack, 1997: 135). Of interest to my research are the statues and monuments erected during the settler colonisation of SA in the 19th and 20th centuries, key components of the nation's symbolic and memory landscape.[3] Ross (2009) discusses how this symbolic landscape communicates social and political meaning through its specific public images and physical objects. These objects and images are the "most generally accessible and widely shared aide-mémoire of a culture's knowledge and understanding of its past and future" (Küchler, 1993: 85).

Symbolic landscapes communicate inclusion and exclusion; inclusion within the landscape asserts power, dominance, and recognition, while exclusion can convey subordination and denial of group identity, and thus, its existence (Ross, 2009: 2). Robert Sobukwe captured the significance of this inclusion when he stated that "a national struggle is a struggle for the recognition of heritage" (in Karis et al., 2013: 465). As such, heritage is "both a symbol reflecting group identity and an instrument in forging such an identity. It can simultaneously cause social cohesion and deep social division" (Marschall, 2017a: 4). It is

[2] As it did during the apartheid resistance movement, music and song played a large part in the #RMF protests, with activists playing drums, singing, and rallying around cries of *"Amandla! Awethu!"* (*Power! To Us*) (Fairbanks, 2015: n.p.).
[3] Symbolic landscape is referred to interchangeably in scholarship and in this thesis as memory landscape, commemorative landscape, or heritage landscape (Ross, 2009; Marschall, 2009; Holmes & Loehwing, 2016; Knudsen et al., 2019).

this division over the calls for the removal of statues representing and reflecting particular heritages and cultural ideologies that is of particular interest to this thesis.

2.1.1 Memorialising white supremacy

As Holmes and Loehwing (2016: 1211) detail, the commemoration of colonial icons and Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa had in mind one goal in mind: "to ground the project of [white] minority rule in the geographic space of [the country]" (see also Larsen, 2012). This strategic project of memory and national narrative making was achieved through three objectives: extoling 'great' men, legitimating white minority rule, and asserting a singular version of the nation (Holmes & Loehwing, 2016). These objectives created 'monologic commemoration' in SA, the impression of a single history and identity for South Africa's national community (*ibid.*). This commemoration foraged a sense of legitimacy and indigeneity of white rule by 'great men' such as John Cecil Rhodes, cementing power relations in stone (or bronze) while simultaneously annihilating the presence, histories, and contributions of indigenous peoples.

Ndletyana and Webb (2017) argue that memorialisation is primarily about legitimizing the present, not recalling the past. In this way, memorialisation can be a political tool utilized in heterogenous societies where history, heritage, and power between groups is often contested. In heterogeneous societies, minority groups must often fight for their recognition, fearing for their cultural and occasionally physical 'survival' (Ross, 2012). South Africa's white settler minority utilized the country's symbolic and memorial landscape to justify their inclusion, claim public space, and assert their 'right' to permanent residency (Van Der Wal, 2015; Marschall, 2012). Conversely, the monuments were used to support ideological stereotypes and racist assertions regarding the native inhabitants, further cementing their "otherness" (Marschall, 2010: 6).

In a 1992 study, Frescura found that 97 per cent of all declared national monuments in pre-democratic South Africa belonged to this white minority, leaving the remaining 3 per cent to represent 84 per cent of the population. Of this, the majority were "rock art sites", sites Frescura argues perpetuates a "white supremacist stereotype of indigenous [non-white] South Africans as… rural and poor" (1992: 9). Thus, the symbolic landscape of SA has not

only over-represented white heritage, but under-represented alternative, non-white expressions of heritage, imply non-white people possess "little material culture" to note (*ibid*.; Marschall, 2010). The majority of these symbols and monuments continue to stand and convey these sentiments.

Thus, a constant from the time the first European settlers arrived in the mid-17th century has been the legitimation of white minority rule and thus, white supremacy. From this time onward, racial discrimination has underpinned life in South Africa (Perez & London, 2004). Racial discrimination in the history of higher education in the country is no exception. The University of Cape Town (UCT) was originally founded as the South African College, a high school for white male adolescents, in 1829 (UCT, n.d.b.). It developed into a bona fide university from 1880 to 1900, with assistance from both private and government funding, becoming established as a university in 1918 (*ibid.*). In 1928, UCT moved the bulk of its facilities to the slopes of Devils Peak, part of the Groote Schuur estate bequeathed to the university by English imperialist Cecil Rhodes through the Rhodes Trust (*ibid.;* Schmahmann, 2011: 19-20).

Although UCT has historically been a predominantly white university, for much of history it was considered an 'open university', admitting its first small group of black[4] students in the 1920's (UCT, n.d.b.). This number, however, remained low.[5] Despite the lack of *de jure* regulations restricting the admission of black students into 'white' universities prior to 1948, many schools adopted *de facto* discriminatory stances or policies that effectively blocked black academics from studying (Perez & London, 2004; see also Phillips, 1993: 192-195). As historian Howard Phillips recalls in his book on UCT's formative years, UCT's Council stated that "it would not be in the interests of the university to admit natives or coloured students in any numbers, if at all" (Phillips, 1993: 114).

[4] When used in the SA context, the term 'black' refers to any student of perceived 'African' descent, as delineated and classified under the former apartheid legal system. For a brief discussion on the politicization of this usage, as well as the apartheid classifications of 'white' and 'coloured' (a person of racially mixed or Indian descent) see Welsh, 2009.

[5] The University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Cape Town, which were called the 'open' universities because they admitted black students to most faculties, were still 94% white prior to 1948 (Beale, 1998).

2.2 The Statue

"The trouble with statues and memorials is that they tend to obscure, beneath their impressive solidity, the myriad connections they bare to the past, present and future entanglements"

Goodrich and Bombardella, 2016

Figure 4: Cecil John Rhodes' statue at the University of Cape Town, post 1962 move. January 12, 2007. Credit: Danie van der Merwe/ Flickr.

The now infamous bronze statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT was unveiled on March 7th, 1934, 22 years after Rhodes' death. On the day of its unveiling, classes were suspended for most of the afternoon and Rhodes Drive, which ran through the upper portion of campus, was closed for the occasion (Lillie, 2016). The statue was unveiled by the distinguished Earl of Clarendon, the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa to a large crowd of spectators, both academic students, staff and prestigious visitors, in a ceremony that lasted most of the morning (*ibid.;* RNSAMC, 1934).

Interestingly, the creation of the statue itself was largely an "accident of history" (UCT Properties and Services, 2015: n.p.). In 1911, after the completion of the grandiose Rhodes Memorial nestled in the foothills of Table Mountain, the Rhodes National South

African Memorial Committee had excess funds available for use (*ibid*.). The committee decided to fund a statue of Rhodes, a man who had "won [land] for South Africa", "loved and served" the country, and whose idea it was to found a teaching University in the Cape Colony (RNSAMC, 1934: n.p.).[6]

The committee had previously commissioned a bust of Rhodes from Marion Walgate, an acclaimed English sculpture artist who was in South Africa with her husband Charles, an architect involved in designing UCT (Schmahmann, 2016). Pleased with her work, the committee commissioned Walgate to sculpt a "heroic statue" of Rhodes as a gift to UCT (Walgate in Schmahmann, 2016: 112). The decision was a notable one, for as Schmahmann (n.d. : 4-5) reflects, at the time it was rare for women to get commissioned such prestigious work.

Rhodes' statue was constructed with deliberation and an unambiguous political agenda in mind (Kros, 2015). He was sculpted in a manner resembling Rodin's 'The Thinker' (Bates, 2015): deep in contemplation, chin resting on knuckles. The pose immortalised Rhodes' "imperialist and possessive gaze" and amplified his "immense and brooding spirit", eternally gazing over the Cape Flats, Hottentots-Hollands Mountains, and beyond (Schmahmann, 2016: 94-94). Gwasira (2001) argues that this view was strategic, symbolizing Rhodes' dream of a British empire extending from the Cape Colony to Cairo. Taken all together the statue's inscription, proudly proclaiming Rhodes' imperialist ambitions, pose, and placement laid the foundation for the statue's association with "white dominance and a politics of exclusion" (Schmahmann, 2016: 96). [7]

The statue stood below the school's rugby field until 1962 when Da Waal Drive, where Rhodes was located, was widened (Schmahmann, 2016). Upon completion of the roadwork, the monument was relocated above the university's rugby field, at the base of the steps leading to UCT's classical central fixture: Jameson Hall. This portion of campus, along with the statue, was declared a National Monument in 1983 and later became a Provincial

[6] Without the donation of his Groote Schuur estate, "UCT would probably not have come into existence in 1918 (UCT, n.d.a.). Rhodes' will also left millions of pounds to establish a scholarship fund in his name, starting in 1903. At its inception, the scholarship would cover full tuition and a living stipend for white male scholars from Commonwealth countries to attend his alma matter, Oxford (Rotberg, 1988).
[7] The inscription on the status's plinth read: I DREAM MY DREAM/ BY ROCK AND HEATH AND PINE/ OF EMPIRE TO THE NORTHWARD/ AY, ONE LAND/ FROM LION'S HEAD TO LINE.

Heritage Site,[8] cementing the importance and significance of Rhodes (Price, 2015b). This new placement also expanded Rhodes' view and command over the campus and city.

The relocation of Rhodes was notable for several reasons. Firstly, it placed him in an architecturally pivotal point, at the centre of the picturesque Solomon axis of the original Groote Schuur estate,[9] and by extension, at the centre of university life (Phillips, 1993). Ndebele (2013) argues that Rhodes' dominance was conveyed through this placement, magnified by the architecture and setting, which reflected a British-Imperialist visual stronghold (see also Bates, 2005). This stronghold extended not only over the university's building design, but the space and representation of identity at UCT in general, a visual legacy which "still resonates in the post- Apartheid democracy of twenty-first century South Africa" (Bates, 2005: n.d.; Classeen, 2009).

Gwasira (2001) posits that monuments can be read as metaphors, understood extra-lingually as silent texts, symbolic representations of the ideologies of power, resistance and domination of their fashioning. He therefore credits metaphorical meaning not only to the erection of Rhodes as an embodiment of the colonial (white supremacist) ideologies of the time, but also to his deliberate 1962 move. To fully understand this symbolism, one needs to consider the era in which the relocation took place. While colonial-era laws had long since laid the foundations of white supremacy and marginalisation of people of colour,[10] when the National Party came to power in 1948, they further entrenched racial discrimination (Welsh, 2009). Segregation was mandated through the passing of draconian policies and legislation, officially marking the beginning of the apartheid state (*ibid.*; Perez & London, 2004).[11] Under apartheid, white racial domination was not only pervasive in the political, economic, social, and educational realms, but psychologically as well; a 'colonization of the mind', body, and spirit (Welsh, 2009: 47).

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[8] In terms of the National Heritage Resource Act, Act 25 of 1999.

[9] The Solomon axis ran from Japonica walk through the Summerhouse to Devil's Peak and was named after Joseph Solomon, was architect of the original university (Phillips, 1993). It was later incorporated into UCT's campus through Rhodes' will. Solomon, together with Marion's husband Charles Percival Walgate and the Baker firm (Herbert & Masey) formed a circle of elite British architects (Bates, 2005).

[10] For example, the Kaffir Pass Act No. 23 and the Kaffir employment Act No. 27, which "prohibited Xhosa from entering the [Cape] colony except to work" (Crais, 1992: 212) and "stipulated that Xhosa had fourteen days to find employment after the expiration of a contract" (*ibid*.) It is important to note that the word 'kaffir' is a particularly derogatory ethnic slur, used to refer to a person with 'black' skin.

[11] Meaning 'apartness' in Afrikaans, the language of Dutch descendants in the Cape Colony, apartheid was a complex system of institutionalised race-based oppression, categorizing people, and by extension their rights and freedoms, by the colour of their skin (Perez & London, 2004).

As previously discussed, while university education was racialized prior to 1948,[12] the Extension of University Education Act of 1959 further extend apartheid's 'apartness' ideologies to university campuses. Under the act, it became a criminal offense for black students to register at formerly 'open' universities without special permission from the Minister of Internal Affairs (Beale, 1998). Though resentment towards this and other policies were building on and off campus, on March 20th, 1960, it exploded. On this day, police open fired into a crowd of peaceful protestors in Sharpeville, killing 69 people and wounding 200 others (Welsh, 2009). The Sharpeville massacre is largely credited as the genesis of the armed struggle and a turning point in the resistance movement against white supremacy (*ibid*.). It is against this backdrop that Rhodes' relocation occurred.

2.3 The Man: Conceptualizing Cecil John Rhodes

"The few who knew him loved him. The majority, to whom he was unknown, paid him their homage, some of their admiration, and others of their hate."

W.T. Stead, 1902
Editor, The last will and testament of Cecil John Rhodes

There are far more biographies written about Rhodes than any other figure in South African history (Maylam, 2002). Taken together, they reflect a contentious legacy "neither fixed nor secure" (Rotberg, 2006: 272). Rhodes was a man many black South Africans fiercely distained, as his is a legacy of race-based colonisation premised on the goals of displacing, marginalising and exploiting SA's indigenous people for profit. These voices, however, have been silenced for most of SA's history, overpowered by country's white (English) minority. With the tides of power continuing to change in SA, the legacy of Rhodes is one that has increasingly been the subject of scrutiny, re-assessment, and revision as ideas of how a post-colonial, racially inclusive 'Rainbow Nation'[13] assesses and interprets its colonial and apartheid-era heroes, icons, and heritage symbols.

[12] Prior to 1948, 65 per cent of white students and 77 per cent of black students were studying in segregated institutions (Beale, 1998).
[13] A metaphor for the racially and ethnically diverse nation of South Africa, coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Barnabas, 2016: 112).

Cecil John Rhodes was born on the 5th of July 1853 in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, England, the fifth son to Reverend Francis William Rhodes and Louisa Peacock Rhodes (Lockhart & Woodhouse, 1963). Rhodes was a frail boy with history of respiratory illness, sent to SA on doctors' orders where the sea and climate were thought to be good for the lungs (*ibid.*). Upon arriving in Natal, Rhodes joined his brother and began realising his entrepreneurial spirit, first farming cotton and later prospecting diamonds (*ibid*.). All the while, "South Africa wound its way into his heart" (*ibid*.: 60).

Rhodes returned to England in 1873 to matriculate at Oriel College, a move many attribute to cementing his allegiance to the British imperialist cause (Lockhart & Woodhouse, 1963; Rotberg, 1988). It was here Rhodes became increasingly vociferous in his belief of the superiority of Englishmen, stating in a speech composed at Oxford:

> "I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings, what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence" (Rhodes, 1877: n.p.).

When Rhodes returned to SA, it was in ardent support of colonialism. As Brown puts it, he was "[a]rmed with a dream to conquer and impregnate the world with the superior values of the British in God's name" (in Nyamnjoh, 2016: 25). He advanced in his mining career and began perusing his political ambitions, becoming a parliamentarian representative at 29 in the midst of the first Anglo-Boer War (Rotberg, 1988). With his ascent in political power, Rhodes began actualising his ideas of northward expansion; the critical foothold of Bechuanaland was his main objective. As Maylam (2005: 2) recounts, with the "realization of this vision, so the story goes, [imperial expansion] becomes the focus of his life's work".

From 1888 – 1895, Rhodes was at the pinnacle of his career, powerful and successful (Maylam, 2005: 3). He was also wealthy, for in addition to his territorial aspirations, Rhodes was "constantly concerned in financial schemes" (The Guardian, 1902: n.p.). He found success in diamonds, securing a monopoly over the industry with his De Beers Consolidated Company in 1888, and established a foothold in the gold-mining industry with the Gold Fields Company (Lockhart & Woodhouse, 1963). Rhodes also founded the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in 1889. Rhodes used his business ventures to push for the

colonization of Matabeleland[14] for as Newsinger observed, "[At this time, c]olonisation by companies was seen as an inexpensive method of Imperial expansion" (2016: 73).

Rhodes' next territorial aspiration was Matabeleland; "If we get Matabeleland, we shall get the balance of Africa" (*ibid.*). In 1888, Rhodes dubiously secured Matabeleland's charter from King Lobengula through the Rudd Concession, granting him exclusive mining rights of the land (Maylam, 2005). A year later, Rhodes used the BSAC to acquire a charter to nearby Mashonaland, prospecting the area for gold and incentivizing white settler occupation of the territory (*ibid.*). With enough settlers traversing through in Matabeleland to launch an attack, Rhodes ordered the invasion of Matabeleland in 1893, a devastating war costing thousands of African lives (Rotberg, 1988). As Newsinger (2016: 72) recounts it,

> "[T]he imposition of BSAC rule [in Matabeleland was] accompanied by wholesale land seizure, the confiscation of cattle, the rape of Africa women, and the imposition of forced labour as the 'native' population were put to work for their new white master".

Continuing his ascent to power in 1890 Rhodes became the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. As Minister, Rhodes introduced what would be called the "first blueprint for apartheid" (Barnabas, 2016: 110): The Glen Grey Act, Act 25 of 1894. The act aimed to deal with "the labour problem of the colony"-- the necessity of a cheap, mobile, African labour force to work the gold and diamond mines-- and addressed "the native question", what to do with 'natives' whose "sloth and laziness" were considered a "distinct source of trouble and loss to the country" (Rhodes, 1894: n.p.). The act also sought to address issues of land tenure and political administration and representation (Thompson & Nichols, 2011).

As Hyam (1976: 298) notes, Rhodes and his act played an important role in the evolution of a racially-determined labour system. Through it, Rhodes imposed poll taxes which forced 'natives' into the cash economy, pioneering the break-up of the traditional communal landholding systems along the way, with the "full intention of creating a supply of landless labourers" (*ibid.*) He did this through introducing 'native reserves', restricting black Africans in their right to own land and pushing them to become dispossessed migrants in search of employment (Thompson & Nichols, 2011; Barnabas, 2016). If they did not work, they were heavily fined (Thompson & Nichols, 2011). Additionally, if 'natives' could not

[14] Now a part of Zimbabwe, which under English colonization (1965-1979) was called Rhodesia after Rhodes.

write their name, address, and occupation, they were not allowed to vote, further disenfranchising large portions of the black African population; in some areas blacks were denied the vote altogether (*ibid*.).[15]

The Glen Grey Act also effectively created the first homeland (Delport & Lephakga, 2016). Rhodes' model of disenfranchising and dispossessing working-class black men would also be integral to the development of some of apartheid's cornerstone legislations, giving rise to the Native Land Act of 1913, the Urban Areas Act of 1922, and the Group Areas Act of 1950 (*ibid.*). Apartheid's special legacy endures, more than 24 years after democratization. The occupation of indigenous territory and the alienation of indigenous peoples continues to foster poverty, injustice, loss of dignity, dispossession, and land disputes.

2.3.1 (Re)conceptualizing Rhodes

The ever-changing interpretation of Rhodes' legacy is the central theme of historian Paul Maylam's 2005 book, *The Cult of Rhodes*. Through it, he investigates how Rhodes has been remembered and (re)remembered, presented and (re)presented, and memorialised post-mortem. Maylam (2002; 2005) recounts how Rhodes was initially revered by hagiographers who penned a heroic figure. In these initial works, Rhodes was described as "the Founder", "the Premier", "the Lawmaker", "the World Stateman" and "the Visionary" (Rotberg, 1988: n.p.; Lockhart & Woodhouse, 1963)

Later biographers began to question Rhodes in these roles, understanding him as a man who was firstly a capitalist, focused on expanding his business interests despite the (in)humane costs (Green, 1936; Maylam, 2002). Increasingly, writing on Rhodes tends to expose his racism and his despicable treatment of indigenous peoples, predominantly viewing them as units of labour (Attwell & Strom, 2016; Maylam, 2002). In the midst of the #RMF movement, even Rhodes' namesake, Rhodes University, released a statement proclaiming, "It cannot be disputed that Cecil John Rhodes was an arch-imperialist and white supremacist who treated people of this region as subhuman" (RU Registrar Office, 2017: n.p.).

[15] This was the case in Pondoland, a suburb of Cape Town (Thompson & Nichols, 2011).

Ultimately, Maylam is unable to account for the enduring cult of Rhodes (2005; Kros, 2007). Most historians and academics now consider Rhodes an arch-imperialist whose actions and legislation have paved the way for apartheid, laying the framework for native reserves, pass laws, Bantu education, and the disenfranchisement of black people (Mangcu, 2017; Maylam, 2002; 2005). UCT historian Rebecca Hodes (2015: n.p.) writes that "more than anyone else - with the arguable exceptions of Frederick Lugard and Belgium's Leopold II- [Rhodes] has come to embody the colonial dispossession and oppression of Africans".

Since the turn of the 20th century, Rhodes has been the "most commemorated figure in Cape Town" and for most of history, his symbolic presence has largely remained untouched (Maylam, 2005: 46). However, as history has shown, it was only a matter of time until changing power relations and social climates would foster resistance to Rhodes' historic and symbolic legacies and its continuing implications.

2.4 #RhodesMustFall

"The world around a monument is never fixed. The movements of life cause monuments to be created, but then it changes how they are seen and understood"

Kirk Savage, 2018

On March 9th, 2015, UCT student and resident of one of apartheid's residual informal settlements, Khayelitsha, dumped faeces on UCT's Rhodes statue. It was a shocking act, one that many admonished, but it was also one that Chumani Maxwele had been scheming since 2014 (Maxwele, 2016). Other than drawing attention to the Rhodes statue, using "poo as the tool of [his] political protest had particular importance" for Maxwele (*ibid.: n.p.*). In using faeces for political protest, Maxwele was utilizing tactics employed by activists in Khayelitsha during the Toilet Wars of 2011 and the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League protestors in 2013.

This 'politics of shit' as Robins (2016) coined it came to stand for the injustices and indignities of daily life under apartheid, as well as the limits of transformation after apartheid's end. In collecting faeces from Khayelitsha, Maxwele dragged the "stench from the urban periphery and its informal settlements to the heart of Cape Town", a metaphor for

the collective pain and disgust at the resilience of colonial education, symbols, and institutionalized racism at UCT and the country at large (Robins, 2016: 480, see also Knudsen et al., 2019; Nyamnjoh, 2016).

Maxwele carried out his protest under the guise of wider protests as part of the Infecting the City live arts festival on UCT's campus (Maxwele, 2016). Donning running shoes, tights and a pink construction hat, he beat a drum and wore placards reading "Exhibit White @Arrogance UCT" and "Exhibit Black Assimilation @ UCT (*ibid.*). Amidst shouts of "Where are *our* heroes and ancestors?" and demands that the Rhodes statue must fall, Maxwele began capturing the attention of the university (Fairbanks, 2015c). By midday, dozens of students had joined in and the Rhodes Must Fall movement officially began (Kros, 2015).

Two days after Maxwele's initial actions, UCT's Student Representative Council (SRC) lent its support to the rapidly expanding movement, voting unanimously to permanently remove Rhodes' statue (Mahapa, 2015). In an 11th March statement on the SRC's position towards the student protests, SRC's President Mahapa stated,

> "For too long, the university has silenced the voices of black (coloured, indian [*sic*], african [*sic*]) students and black history. The university continues to celebrate, in its institutional symbolism, figures in South African history, who are undisputedly white supremacists… The statue is a constant reminder for many black students of the position in society that black people have occupied due to hundreds of years of apartheid, racism, oppression, and colonialism" (*ibid.: n.p.*).

In the week that followed, protests and demonstrations occurred daily on UCT's upper campus. Students, professors, university employees, and tutors, as well as non-academic staff and onlookers all took part, with numbers occasionally swelling near quadruple digits (Fairbanks, 2015). Though Maxwele had catalysed the initial protest of #RMF, the movement officially had no leaders; student activists united in horizontal, inclusive leadership (Pather, 2015c). While the campaign was predominately comprised of activists of colour, white activists were also involved, although their roles were intentionally limited to ensure that black activists led the movement, "safeguarding it from white liberalism" (*ibid.: n.p.*). This decision came about through inspiration from Black Consciousness principles; "[i]t is… crucial that this movement flows from the black voices and black pain that have been continuously ignored and silenced" (RMF, 2015: 6).

The ongoing protests took the form of sit-ins at the base of Rhodes' statue, as well as marches, discussions, and rallies. As it did during the apartheid resistance movement, music and song played a large part in the #RMF protests, with activists playing drums, singing, and rallying around cries of *"Amandla! Awethu!"* (*Power! To Us*) (Fairbanks, 2015: n.p.). During this time, Rhodes' statue was subject to continuous 'interventions' from graffiti to being covered up with sheets, tarps and bin bags (Bester, 2015). In response to the outpouring of protests and demonstrations, on March 16th the university set up boards at the statue's base entitled "Have Your Say", encouraging staff, students and participants to share a "free exchange of ideas on the issue of the statue" (News 24, 2015a). However, hate speech and vandalism was oft the result of this increasingly polarised and emotional contestation (*ibid.*) For many black students and their allies the boards were a rouse, a half-hearted attempt to 'serve democracy' rather than the outright acknowledgment of the university's history of commemorating and supporting white supremacy.

On the same day the university put up the discussion boards UCT hosted a transformation dialogue, asking "Should we expunge campus's historic symbols of Eurocentrism, colonialism and imperialism, or keep them, lest we forget, for our children's children's children's sake?" (UCT Newsroom, 2015a: n.p.). As tensions escalated throughout the discussion, several academics and a panellist, the SRC's president, along with "half the audience" walked out, chanting "We want a date [for the removal of the statue]!", bringing the seminar to a premature close (Farber, 2015: n.p.). As reported to the press after the event, the walk out was a show of solidarity amongst pro-removal activists who refused to engage in superficial topics of transformation "until taken seriously" (Pather, 2015b: n.p.).

Two days after the discussion, UCT's Vice Chancellor (VC) Dr Max Price released a press statement announcing that the Council, UCT's highest governing body, had "initiated a process to review statues, building names and other symbols that affect the institutional climate of UCT, and [investigate] how these affect the sense of inclusiveness or alienation felt by staff and students" (2015a: n.p.). In the communication, Price acknowledged that Rhodes was a symbol of the university's colonial past and that no previous campus-wide discussions related to transformation or the changing interpretation of colonial symbols had

taken place (*ibid.).* A Vula site[16] and an email address, haveyoursay@uct.ac.za, were activated shortly after the press release, allowing staff, students, alumni, and the general public a platform for voicing their opinions on the statue and broader themes of transformation within the campus.

Campus protests continued to escalate and on March 20th, a group marched to UCT's main administrative building, Bremner, beginning the occupation of the building that would last several weeks (Farber, 2015). The reclaimed space was renamed Azania House and became the headquarters for student and staff activists (Ramaru, 2017). Within days, the number of occupiers swelled into the hundreds (*ibid.*). Azania House housed lively debates, lectures and planning sessions, and provided a space for collaboration with different universities in charting a way forward for the removal of Rhodes and the decolonization of South African universities (*ibid.*).

At times, theories and ideas competed and tensions arose, so intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) quickly became a leading tenet of Azania House conversations. The discussions drew from Fanon's theories on the psychopathology of colonization, as well as Pan Africanism, decolonial theory, and Biko's principals of Black Consciousness, but were also challenged by queer politics and black feminism (RMF, 2015; Pather, 2015c; Ndelu et al., 2017). As a result, there were a number of cleavages in the movement and conversations (Ndelu et al., 2017). From these splinters, feminist interventions broke out, including mobilisations by the UCT Trans Collective, Patriarchy Must Fall, and #IamOneinThree,[17] as well as events, workshops, and protests countering the exclusion and violence of heteronormative, patriarchal, and cis-normative rhetoric (*ibid;* Ramaru, 2017).

From these collective influences and discourses, a 'Transformation Memorandum' was drafted and disseminated (RMF, 2015). A petition was also initiated online at Change.org outlining the demands of Rhodes' removal and the 'Fallists', capturing a national and international audience and the signatures of over 1,600 people (Change.org, 2015). The petition and statement explained that the movement was comprised of a collective of "students, workers and staff who have come together to end institutionalized racism and patriarchy at UCT", citing black pain, alienation, and disempowerment symbolised by the

[16] Vula is the name of UCT's system of online collaboration and learning.
[17] The social media handle and movement's name represents the number of women in South Africa who have or will be sexually assaulted or raped in their lifetime (Ndelu et al., 2017).

Rhodes statue (RMF, 2015: 6). According to the memorandum, Rhodes' very presence was "an act of violence", "glorify[ing] a mass murder who exploited black labour and stole land from indigenous people" (*ibid.*).

#RMF largely relied on digital activism and social media to disperse its messages, transforming the nature of the movement both in its organizational capacity and its scope (Pillay, 2016; Ndelu et al., 2017, Knudsen et al., 2019). As Ndelu et al. notes, "…the use of social media was deployed on a scale heretofore unseen in [SA's] national political arena" (2017: 1). Both Facebook and Twitter were instrumental in "setting the mainstream news agenda" in SA, and fostering youth participation, what Bosch (2017) terms a new form of 'subactivism' (*ibid.*). Online activists used the Twitter handle #RMF as a "centring tool" for the discussions (*ibid.*) and posted daily on the #RMF Facebook page about everything from the occupation of Bremner, to the location and nature of upcoming protests, to pictures and videos of protests occurring in real time.

In her reflections of her involvement in the movement, RMF student activist and leader Kealeboga Ramaru noted, "Higher education has always been a contested space in South Africa, particularly in former white universities" (2017: 89). Thus, as the #RMF movement gained momentum at UCT, solidarity movements demanding transformation and denouncing high education's historic culture of white supremacy rapidly emerged. Nationally, #TransformWits emerged at the University of Witwatersrand, Open Stellenbosch began at Stellenbosch University, and the Black Student Movement at the University Currently Known as Rhodes (UCKAR)[18] unfolded (Ndelu et al., 2017). Internationally, a #RhodesMustFall solidarity movement began at Oxford University, calling for the removal of their Rhodes statue (Ndelu et al., 2017). A 'Royal Must Fall' Movement launched at Harvard University, calling for the university's "racist crest" to fall (Peterson, 2016: n.p.).[19] Amidst these internal and external pressures, VC Price announced that he would move up the final decision on Rhodes' removal (Price, 2015a).

[18] In the wake of RMF and the ensuing Fees Must Fall (FMF) movement, students at Rhodes University lobbied for an official name change of the university. While awaiting the outcome, students began referring to the school as the "University Currently Known as Rhodes". The nickname became popular on social media and has made an appearance in several scholarly articles and newspapers, despite the university's decision to keep its original name (Van Niekerk, 2017).

[19] The crest belonged to the Royall family, who bequeathed the land on which Harvard University stands. The crest depicts three slaves buckling under the weight of wheat carried on their backs (Peterson, 2016); see also https://www.facebook.com/RhodesMustFallOxford/; https://www.facebook.com/RoyallMustFall/.

While UCT's #RMF movement was relatively peaceful and reflected guiding principles of non-violence, violent protests in support of #RMF rocked the University of Johannesburg, where police pepper-sprayed and shot rubber bullets at campaigners, and the University of Western Cape, where students blocked buses exiting campus and allegedly set fire to two campus buildings (Nicolson, 2015). The Cape Peninsula University of Technology also engaged in 'violent' solidarity actions damaging university property, leading to the university's VC to suspend classes (*ibid.*).

On March 27th, UCT's Senate voted 181 – 1 to remove Rhodes (UCT Communication and Marketing Department, 2015). Shortly thereafter, VC Price filed an emergency application for the temporary removal and storage of the Rhodes statue with Heritage Western Cape (HWC), the governmental organization presiding over heritage concerns for Cape Town's Western Cape Province (Nyamnjoh, 2016: 145). In the application's cover letter Price urgently requested the matter be expedited, citing "threats that there will be attempts to topple the statue during or around the Two Oceans marathon", an event to be held on UCT's campus from the 3rd – 5th of April, (Price, 2015c: n.p.).

The permit was granted and on the morning of April 8th April, UCT's Council cemented the decision to remove Rhodes (UCT Newsroom, 2015b). In a press release, the university stated that the permanent removal of the statue was "a symbol of the Council's renewed commitment to the process of transformation at UCT" (UCT Properties and Services, 2015: n.p.). On April 9th, hundreds of people came to celebrate the moment Rhodes was removed from his plinth (Etheridge, 2016).[20] As Rhodes fell, the crowd erupted into cheers and songs. Some belted and beat the statue with rubbish and a wooden beam while others pelted it with paint as it was lifted onto a flat-bed truck and removed to an undisclosed location (*ibid;* Nyamnjoh, 2016).

After more than a year and a half of heritage reports, investigations, public consultation processes, meetings, decisions and appeals, HWC addressed the fate of the permanent relocation of the Rhodes statue. On October 31st, 2016, the *Section 27(18)*

[20] There have been varying estimates on the number of bystanders present for Rhodes' removal. Videos of the removal appear to show a few hundred spectators (see *Rhodes Falls at UCT*, 2016; *Watch the Historic Moment Rhodes Fell at UCT*; 2015), while others have estimated up to "10,000" people (Ramaru, 2015: 93).

Application for the Permanent Removal of the Rhodes Statue at UCT granted Rhodes' permanent relocation. This relocation was subject to four conditions:

> "The continued storage and safe-keeping of the statue by UCT; [that] the future location of the statue [be] subject to HWC approval; [that] the future of the remaining upper and lower plinth and the role of the plinth in the re-interpretation of the space previously occupied by the statue [be] subject to a separate Section 27 application, informed by a consultation process; [and that] any proposed conservation work to the statue is subject to HWC approval (BELCom, 2016: n.p.).

As of research conducted in December 2018, the statue has not permanently been relocated. It continues to be stored and safeguarded in an undisclosed location under the eye of HWC (Nyamnjoh, 2016).

Figure 5: The removal of Cecil John Rhodes on April 9, 2015. Credit: Sumaya Hisham/ Reuters.

2.5 Discourse surrounding the calls for the removal of Rhodes

Both the Rhodes statue and the #RMF movement became a flash point of cultural contestation, not just in the university space but in the country at large. It brought to the fore unresolved issues of identity, belonging, and the right to heritage in the aftermath of apartheid and a regime arguably guilty of 'whitewashing' history. Contestation over Rhodes' removal will be discussed in section 2.5, with subsections 2.51 surveying commonly invoked removalist arguments and 2.5.2 highlighting preservationist arguments

2.5.1 Rhodes Must Fall

The UCT RMF Mission Statement is integral in understanding the pro-removal arguments invoked against Rhodes, outlining many of the widely reiterated arguments for the statue's removal (RMF, 2015). The statement maintains that the racism and patriarchy Rhodes represents is pervasive not only in institutions of high learning in SA, but in its society in general, a society that has promised transition and transformation but has "remained unchanged since the formal end of apartheid" (*ibid.: 6*). The manifesto argues that this lack of transformation is reinforced through UCT's culture and symbolism, and "remain[s] a testament to the country's colonial heritage in terms of what [it] teach[es], who does the teaching, and the morally odious symbols that haunt our campuses or lurk in their very names" (McKaiser, 2015: n.p.; Nyamnjoh, 2016). This symbolism, according to SRC President Mahapa, doesn't say "black child, be proud" (in Pather, 2015a: n.p.), but celebrates white supremacy and privileges "whiteness as the political and cultural agenda of South Africa" (Nyamnjoh, 2016: 84). It is a "heritage that hurts" rather than one that reflects hope (Chirikure, 2015: 6).

Barnabas (2016: 11) furthers these arguments for removal, contending that the campus's "disarticulation of certain heritages", black heritages, perpetuate a singular, (white) version of history. The presence of Rhodes reinforces this and thus "erases black history" (RMF, 2015). As such is the quintessential "embodiment of black alienation and disempowerment" (Nyamnjoh, 2017: 261; Mangcu, 2017). The movement's manifesto argues that this alienation functions to show people of colour that "their history, culture and language [are] inferior", upholding white supremacy and dehumanising black bodies (Matandela, in Nyamnjoh, 2015: 262; RMF, 2015). Therefore, how the statue "makes students feel about themselves is at the core of the RMF Movement" (RMF, 2015: 6).

By removing the statue, strides are made at rectifying the false creation narrative of SA, one rooted in colonial ideas and Afrikaner nationalism. As such, another core argument is that it is time to embrace a more "inclusive historical narrative" (Ally, 2015: 7), one that disturbs the "normalisation of colonisation and white supremacy" (RMF, 2015); one that will perhaps eventually "counte[r] a long legacy of absence and suppression" of non-white history

and heritage, both at UCT and in the county at large (Marschall, 2010: 3). As Goodrich and Bombardella (2016: 5) argue, the time has come for "statues etching a colonial narrative into the past [to] go", for every statue, street name, mountain range and river "enact the colonial wound [and] reminds native people of their position in the colonial matrix of power."

2.5.2 Rhodes Must Stay

Despite vociferous calls for the removal of Rhodes, the discussion has been far from unanimous. There have been many ardent voices against the removal and relocation of the statue. In their article on challenging public memory strategies in SA, Holmes and Loehwing (2016: 1208) found that common arguments invoked to critique the movement included assertions that:

> "protesters were more concerned with frivolous symbols instead of pressing, real-world problems; that they demonstrated a lack of reverence for the multicultural ethos of the Rainbow Nation; and that their actions were immature and attention-seeking".

The need to focus on 'real' issues was reiterated in findings by Goodrich and Bombardella (2016: 8), who found preservationists felt concerns like "poverty, inequality, environmental problems, state corruption [and] crime" deserved primacy of attention, invalidating the attention placed on Rhodes.

In a survey of online comments from local news station News24, Barnabas (2016: 117) found that engagement from preservationists contained hints of racism and even outright hate speech, with words like 'uncivilised', 'idiots', 'disrespectful', and 'monkeys' commonly invoked in discussions. Many such commentators followed the argument that "civilisation and technological advancements were brought to Africa by the 'white man'" and these 'positive' aspects should outweigh and excuse any negative side effects (*ibid).* As such, Rhodes should be respected and commemorated as a harbinger of modernity and development, evaluated not as racist but as one simply "guilty of paternalism and cultural elitism" (Mensing, Jr., 1986: 104; Newsinger, 2016; Mushonga, n.d.).

Others criticised the calls for removal as too simplistic, an option that relied on underlying beliefs about the meaning of statuary as fixed, permanent, and binary (Schmahmann, 2016). As such, Schmahmann argues this binary interpretation of historical

figures and statuary hinders the opportunity for further debate (n.d.: 5). Removing Rhodes closes future opportunities for critical engagement with his ever-changing legacy and hampers the possibility for creative (temporary) interventions to disrupt the dominant narrative (Schmahmann, 2016: 108; Marschall, 2017a). As Lemon (2016: n.p.) states, "[a] healthy culture does not cease to remember those with whom it has come to disagree. Rather, with the help of historians, it endlessly debates and revises its assessment of them." Taken collectively, these arguments call for the presence of memorial devices to stay and for their meaning to be re-worked and re-assessed, instead of removed, for a nuanced, depoliticised understanding.

Another preservationist theme emerging in anti- removal discourse centres around the belief that removal censors or sanitizes history. This is the "Hands off Rhodes" stance taken by the ANC's Minister of Arts and Culture stated, "As a government that promotes a transformative national agenda, we also accept that the past cannot and should not be completely wiped out" (Hartley, 2015: n.p.). It is a stance that the ANC's opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), also shares, with their provincial party leader maintaining "Destroying statues cannot change our history" (The Citizen, 2015; n.p.). "Removing [Rhodes] omits an essential part of the institution's history that has contributed to everything good, bad and ugly about it – and arguably the country too" (Mnyanda in Holmes & Loehwing, 2016: 1208).

Others take this position further, likening the removal of Rhodes to regimes that "burn books or […] the Taliban who destroy archaeological sites in the Middle East" (Lemon, 2016: n.p.), "show[ing] the same disregard for history as Isis fighters (Johnson in Hurst, 2015). From the view of removal as iconoclasm, it is dangerous when statues are used as political tools of the ruling regime, removed when they no longer fit the ideological narrative. This is also the position of heritage groups such as the Heritage Association of South Africa (HASA), who stated arguments used for Rhodes' removal were "founded on political ideals and used for sectarian gains", thus violating section 5(1)d of the NHRA of 1999 (Stolz, 2015: n.p.).

Those who argued against the removal of Rhodes also cautioned that removal can cause a form of historical amnesia. Supporters argued that removal can causes citizens to forget their past and prevent future generations from learning from it. Such rationalizations

often centre around the need for memory markers to be used as historical reference points, physical markers of a "chequered" past, used to see and thus remember "the dark side of history" (Marshall, 2009: 32), and form the "basis for a better common future" (Wessels, 1994: 283).

The need to 'protect heritage' is another central theme in anti-removal discourse. Some critics of #RMF liken the destruction of cultural heritage to genocide: "When a group's cultural heritage is deliberately destroyed, there is no doubt that the group itself is under attack" (Laband, 2015: 19). They posture #RMF is about rewriting and replacing history, an attack on white South Africans' 'cultural patrimony' by those who fail to understand how the protection of heritage is linked to the protection/survival of a group's culture, and thus its existence. In this view, the destruction of 'white' cultural heritage by the newly empowered black majority rule turns the "formally oppressed into the new oppressors" (Bevan in Laband, 2015: 21; Holmes & Loehwing, 2016). As voiced by Warwick (2015: n.p.), the underlying fear is that "[t]here will be no stop to demands to suit black nationalism".

White civil rights groups, such as the Afrikaner solidarity group AfriForum and AfriForum youth, utilized such arguments in their counter-protests for the removal of Rhodes and other apartheid-era memory markers, presenting their beliefs in a memorandum to Parliament in April 2015 (Batt, 2015). Their convictions played out during protests against statue removal on April 9th at the base of Paul Kruger's statue in Church Square, Pretoria. Led by far- right political groups such as Freedom Front Plus and Front National party, white demonstrators gathered holding signs stating, "The ANC has blood on their hands, white Afrikaner blood", "If colonial statues aren't safe, are we?", and "Hands off our heritage, this is genocide" (News 24, 2015b: n.p.). Other protesters chained themselves to Kruger while singing the apartheid anthem "*Die Stem*" (Laing, 2015). Similar counter-protests, organized by white civil rights groups, took place across the country.[21]

From the nature of the arguments used to call for and against Rhodes' removal, it is clear the issue is about more than just removal. The statue has acquired symbolic capital and one's position on removal represents wider, ideological stances; the statue has become deeply

[21] This includes Jan van Riebeek statue in Cape Town, memorializing the Dutch colonist who founded the city. During an anti-removal rally held on April 8th, activists gathered in the dozens. Some chained themselves to the statue, while others chanted slogans such as "Enough is Enough!" (Malgas, 2015).

politicised. Those on the side of removal capitalise on the statue's symbolism as a reflection of oppression, alienation, and hate from a past steeped in colonial and apartheid-era white supremacy and black inferiority. Those on the side of preservation try to mitigate this symbolic meaning, arguing its value as a reflection of history that should not be erased simply because of current trends to politicize it. Both sides are adamantly opposed to one another, reflective of deeper underlying division, playing out in protests that rocked SA in the wake of Rhodes' fall.

2.6 Outcomes: South Africa's Statue Revolution?

From April until June 2015, dozens of monuments commemorating colonialism and Afrikaner nationalism were vandalized around South Africa. The spate of defacements started with the 'necklacing'[22] of Uitenhage's Anglo-Boer War memorial (Spies, 2015a; Schmahmann, 2016: 111) but went on to include the vandalism of King George V's statue at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Paul Kruger Statue in Pretoria, and Louis Botha's statue outside Cape Town's parliament. The National Heritage Council estimated that 2015 had "probably the highest record of defac[ed] statues" in history (NHC, 2015: n.p.). Marschall (2017a) notes that in the first two months after #RMR alone, 20 monuments were defaced with additional defacement continuing throughout the year. In most cases, bronze statues in public spaces were targeted with paint or graffitied with slogans such as the "end white privilege" that was sprayed on UKZN's King George V statue (*ibid.*; Khoza, 2015).

While most of the statue defacements were done anonymously and independently of one another, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) claimed responsibility for a number of the acts around the country (Dolley, 2015; Ferreira, 2015). Following the successful removal of Rhodes, EFF party leader Julius Malema urged South Africans to "tear down symbols reminding them of apartheid" (Ferreira, 2015: n.p.). "The toppling of colonial statues is part of EFF's signal, which indicates rejection of the economic system that has been imposed on us by foreigner settlers," stated Madwara, the EFF's deputy chairperson (in Spies, 2015b: n.p.). Despite calling for statuary removal, the "radical, leftist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist" party (EFF, n.d.) played a limited role in the so-called 'Statue Revolution' (The

[22] 'Necklacing', the practice of placing a petrol soaked tyre around a victim's neck and lighting it on fire, was gruesome act originating in the mid 1980's, widely associated as form of extra-legal punishment for those accused as functionaries of the apartheid state.

Heritage Portal, 2015). Instead, the party appropriated the parallel and related movement of #FeesMustFall (#FMF), to be discussed in the following subsection.

2.6.1 Current state of the phenomenon: Movement or moment?

A scan of South Africa's news media in late 2018 shows that although the issue of statue removal has surfaced from time to time since 2015,[23] the movement has largely been subsumed under wider calls for decolonisation and fees associated with tertiary education to 'fall'. These calls gained momentum the form of #FeesMustFall, erupting at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in October of 2015 off of the momentum and activism of #RMR (Nyamnjoh, 2017: 262; Pillay, 2016; Ndelu et al., 2017). Writing on the movement highlights how although the doors of learning have been figuratively opened for all South African students, economic exclusion remains a reality, especially for students of colour (Ndelu et al., 2017). Thus, the #FMF protest movement started in response to Wits' proposed 10.5 per cent fee increase for the 2016 academic year. It rapidly spread to almost all of South African's 26 universities by 2016's end, many of which were instituting similar fee increases, an inconceivable and exasperating hurdle for many black families barely able to afford university tuition as is (*ibid.*; Fairbanks, 2015c). Although protests continued into 2017, the close of 2018's academic semester saw little unrest related to the #FMF movement. Despite this, the issue of reduced/ free higher education has yet to be resolved and will likely surface again (*ibid.).*

Calls for decolonisation have been equally prolific, surfacing in flyers, lectures, panel discussions, university courses, and conferences held at UCT and across South Africa. As Heleta (2016) reminds us, 'decolonisation' calls on the dismantling of epistemic violence, Eurocentric knowledge production, and the power structures at the heart of the colonial project. Ramoupi (2014, n.p.) further articulates that:

> "The colonial and apartheid curriculum in South Africa has promoted white supremacy and dominance, as well as stereotyping of Africa… The current higher education curriculum still largely reflects the colonial and apartheid worldviews and is disconnected from African realities, including the lived experiences of the majority of black South Africans."

[23] See the EFF's calls for removal of the Paul Kruger statue in May of 2018 in Tshwane, Pretoria (Haden, 2018).

Calls for decolonisation extend not only to SA's higher education but are fundamentally intertwined with the country's symbolic landscape and society as a whole. As #RMF's manifesto states, decolonisation is "linked to the black condition both nationally and internationally" (RMF, 2015: 12; Van Der Wal, 2015).

The above chapter has discussed the life, times, and ideologies of Cecil Rhodes, ideologies which have been projected onto his statue. As such, the statue has undergone a change in symbolic capital from a bronze effigy to a symbol of the Rainbow Nation's many lingering social and racial cleavages. The impassioned debate that unfolded over both the removal and preservation of the statue speaks to how deeply divided the country remains, despite its widely hailed post-conflict reconciliatory measures. Although calls for the removal of colonial and apartheid-era statuary occurred across the nation, UCT's Rhodes statue was the only monument to come down as a result of SA's nation-wide reckoning over historical narratives and their intersections with race, heritage, memory, and representation in 2015.

3. Chapter Three: "Take him down!" Calls for the removal of Charlottesville, Virginia's Robert E. Lee's statue

3.1 Context

"We recognize the fact of the inferiority stamped upon that race of men by the Creator, and from the cradle to the grave, our Government, as a civil institution, marks that inferiority".

Jefferson Davis, 1860
Future President of the Confederate States of America

Midway through the 19th century a war between the states was brewing. Sectional tensions between North and South were reaching their breaking point. Each side was deeply entrenched in their state interests: the institution of chattel slavery was bitterly contested and in jeopardy for the South, and unification and the nation's identity as a land of progress and democracy was severely threatened for the North (Barber, 2008). The 1860 national election saw these disputes come to a head as Abraham Lincoln, an abolitionist, was elected into office as the third President of the United States.

On the 20th of December 1860, South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union. Their ordinance of secession, *The Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union* (1860: n.p.) declared:

> "A geographical line has been drawn across the Union, and all the States north of that line have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States, whose opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery… [black people in some states have been elevated] to citizenship, persons who, by the supreme law of the land, are incapable of becoming citizens; and their votes have been used to inaugurate a new policy, hostile to the South, and destructive of its beliefs and safety."

By 1861, 11 states had joined South Carolina and seceded from the Union, forming the Confederate States of America (CSA); the right to own human slaves was quickly enshrined in the CSA's constitution. As evidenced by the constitution and multiple states' declarations

for secession, the protection of slavery was a key motivating factor for the South.[24] Slavery and the racial hierarchy it depended upon was a "pillar of Confederate life" (Brooks, 2015: n.p.; Beetham, 2016; Hague & Sebesta, 2011; Müller, 2004; Stampp, 1956).

Over the next four years, the undermanned, underfunded, and undersupplied Confederate troops fought against Northern armies to protect their 'peculiar institution'[25] until the Confederacy surrendered in the spring of 1865 (McPherson, 1996). When the dust of the Civil War settled, the loss of life was prolific: over 620,000 people had died and a quarter of the white military age men in the Confederacy had been killed (American Battlefield Trust, n.d.). Union commander General Grant's 'total war' had destroyed both the Confederacy's economy and morale: farmlands had been burned, entire towns evacuated, and railroads torn from the ground (McPherson, 1996).

Lincoln's 1863 Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction paved the way towards reconciliation and unification, enabling Southerners to declare an oath of future loyalty to re-join the Union, while the Reconstruction Acts of 1867-1868 plotted the way for Southern states to re-enter (Foner, 2018).[26] Under Lincoln's Reconstruction plan, Union armies occupied former Confederate territories and installed governments of limited power (Perman, 1987). They also rebuilt damaged infrastructure and enforced the post-war civil rights legislations for Southern blacks who had recently been freed under Lincoln's 1865 Emancipation Proclamation and empowered under the 13th - 15th amendments (*ibid.*; Mintz & McNeil, 2018; Foner, 2018).[27]

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[24] Article IV, Section 3.(3) of the CSA's constitution (1861) stated: *"In all such territory the institution of negro slavery, as it now exists in the Confederate States, shall be recognized and protected by Congress and by the Territorial government"*. Slavery and notions of white supremacy were also explicitly mentioned as reasons for secession in many individual state declarations, including Texas' Declaration for Secession: *"We hold as undeniable truths that the governments of the various States, and of the Confederacy itself, were established exclusively by the white race, for themselves and their posterity; that the African race had no agency in their establishment; that they were rightfully held and regarded as an inferior and dependent race"*. Mississippi's declaration stated *"Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery — the greatest material interest of the world"* (Gunter et al., 2018).

[25] A term for slavery, popularized by Stampp's analysis of chattel slavery in the American South in *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (1956).

[26] Also known as the Military Reconstruction Acts or "An act to provide for the more efficient government of the Rebel States", the Reconstruction Acts were comprised of 4 pieces of legislation addressing the requirements for Southern States to be readmitted into the Union. They created 5 military districts to be commanded by a general, new state constitutions, and mandated the ratification of the 14th and 15th amendments (Foner, 2018; Mintz & McNeil, 2018; Perman, 1987).

[27] The 13th Amendment, ratified in 1865, abolished slavery and involuntary servitude; the 14th Amendment granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the US, including former slaves, affording them "equal

Despite the intentions of Emancipation and Reconstruction, the era was marked by blame, bitterness and disappointment; historical consensus is that the period was largely a failure (Perman, 1987: 48-60; Fredrickson, 1981). As Mark Twain noted, the Civil War and its aftermath "uprooted institutions that were centuries old, changed the politics of a people, [and] transformed the social life of half the country" (in McPherson, 1996: viii-ix). The death of slavery gave way to a "new birth of freedom", one the demanded profound cultural transformation in addition to the political (Savage, 1997). This transformation faced vigorous opposition from Southerners who adamantly rejected Northern 'reconstruction' measures, measures they felt meant the complete and utter destruction of the 'Southern Way of Life' (Wilson, 1980: 222). This was a way of life based wholly on white supremacy and the subordination of African-Americans who were now entitled, much to the disgust of many white Southerners, to equal rights and citizenship, de jur belonging to the nation.

Thus, a fundamental element of Lincoln's Reconstruction plans, the protection of freedmen, faced fierce and violent backlashes, both in the social and political realms (Perman, 1987; Cell, 1982; Fredrickson, 1981). As post-war frustration and disenchantment set in, Northern troops began vacating their posts and efforts throughout the South (*ibid*.). Without the North's supervision, Southerners quickly began dismantling the civil rights protections put in place after the war, effectively reversing any progress made during Reconstruction (Beetham, 2016; Fredrickson, 1981). With Reconstruction abandoned, the "hopes of newly freed men and women were quickly and decisively dashed" and the "formerly enslaved slipped back into lives that were marked by enduring poverty, racial subordination and harsh brutality" (Bergin & Rupprecht, 2016: 15; Fredrickson, 1981).

3.1.1 The mythologization of the Lost Cause

In the aftermath of the Civil War, both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line[28] began constructing monuments to commemorate their fallen heroes. This initial period of memorialization[29]

protection of the laws"; the15th Amendment, ratified in February of 1870, prohibited the denial of a citizen's right to vote based on their "race, colour, or previous condition of servitude" (Foner, 2018).

[28] Named after two English surveyors, the Mason-Dixon line was the original boundary line between Maryland (to the south) and Pennsylvania (to the north). Pre-Civil War, this line became known as the dividing line between slave states and free states (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017).

[29] Generally termed the "Bereavement and Funeral Era" (Sedore, 2011: 3).

often took place next to battlefields as a way to come to terms with suffering, "dr[awing] directly from the visual language of grief, a sense of loss and defeat" (Beetham, 2016: 12; Gilbert, 2017; Grobler, 2007). In the decades following the war, however, two distinct spikes of Confederate commemoration emerged: the period from 1890's - 1920's and the 1950's – 1960's (Gunter et al., 2018). This veneration varied greatly from previous Civil War memorialisation efforts (Savage, in Slevin, 2017; Gilbert, 2017). Charlottesville's Lee monument-- the monument at the centre of this case study-- was constructed during the first peak of Confederate veneration in 1924, almost 50 years after the war's end.[30] This period saw the construction of more than 400 Confederate monuments (Gunter et al., 2018), a surge that coincided the war's semi-centennial and a marked ideological shift at the turn of the century: the emergence of the Lost Cause (Beetham, 2016).

After the war, (white) Southerners were eager to make sense of their defeat and (white) Northerners were devoted to reconciliation (Beetham, 2016; Blight, 2001). Vital to this reconciliation was a history both sides could agree on, a history that absolved guilt, blurred the causes of the war, and depoliticized the past in a "vacuous, meaningless, [and] homogenous [way, so] that no locality could take pride in a distinctive history and identity" (Schultz, 2011:1239). For Southern whites, this meant a history that politely ignored slavery (Schwalm, 2008). It meant a history that turned the widespread suffering resulting from the war's loss into victory in the battle for nobility and what was right: the antebellum South's values and way of life (Grobler, 2007: 207; Beetham, 2016; Barnett, 2013). For Northern whites, it meant a history that would "ignore or overwrite the unresolved struggle for black citizenship" (Schwalm, 2008: 291) and most easily resolve the sectional dispute (Blight 2001).

From these grave needs came the collective re-writing of history through the Lost Cause (LC), a historical narrative introduced in Edward Pollard's *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (1866). Pollard's narrative quickly took root, emerging in various writings, speeches, performances, and prints. It presented a version of history tailored from the white Southern perspective, recasting the purpose of the war and the reasons for the South's defeat (Pollard, 1866; Mills, 2003; Gilbert, 2017). The revisionist narrative depoliticised and "nobly" reconfigured the war as the agrarian South's "hopeless

[30] A period known as the "Reconciliation" or "Celebration Era" (Sedore, 2011: 3).

fight for state's rights against the industrialized North", side-lining the issue of slavery in the process (Blair, 2004: 2). It is this narrative that has been cemented in collective minds of the general American public, reaching its zenith with films such as *Gone with the Wind* (Curtis, 2017).

With slavery masterfully recast as "the mildest [institution] in the world" (*No one needs to put an end to slavery if it's not bad*!), the causes of war were also reconfigured for the North, from abolition to unification (Pollard in Curtis, 2017: n.p.; Blight, 2001). Thus, in the name of reconciliation and under pretences of facilitated unification, white Northerners largely left the myth of the LC untouched (*ibid.*) The narrative cemented Southern history as the story of Southern whites coming to terms with loss and jarring, unjust changes to their antebellum way of life, while simultaneously annihilating the struggles, gains, contributions, and histories of Southern blacks during this period (Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Alderman, 2010).

Essential in propagating the South's LC ideology were Southern memorial societies, spirited defenders of antebellum culture (Centner, 2002). United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) were and continue to be two of the most influential heritage defenders dedicated to "preserving the history and legacy of [our] heroes so that future generations can understand the motives that animated the Southern Cause" (SCV, n.d.). They saw, as Cobb (2011, n.p.) notes, "the potential to spin history into propaganda", ensuring the Confederacy and its leaders were memorialised in a "favourable light". In addition to lobbying congressmen, promoting the LC in Southern history books, and holding essay writing contests for Southern children to "write about the 'truth' of the LC" the societies were responsible for funding Confederate monuments (Blight, 2001: 80-81; Mills, 2003). According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), the UDC were responsible for the construction of 438 statues during the first wave of Confederate commemoration-- a period which coincided with the height of the group's popularity (Burkhardt, 2011); the SVC were responsible for 85 (Gunter et al., 2018).

Unlike Confederate memorialisation directly after the war, statues during this first peak were predominantly placed in front of court houses and in public parks (Beetham,

2016).[31] They were also inscribed with "fiery Lost Cause rhetoric", justifying the Confederate cause (*ibid*.: 17). An example of such rhetoric inscribed on Prince George, Virginia's Confederate monument reads, "[…]UNDYING DEVOTION TO DUTY AND COUNTRY" (Seabrook, 2015: 22).[32] As Beetham argues and Winberry's 1983 study furthers, courthouses in Southern cities were focal points of power and civic participation. They were also sites of brutal racially-based violence and lynching.

During this period, Southern whites increasingly used tactics of intimidation, humiliation, and terror to reinforce segregation, superiority, and control in order to quash the civil rights gains and liberties granted to blacks after the war (Beetham, 2016). The climate of fear this generated was exacerbated by the resurgence of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) and newly enacted Jim Crow laws, aimed at disenfranchising Southern blacks (Gunter et al., 2018; Fredrickson, 1981).[33] As an increasing number of Southern whites took the fight against black equality into their own hands, lynching between 1910 and 1919 averaged 65 per year (Ellis, 2011: xiii). Thus, as Confederate monuments went up during this time "so did the bodies of black men, women, and children during a long rash of lynching" (Cox, 2017: n.p.). As Cox notes, "Confederate monuments have always been symbols of white supremacy" (*ibid*.).

A second, smaller peak of Confederate commemoration occurred from the 1950's – 1960's, with nearly 50 monuments were erected; a large number of these dedications were to Confederate General Robert E. Lee (Gunter et al., 2018). This spike was equally as symbolic as the first, as statues erected during this time coincided not only with the Civil War's centennial celebrations, but with the American civil rights movement (*ibid.*). The civil rights movement saw mass protests against racial segregation, inequality, violence, and racial discrimination, and as it swept through the South, so did efforts by segregationists to suppress it (Carson, 2018; Cox, 2017).

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[31] In his 1983 study, Winberry found that 93 per cent of Confederate monuments placed in courthouse squares were erected between 1903- 1912.

[32] Inscribed on Prince George, Virginia's Confederate monument. Other inscriptions on monuments from this 'first peak' include Spotsylvania, Virginia's Confederate courthouse monument (1918) reading "WHO BORE THE FLAG OF/ OUR NATION'S TRUST,/ AND FELL IN THE CAUSE/ 'THO LOST, JUST STILL" and Victoria, Lunenburg County, Virginia's Confederate monument (1916) which states " IN MEMORY OF THE/ CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS/ OF LUNENBURG COUNTY,/ AND THE CAUSE FOR WHICH/ THEY FOUGHT". For more, see Seabrook, 2015.

[33] A series of comprehensive laws that enforced racial segregation in the South between the end of the Reconstruction period and the commencement of the civil rights movement of the 1950's (Urofsky, 2018).

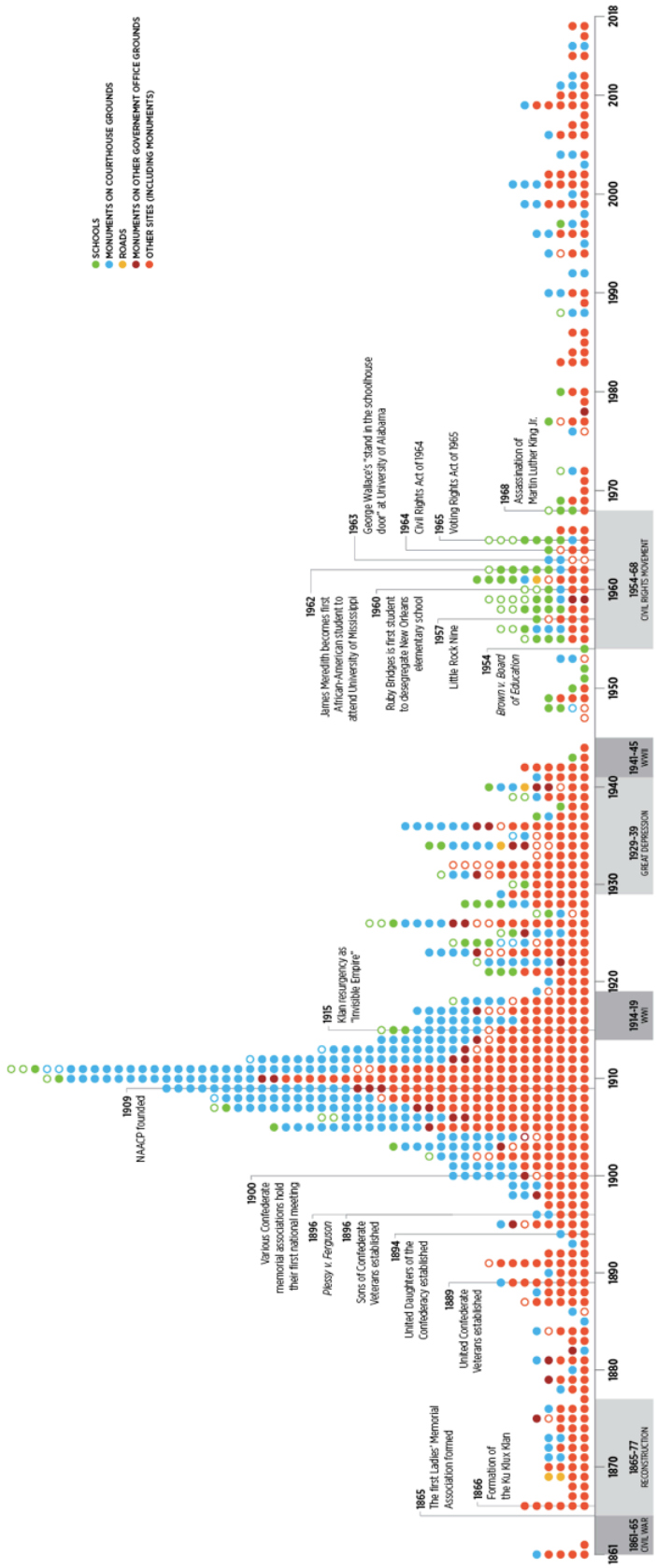

Figure 6: "Whose Heritage? 153 Years of Confederate Iconography". Credit: Gunter et al./ Southern Poverty Law Center. January 26, 2019.

3.1.2 Memorialising white supremacy

As Foner (2017a) and Gwasia (2001) remind us, statues say more about the era in which they were erected than the historical era they evoke. As such, when post-war peaks of Confederate commemoration are discussed within their socio-political and cultural contexts, light is shed on the symbolism and power relations imbued within the statuary. Therefore, the first peak of monument building can be understood as a post- Reconstruction (re)assertion of white supremacy, with Confederate statues served as daily reminders to recently liberated blacks of their place in society (Beetham, 2016). Confederate statues were deliberately placed in public focal points, delineating and claiming the space for white Southerners and making it impossible to forget the Confederate regime they represented, one formed to "preserve slavery, enforce white supremacy, and impose racially motivated violence on black Southerners" (*ibid*.: 17-19; Hague & Sebestat, 2011). The statues were intended as menacing symbols to assert powerless on Southern blacks, symbolic countering's of the freedoms gained by through emancipation and the 13th - 15th amendments, heightened by the mythologization of the LC (Wilson, 1980; Blight, 2001; Gunter et al., 2018).

The second peak of Confederate statuary can be understood as a (re)reminder of the subservient position of blacks in American society during a time when people of colour were challenging the status quo and fighting for equal rights. As Mills recounts, from some Southern perspectives the legal victories of the civil rights movement[34] "represented another imposition of northern control on the former states of the Confederacy" (2003: xxiii). Confederate statuary thus rose as a tangible response to this. The monuments were physical representations of the segregationist backlash against the civil rights movement's calls for equality (Brundage, 2018: 327; Mills, 2003; Wilson, 1980). It is also notable that during this period, many Southern state legislatures voted to place Confederate flags atop their capitol buildings for the first time (Mills, 2003). Both statues and flags were "acts of defiance"; assertions of white Southern pride, harking back to the "good ole days" of the antebellum South's firmly defined racial order (*ibid.*: xxiii).

[34] Including the Supreme Court's landmark decision in 1954's *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which ruled school segregation unconstitutional, Congress's 1964 Civil Rights Act, outlawing discrimination based on race, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, an attempt by then President Johnson to overcome the legal barriers many Black Americans faced when attempting to vote.

3.2 The Statue

"We delight in the monuments of our leaders, we are making the memories of the people of our state as lasting as bronze and granite, but these tributes are lasting only as long as the elements will permit, but we of the South, in our hearts have the love of the heroes of the Confederacy."

Commander Miller, 1924
Sons of Confederate Veterans, Virginia Chapter
Robert E. Lee's unveiling ceremony

Figure 7: Robert E Lee's statue standing in Freedom Park, Charlottesville, Virginia. September 10, 2011. Credit: Mark Whittle/ Flickr.

No former Confederate state has more monuments dedicated to the Confederacy than Virginia, and no Confederate figures are more memorialized than the "big three": Jefferson Davis, Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson, and Robert E. Lee (Grobler, 2006: 211; Gunter et al., 2018). Of these Southern icons it is arguably Lee that has most captured the nation's imagination, a legacy that has withstood the test of time. A survey conducted in 1996-- more than 130 years after the Civil War's end-- found that Lee is still admired by 64 per cent of Southern respondents, and an even more surprising 60 per cent of non-Southern respondents (Cobb, 2011). A first-of-its-kind, country-wide study conducted by the SPLC in 2016 found that 1,503 place names and symbols dedicated to the Confederacy;[35] of these, 225 symbols

[35] This number, as the study reports, is "far from comprehensive" but is the best and most updated information available and is widely cited. Per the findings, the SPLC states that "the sum does *not* include approximately 2,570 Civil War battlefields, markers, plaques, cemeteries and similar symbols that for the most part, merely reflect historical events" (Gunter et al., 2018).

(including 16 statues) were dedicated to Lee (Gunter et al., 2018). Following Lee, 149 symbols (including 48 statues) commemorated Davis and 110 symbols (14 statues) memorialised Jackson (*ibid.*).[36] It is with this in mind that this thesis has focused on Lee and embarks on exploring his Charlottesville statue.

Standing in what used to be McIntire- Lee Park in Charlottesville, Virginia, the bronze, 26-foot-tall statue of Lee depicts the Confederate army's top general, larger than life, atop a horse (Sedore, 2011: 182).[37] They stand on a granite plinth, simply inscribed with "Robert Edward Lee 1807- 1870" (*ibid.*). Sedore, author of *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments*, describes the Charlottesville rendition of Lee as quintessential: an "elaborate" yet simplistic statue with an understated script, as his importance to Virginia is "self-evident" (*ibid.*). Praised in *Confederate Veteran,* a magazine dedicated to "the interests of Confederate veterans and kindred topics", the statue was described as "masterful", beautifully highlighting Lee's "dignity, nobleness, and fighting spirit" (in Sedore, 2011: 182; *The Online Books Page*, n.d.)

Lee's statue was commissioned by Charlottesville-born philanthropist Paul Goodloe McIntire, whose father was the mayor of Charlottesville during the Civil War and was forced to surrender the city to the Union when its cavalry took over in 1865 (Demetrio & Wingo, 2018). Heralded as a patron of the arts, when McIntire made his fortune in the stock market, he donated 4 statues and 5 parks to Charlottesville and the University of Virginia (UVA), stipulating most of the parks be racially segregated (BRC, 2016: 7; Patton & Camp, 1924). McIntire commissioned New York artist Henry Shrady to complete the statue, but upon his untimely death, acclaimed Italian sculptor Leo Lentelli completed Lee (*ibid.*).[38] Both Shrady and Lentelli were renowned members of the National Sculpture Society and were considered

[36] These numbers fluctuates as data collection is ongoing, publicly collected and vetted by the SPLC. Symbols continue to be added to the publicly available spreadsheet and removals continue to take place. Symbols included are categorized as bodies of water, buildings, cities, monuments, commemorative license plates, counties, highways and roads, holidays, military bases, schools, and parks. As of the conclusion of my research in January, 2019, this data was last updated in August, 2018. See https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17ps4aqRyaIfpu7KdGsy2HRZaaQiXUfLrpUbaR9yS51E/edit#gid=222998983 for the raw, publicly collected data.

[37] There is conflicting information on whether or not Lee is in fact mounted on his horse, Traveller. In the programme from the statue's unveiling, it states: "Lee is represented on his war-horse Traveler" (Patton & Camp, 1934: 6) while other writings, like Sedore (2011: 182) who states of Charlottesville's Lee, "Lee is mounted, but not on Traveller" and Foner (2017b) who mentions "Lee's celebrated horse Traveller", also highlighting the different spellings of the horse's name.

[38] Spelled Schrady in some instances, see for example Sedore (2011).

prolific, highly regarded artists (*ibid.*). As a result, the Lee statue was listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register as a notable artwork for its association with the late City Beautiful movement (BRC, 2016).[39]

The monument was installed in McIntire Park in 1924, ten years before the statue of Rhodes would be unveiled across the world at UCT. It was presented to the crowd by Dr Edwin Alderman, President of UVA (Patton & Camp, 1924: 5). Like the unveiling ceremony at UCT, Lee was presented to a predominantly white crowd, as the park had gained a reputation as a "whites only" space (BRC, 2016: 7). The unveiling ceremony was organized by Virginian Confederate veterans' associations, including the Virginia Division of the Grand Camp United Confederate Veterans, as well as the SCV and UDC who held their 37th and 29th year reunions over the same weekend as the statue's reveal.

The reunion, from March 20th to March 22nd, was "interesting from beginning to end, the most important of the three days… was May 22, the one on which occurred, with reverent observances, the unveiling of the statue of Robert E. Lee" (Patton & Camp, 1924: 5). On this day, the city of Charlottesville swelled to more than 25,000 people, all of whom gathered to celebrate the life of Lee, "the great Commander", and celebrate the Confederacy and its veterans (The Daily Progress, 2017a: n.p.). The orators and guests present for the ceremony were a prestigious group and included Governor Trinkle of Virginia, UVA professors and faculty, commanders and members of the SCV, UDC, and Grand Camp UCV, leaders and cadets of the Virginia Military Institute, and the Department of Virginia (Patton & Camp, 1924: 9; The Daily Progress, 2017a).

The morning of the unveiling "all business in the city was suspended" so that the town in its entirety could take part in the day's events, the highlight of which was a pageant, "the greatest… that ever moved through the streets of Charlottesville" (Patton & Camp, 1924: 47-48). After the pageant, the statue was unveiled by "Little Miss Mary Walker Lee", the great-granddaughter of General Lee (The Daily Progress, 2017a: n.p.), to "pay a tribute of love, and to honour one whose name and life is a beacon ray to the men of the world" (Patton &

[39] The City Beautiful movement was a reform philosophy affecting architecture and urban planning, with the intention of introducing beautification and monumental grandeur into cities to create moral and civic virtues in urban dwelling populations and increase the quality of life. During this period, neoclassical and Beaux-Arts styles were emulated (Rose, 1996).

Camp, 1924: 22).

3.3 The Man: Conceptualising Robert E. Lee

"I speak from intimate personal acquaintance when I write on the Christian character of Robert Edward Lee, the greatest soldier of history, and the model man of the centuries."

Reverend J. William Jones, 1907
Robert E. Lee Centennial Celebration

Confederate General Robert E. Lee "was, and remains, the most iconic of Confederate heroes" (Cox, 2017: n.p.). Unlike Cecil John Rhodes, history has remembered Lee in a more favourable light. Yet, he remains controversial. To quote Smithsonian scholar Blount, Jr., "Few figures in American history are more divisive, contradictory or elusive than Robert E. Lee" (2003: n.p.). He is a hero of the Confederacy and the perfect Christian gentleman to some, and a symbol of white supremacy and slavery to others (*ibid.*, 2003; Roosevelt in Cobb, 2011).

Revered as a Southern icon during his life, after his death hagiographers propelled Lee into cult status as a national hero (Connelly, 1978).[40] Post-mortem, Lee has been commemorated lavishly by Confederate memorial associations and praised by numerous standing US Presidents.[41] The US Navy has named a submarine in his honour, poems have deified him,[42] the US Mint has pressed Lee's image into a coin, and Lee's face has featured on five postage stamps, an honour Contreras (2017) notes most Union soldiers have never received.

Despite infamously turning down the chance to command the Union's army, choosing instead to lead his Virginian troops into battle on behalf of the Confederacy-- an act that left

[40] Most notably by Douglas Southall Freeman who published four volumes on Lee in 1935, winning the Pulitzer Prize.
[41] In 1924, President Wilson called honoring Lee a "delightful thing" (Conner, 2018); President Roosevelt praised Lee as having "extraordinary skill as a general.. dauntless courage and high leadership" in 1907 on the centenary of Lee's birth (Blount, Jr., 2003); President Eisenhower had Lee's portrait on the wall of his White House office (Reeves, 2018: 2); President Ford posthumously pardoned Lee, a man he called "the symbol of valour and duty", from war crimes and treason 110 years after he was first accused of them (Conner, 2018).
[42] See for example Julia Ward Howe's famous 1907 poem, *Robert E. Lee*.

Lee labelled as a traitor-- and perhaps even more infamously the defeat of those troops at the tide-turning Battle of Gettysburg, Lee emerged from the Civil War as a hero and the embodiment of the Southern Cause (Reeves, 2018; Foner, 2017b; Savage, 1994). Lee's legacy saw a resurgence of adoration and popularity with the Civil War's centennial, a time which saw him "metaphorically resurrected into a Christlike figure of perfection and the embodiment of the Lost Cause" (Connelly, 1978: 4; Thomas, 1995).

Robert Edward Lee was born in Westmoreland Country, Virginia on January 19th, 1807 into one of young America's elite and aristocratic families (Conner, 2018). He was the fifth child of the Virginia Governor, congressional delegate, and Revolutionary War hero Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee III and his second wife, Ann Hill Carter Lee (Thomas, 1995). Lee was described as a responsible and devoted adolescent who went on to attend the prestigious United States Military Academy at West Point, graduating second in his class without a single demerit (*ibid.*). After graduation, Lee joined the Army Corps of Engineers, and in 1831 married Mary Anna Custis, a descendent of first lady Martha Washington (Conner, 2018). While the national dialogue over slavery was escalating, Lee worked as an engineer and served in the Mexican War, where he received many accolades (*ibid*.; Freeman, 1935). After his commendable service, he returned to his alma mater, West Point, to work as the school's superintendent (Freeman, 1935).

The backdrop of the majority of Lee's life was marked by a country in turmoil, one bitterly divided over the issue of slavery. When, largely as a result of this issue, Lee's home state of Virginia voted to secede the Union in April 1861, it became the 8th state to join the newly formed CSA. With the announcement of Virginia's secession, Lee resigned his 32-year posting with the US Army (Connelly, 1978). Citing loyalty to Virginia, Lee joined the Confederate Army as an advisor to the CSA's President Jefferson Davis, eventually becoming the Confederate's Commander-in-Chief in 1862 (Connelly, 1978; Horn, 2015). Throughout battle, Lee performed laudably, dutifully leading the Army of Northern Virginia against Union troops; the army's ranking general proclaimed Lee the "very best solider I ever saw in the field" (Horn, 2015: 15).

Lee commanded his troops through decisive victories and stunning defeats in many of the war's most notorious battles, including the Seven Days Battles, the Battle of Fredericksburg, and the Battle of Antietam, a battle which accounted for the single most

bloody day of warfare (McPherson, 1996). Despite this, it was the 1st – 3rd of July 1863 that was the "most horrific and formative" in American history and arguably, in the life of Lee (Blount, Jr., 2003: n.p.). During these days, the Battle of Gettysburg took place and Lee's troops suffered a monumental defeat at the hands of General George Meade (Contreras, 2017). By battle's end, nearly 30,000 men, 1/3 of Lee's troops, were wounded, captured, or missing (Blount, Jr., 2003). After his staggering loss at Gettysburg, Lee never launched another offensive attack (*ibid.*). On April 9th, 1865, commanding Union General Ulysses S. Grant surrounded Lee's troops at Appomattox, Virginia and Lee lead the final surrender of the Confederate army to the Union (Conner, 2018).

During his last years, Lee became a committed Southern nationalist choosing consciously, as Fellman (2009: 204) notes, to become part of the "larger Southern white project which would find great use for him after his death as in life". It was after his quiet death in October of 1870 that this "Southern white project" would gain momentum. As an "ideal figure for post-war Southern commemoration", Lee would play a vital role in the LC narrative that gripped the South, reconceptualizing him as the myth and legend he would become inextricable from (Savage, 1994: 132; see also Blight, 2001; Connelly, 1978; Reeves, 2018). Recast as a general of the utmost loyalty, nobility, honour and virtue, Lee embodied values that white culture on both sides of the sectional divide could embrace, values at the core of the war's new narrative (Gilbert, 2017; Savage, 1994).[43] These values would be instrumental in dissociating the war's causes from a politics of slavery to a politics of Southern cultural preservation, an integral part of legitimising Lee in national memory and history (Savage, 1994).

3.3.1 (Re)conceptualizing Lee

Although biographies penned by historians such as Connelly (1978), Nolan (1991), and most recently Reeves (2018) have attempted to deconstruct Lee's seemingly everlasting legacy, it wasn't until the June 17th, 2015 racially motivated massacre at Emmanuel African Methodist

[43] For example: "[Lee] is more Virginian than could be expected even from a person born and connected like himself" … "[with a] career so brilliant as to establish his claim to be reckoned among the greatest captains that have risen in the world" ... "perfect" (Harwell, 1989: 118- 120); Freeman, 1935 calls Lee a " a pagan of virtue"; Brooks (2015) states, "The case for Lee begins with his personal character. It is impossible to imagine a finer and more considerate gentleman….[of] impeccable honesty, integrity, and kindness"; "Lee's courage, wisdom, and strength could only reflect honor on our American manhood" (Rhodes, in Cobb, 2011).

Episcopal (AME) Church in Charleston, South Carolina, that the overall tenor towards Confederate veneration began to change. [44] On this evening, self-proclaimed white supremacist Dylann Roof entered the church during Bible study and fired off 70 rounds of ammunition, shooting and killing 9 black churchgoers (Sanchez & O'Shea, 2016). Online photos surfaced in the days after the shooting showing Roof holding a Confederate flag in one hand and a gun in the other; in words exchanged with friends, Roof said he had wanted to start a "race war" (Gunter et al., 2018). Shortly thereafter, Roof's manifesto was published online:

> "I have no choice. I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight. I chose Charleston because it is [the] most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of Blacks to Whites in the country. We have no skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me" (Wallace-Wells, 2017: n.p.).

As historian David Blight stated, "Charleston was the marker" (in Wallace-Wells, 2017, n.p.). The shooting marked a definitive change in the national tenor of Confederate idolisation and is now largely credited with igniting the explosion of interest in questioning symbols and statuary memorialising white supremacy, dedicated to the Confederacy, the 'Cult of the Lost Cause',[45] and opponents of Reconstruction (Cobb, 2011; Demetrio & Wingo, 2018; Beetham, 2016; Gilbert, 2017). As the nation began to re-evaluate Confederate symbols and the beliefs underpinning them in the wake of the Emanuel AME massacre, so too did they begin questioning 'The myth of the Kindly General Lee' (Sewer, 2017). As Contreras (2017: n.p.) notes, this transformation in the understanding of Lee "reflects the changing mood in the United States around race, mythology, and national reconciliation".

Many re-conceptualized ideas of Lee revolve around his views on slavery and race (Foner, 2017b), stances that re-assert that he was a white supremacist. While oral tradition has shaped the myth that Lee was not an avid advocate of slavery, an investigation into his personal letters demonstrates his strong support of the institution. In her work on Lee, Pryor (2007, 2009) has undertaken this investigation, demonstrating how his personal letters show a

[44] See James T. Campbell's *Songs of Zion* (1995) for a discussion of how the AMC played a vital role in the transatlantic appeal and spread of black religious nationalism, instrumental in facilitating solidarity in the struggle for freedom between black South Africans and African-Americans.
[45] A term coined by New Orleans' Mayor Mitch Landrieu in his public address before the removal of the Robert E. Lee's statue in New Orleans, May 19th, 2017 (Landrieu, 2017b).

consistent pattern of racism and distain for black people. They assert more than once that he believed "the relation of master and slave… is the best that can exist between the… races" (2009: n.p.). Other letters faulted and villainised abolitionists whose "reckless agitation" befouled sectional relations, without so much as a mention of the role of chattel slavery (Foner, 2017b: n.p.; Pryor 2007, 2009).

There are other references to Lee's cruelty towards his slaves. Contreras (2017) notes how he encouraged beatings; Pryor (2008; n.p.) documents how some of his slaves stated Lee was "the worst man I ever see *[sic]*". Fellman (2009) discusses Lee's racism in the postbellum period, describing how he never questioned his belief in the inferiority of black people. He also notes Lee's stance against "blacks owning property", as well as statements that blacks were "childlike", "lazy" and "irresponsible" (*ibid*.: 187). According to Lee, "The best possible result for race relations in Virginia would be the disappearance... of blacks" (Fellman, 2009: 188).

Recent calls to interrogate and (re)conceptualize Lee's ideologies have led to a revisionist understanding of the man. Lee is now understood for his role in furthering systematic, institutionalized racism and white supremacy. The fact remains, as Blount, Jr. (2003) reminds us, if he had been successful in his Civil War endeavours he would have preserved and prolonged the institution of slavery. As Cobb (2011: n.p.) notes, "There is no denying Robert E. Lee's direct connection with the cause of slavery or his symbolic appropriation by those who succeeded in replacing slavery with Jim Crow."

The consequences of the devaluation of black lives that Lee championed continue to be felt after his death; the brutal events of Charlottesville, Virginia are just one such manifestation.

3.4 "Hey Hey! Ho Ho! White supremacy has got to go!": The call for the removal of the Lee statue in Charlottesville, Virginia

"The Negro put up the Lee Monument and should the time come, will be there to take it down"

John Mitchell, 1890
Editor of Richmond's black magazine, The Richmond Planet

The events that transpired in Charlottesville over the calls for the removal of Lee would signify a national reckoning over race, heritage, and identity. Lee's statue would serve as the movement's lightning rod, a tangible symbol representing the contention over unresolved social and racial cleavages and understandings of America's past, reflected in its commemorative landscape. Like the #RMF movement the phenomenon started rather unassumingly, off of momentum from an online petition posted on Change.org.

In March 2016, Charlottesville freshman Zyahna Bryant posted a petition on Change.org to rename Lee Park and remove the monument standing at its centre, a statue of Confederate General Lee (Wallace-Wells, 2017). With language evoking the alienation and exclusion felt by Maxwele on UCT's campus, Bryant stated:

> "As a younger African American resident in this city, I am often exposed to different forms of racism that are embedded in the history of the south and particularly this city. My peers and I feel strongly about the removal of the statue because it makes us feel uncomfortable and it is very offensive. I do not go to the park for that reason, and I am certain that others feel the same way. This city is such a great place to live, but this simply goes against the great values of Charlottesville" (Change.org, 2016: n.p.).

The petition garnered over 700 signatures and was submitted to Charlottesville's city council, where the cause was adopted by Councillor Wes Bellamy (*ibid.*; Wallace-Wells, 2017). As calls for Lee's removal gained momentum, in May of 2016 Charlottesville's city council voted to assemble the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on Race, Memorials, and Public Spaces (City of Charlottesville, 2016). The BRC was tasked with investigating "Charlottesville's history of slavery and segregation" in order to "provide [the city] Council with options for telling the full story of Charlottesville's history of race and for changing the City's narrative through our public spaces" (BRC, 2016: 9).

Over the next six months, the commission held 17 meetings and public hearings, and in mid- December released a detailed report of their findings and recommendations to Charlottesville's council (*ibid.*; Charlottseville.org, 2016). Ultimately, the BRC found that the "Lee and Jackson statues belong in no public space unless their history as symbols of white supremacy is revealed and their respective parks transformed in ways that promote freedom and equity in our community" (BRC, 2016: 7).[46] Considering this, the commission unanimously decided to change the name of Lee Park and recommended "moving the sculpture" and/ or "transforming the park" (*ibid.*: 10).

In January 2017, Charlottesville's city council tabled the issue of Lee's removal. After impassioned remarks on both sides and a contentious vote, the verdict was deadlocked at 2 – 2, due to one councillor's abstention (Suarez, 2017a). A second vote was scheduled for February and was carried out in front of a vehemently divided crowd, waving signs calling both to "Remove the Statue" and "Save History" (Suarez, 2017b). The council voted 3-2 in favour of moving Lee, with Charlottesville's Mayor Mike Signer and Councillor Galvin casting the dissenting votes (*ibid.*). At the meeting's closing, one councillor announced that he had received death threats for supporting the statue's removal, an announcement symbolising just how emotionally charged and deeply rooted the perceived threat of removal was to (white) Southern heritage and identity.

In response to the council's vote, on March 20th, 2017 a joint lawsuit was filed to prevent Lee's removal with the Charlottesville Circuit Court (Moyer, 2017). The plaintiffs were the Virginia Chapter of the SCV, along with a 'conservationist' group called The Monument Fund (TMF) and 11 private citizens. An excerpt about the lawsuit on TMF's website reads:

> "The Complaint charged the city with (1) violating Virginia's monument law,[47] (2) acting outside the authority delegated to them by the Virginia General Assembly and (3) violating the terms of Paul Goodloe McIntire's gifts" (2017, n.p.).

[46] Referring to confederate hero Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson, whose statue stood in a near-by park.
[47] VA Code 15.2-1812 prohibits local authorities from disturbing monuments to war veterans, while VA Code 18.2-137 prohibits the defacing, damaging, or removing of monuments (Virginia's Legislative Information System, n.d.)

The lawsuit called for a temporary injunction against Lee's removal while the case made its way through the courts (NBC News 29, 2017a). In a counter-move, Charlottesville's city council voted to sell the Lee statue to the highest bidder and rename Lee Park (Hawn, 2017).

While Lee's monumental battle in Virginia was slowly unfolding, events in New Orleans, Louisiana were heating up. Although New Orleans' city council had voted 6 – 1 in favour of removing four of their Confederate statues in December 2015, after two years of city council rulings, lawsuits and counter-lawsuits, workers successfully removed the Battle of Liberty Square Obelisk, the first and "most offensive" of the monuments slated for removal (Victor, 2015: n.p.; Landrieu, 2017b; Evans, 2017).[48] The obelisk's removal was so dangerous that the time and date for its dismantlement had to be concealed from the public (*ibid.*). When it was finally removed, it was done so in the dead of night under the protection of police snipers, by workers dressed in protective gear to shield both person and identity (Evans, 2017). New Orleans' Mayor Mitch Landrieu spear-headed the monument's removal to send a "clear and unequivocal message" about New Orleans' focus on celebrating "our diversity, inclusion, and tolerance" (in Evans, 2017: n.p.). New Orleans became the first Southern city to intentionally remove public monuments to Confederate icons.

Back in Charlottesville, the Lee case made its way through the courts with Circuit Court Judge Moore presiding over rulings. In May 2017, Moore granted a six-month injunction against removing or selling the Lee statue, citing that "irreparable harm" could be done if the monument were moved (Suarez, 2017c: n.p.). Moore did not rule against the park's renaming, and the city began accepting submissions for new names from the public through their website, Charlottseville.org (*ibid.*). Meanwhile, white civil rights groups began amassing support for upcoming protests against the Lee's removal. The first of such protests was 'Take back Lee Park', a rally staged by white nationalist Richard Spencer, scheduled for May 15th (McCausland, 2017). At the rally, white supremacists gathered around Lee, holding lit torches and chanting slogans such as "All white lives matter" and "Jews will not replace us" (*ibid.:* n.p.). Speaking to press at the event, Spencer said, "You're not going to tear down our statue and you're not going to replace us" (*ibid.*). Spencer voiced the fear that white

[48] The obelisk, "erected with the goal of re-writing history to glorify the Confederacy and perpetuate the idea of white supremacy" commemorated the Crescent City White League's attempt to topple the city's racially inclusive Reconstructionist government after the Civil War (Landrieu, 2017a). Its base was inscribed with hailing "white supremacy in the new South" (Evans, 2017). Statues of Lee, General P.G.T. Beauregard and Confederate President Jefferson Davis would all come down in the following months.

'survival' is threatened by the presence of non-white populations, a fear echoed in other chants heard at the rally (*ibid.*). A different kind of fear was felt by Charlottesville's residents of colour; Mayor Signer stated "[The rally] was designed to instil fear in our minority populations in a way that harkens back to the days of the KKK" (*ibid.*).

Following the 'Take back Lee Park' rally, members of North Carolina's Loyal White Knights of the KKK applied for a permit to protest at Charlottesville's Circuit Courthouse for July 8th (Moore, 2017). The day of the rally 30- 50 protestors showed up to face thousands of counter-protesters and police in riot gear (Jenkins, 2017; The Daily Progress, 2017b). Shortly after the protest, white civil rights activist Jason Kessler submitted an application for a 400 person rally to be held at the newly renamed Emancipation Park (formerly Lee Park) (Graff, 2017). The rally was to be called "Unite the Right" (UTR).

The weeks leading up to URT were tense in Charlottesville. Local police held a meeting for Charlottesville's citizens declaring that three levels of security (city police, state police, and the National Guard) would be present to monitor the rally (Rowley, 2017). The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released a statement encouraging a "commitment to non-violence and peaceful protest" (Graff, 2017: n.p.). Social justice activists applied for permits to counter protest and prepared for the rally through various peaceful training sessions (Gleason, 2017a; Wallace-Wells, 2017). Local business pre-emptively announced closures on the day of the rally and the UVA Medical Centre issued a statement saying they were preparing "for a mass casualty situation" (Provence, 2017, n.p.).

On the evening before the UTR rally on August 11th, 2017, approximately 600 activists met at St. Paul's Memorial Church across from UVA's campus for service (Wallace-Wells, 2017). As it concluded, hundreds of (predominantly) white males marched towards St. Paul's to UVA's Jefferson monument, holding lit torches and chanting "White lives matter" and "Jews will not replace us[!] You will not replace us" (*ibid*.; Heim, 2017). They were met by a small group of student counter-protestors who had gathered at the base of Jefferson's statue, interlocking arms (Heim, 2017). The 'alt – right'[49] protesters soon surrounded them

[49] A term for the loose conglomeration of far-right groups, including populists, white supremacists, white nationalists, neo-Confederates, and neo-Nazis, who often promote white supremacy, white nationalism, anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial (Al Jazeera News, 2017).

with chants of "Blood and Soil!",[50] with aggression and hostility escalated with no intervention from the police. Suddenly, what *Documenting Hate: Charlottesville* (2017) terms a "happy rage" erupted. The documentary shows kicks and punches breaking out between protestors and counter-protestors (*ibid.*). Shortly after, a torch flame was lobbed towards the statue and chemical irritants were sprayed (Heim, 2017). Both sides sustained injuries and the police finally interceded, leaving a heightened sense of foreboding towards the morning's rally.

At 8:00 the next morning, four hours before the UTR rally was scheduled to begin, a large and boisterous crowd began amassing beneath Robert E. Lee's statue in Emancipation Park. Protestors and counter-protestors gathered in groups, pitted against each other ideologically and in their calls for Lee to stay or be removed (Heim, 2017). *Documenting Hate: Charlottesville* (2017) found that protestors from across the alt-right spectrum[51] from 35 states were present, the "largest gathering [of white supremacists and white nationalists] in over a decade". The protestors consisted overwhelming of white men and included neo-fascists, neo-Nazis, various KKK chapters, the National Socialist Movement, League of the South, Identity Evropa, militia groups such as the American Guard, the Pennsylvania Light Foot Militia and the Virginia Minuteman, and neo-Nazi websites such as The Daily Stormer and the Right Stuff (Peters & Besley, 2017: 1). Many protestors were dressed in camouflage, skull paraphernalia, and Confederate regalia and were heavily militarized, armed with sticks, shields, bats, and a variety of guns and rifles in accordance with Virginia's open carry law (*ibid.*; Wallace-Wells, 2017; Rowley, 2017).

Counter-protestors also gathered in large numbers. Reporters at the scene noted a demographically diverse crowd of students, anti-fascist groups, social justice advocates, members of Black Lives Matter (BLM), the ACLU, Antifa,[52] Anti-Racist Action, and Showing Up for Racial Justice, who were joined by local residents, members of church groups, civil rights leaders and onlookers (Peters & Besley, 2017: 1; Heim, 2017; Rowley,

[50] "Blood and Soil" is a Nazi slogan which means "that ethnicity is based solely on blood descent and the territory one maintains" (Epstein, 2017).
[51] Research by The Times and the Anti-Defamation League identified at least 120 participants who were affiliated with racist and anti-Semitic groups, ranging from long-established organizations like the KKK to newer groups that promote white nationalism (Stockman, 2017; see also Peters & Besley, 2017).
[52] Antifa, short for antifascist, a refers to loosely knit coalition of people whose political beliefs lean far left, often employing militant techniques against those deemed fascists, racists or right wing extremists (Suerth, 2017).

2017). Some of these groups were armed, like Redneck Revolt who wielded rifles while forming a security perimeter around counter-protesters (Stockman, 2017). Chants of "Hey Hey! Ho Ho! White supremacy has got to go!" and "This little light of mine", an African-American spiritual song of resistance, were sung louder and louder as the rally escalated, countered by shouts of "Our blood, our soil!" (*ibid*; Heim, 2017).[53] Despite palpably building tension and increasing aggression and violence, as with the evening before the police were largely uninvolved, allowing what political activist Cornel West described as "fellow citizens to go at each other" (Democracy Now!, 2017: n.p.).

Then, at 10:15 in the morning "melee erupted" (Rowley, 2017, n.p.). Footage of the rally shows an apocalyptic scene: hate speech and slurs blurring into violence; riot gear, shields, and weapons put to use (*ibid*.). A black man was beat with poles and metal pipes in a parking garage next to a police station without police intervention (*ibid.)*. People were kicked, punched, and choked in the middle of the streets (*ibid.).* Before the protest was officially supposed to commence, Virginia's Governor Terry McAuliffe was forced to call a state of emergency (Jackson, 2017). Through bullhorns, police officers proclaimed that the rally, now a full-scale riot, was over (*ibid.*).

However, the rally's dispersal was slow and the fights were difficult to break up (Heim, 2017). Just as things appeared to let up, a white supremacist protestor ploughed his vehicle into a large group of counter-protestors, and then reversed into them (*ibid.*). Dozens were left bleeding and injured on the street, and 19 people with severe injuries were rushed to the hospital (Heim, 2017). Counter-protestor Heather Heyer was struck by the vehicle head-on, dying en route to the hospital from blunt force trauma to her chest (The Daily Progress, 2017c).[54] The death toll continued to climb when moments later two state troopers who had been monitoring the rally via helicopter crashed to their deaths (*ibid.*)

After the day's events, Charlottesville's Mayor announced that he had changed his position on the Lee statue; he was now in favour of its removal (Signer, 2017). Although the ongoing lawsuit prevented Lee's removal, city workers used cranes to drape black tarps over both the Lee and Jackson monuments in a gesture of mourning (Wallace-Wells, 2017). In the

[53] See Deggans (2018) for a discussion of the slave spiritual and how it was repurposed during UTR.
[54] The driver of the vehicle, James Alex Fields, was later indicted on 30 crimes, including one count of a hate crime. He faces additional state charges of first degree murder and other crimes (The Guardian, 2018).

weeks and months that followed, the shrouds were continually removed and vandalized, despite police tasked with keeping watch over them (Talhelm, 2018).

The lawsuit over Lee's removal continues to make its way through the judicial system, with protestors and counter-protestors present at most hearings still vehemently divided on their stances (Duggan, 2017). As Washington Post journalist Duggan reported,

> "What becomes of Lee will depend on how Moore interprets a pile of arcane state legislative acts and appellate court rulings dating to the gaslight age, concerning how municipal governments are allowed to operate in Virginia" (*ibid*.: n.p.).

In court, Charlottesville's legal team persists in arguing that the lawsuit against Lee should be dismissed, stating that the law in question -- Virginia Code 15.2-1812 -- cannot be applied retroactively to the Lee statue; the plaintiffs fiercely argue that it can be (*ibid*.). In October 2017, Judge Moore extended the injunction against relocating, removing, or selling Lee (Gleason, 2017b) and in February, Moore ruled that the shrouds covering the monuments must be removed: "[Visitor's and historian's] lost opportunity [to view the statue] cannot be undone" (Haag, 2018: n.p.).

As of January 2019, there has been no resolution to the Lee statue dispute; Lee remains standing in Emancipation Park. However, the lawsuit against Lee's removal has been amended to include the nearby Jackson monument (Payne v. City of Charlottesville, 2017) and additional lawsuits have been filed (Berg, 2018; Simon, 2018);[55] these lawsuits remain ongoing, to be tried in January of 2019. In August 2018, Jason Kessler attempted to organize a one year anniversary rally of UTR in Charlottesville; he was denied a permit by the city and after suing over this denial chose to hold the rally in Washington, D.C. (Simon, 2018). Although more than 400 alt-right protestors were anticipated, it was estimated that only 25 were present to face hundreds of counter-protestors (BBC News, 2018; Guzy, 2018).

[55] According to the Virginia Courts Case Information Website, http://ewsocis1.courts.state.va.us/CJISWeb/CaseDetail.do, future court dates related to this case are scheduled for January 31st, 2019 and February 1st, 2019.

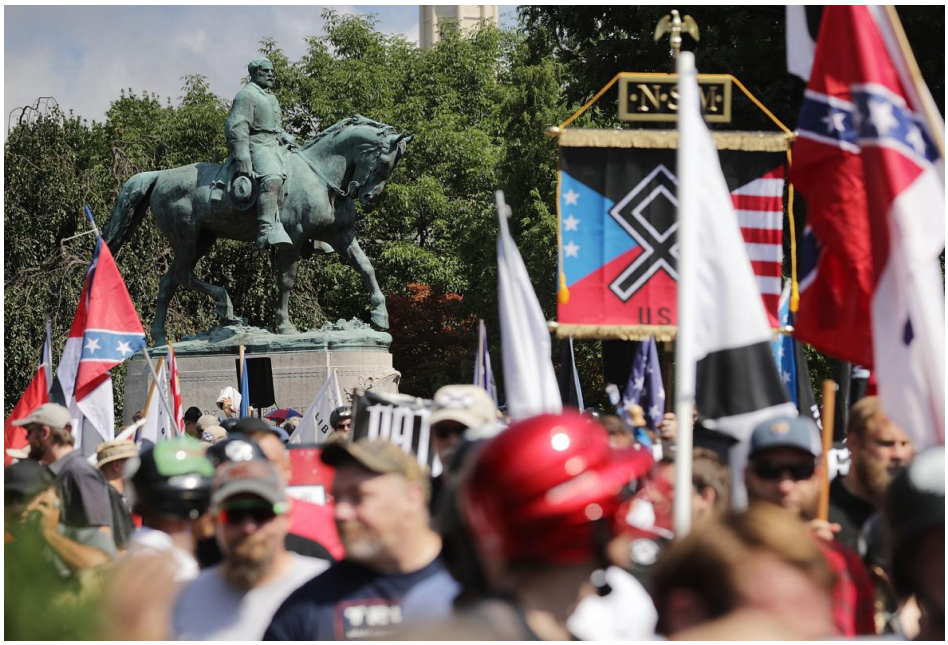

Figure 8: Unite the Right, August 12, 2017. Credit: Chip Somodevilla/ Getty Images.

3.5 Discourse surrounding the calls for the removal of Lee

As with the impassioned debate over the removal of Rhodes, the issue of Lee's removal became a flash point of cultural contestation symbolising larger ideological divisions. Subsections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 highlight these divisions, examining the most commonly invoked arguments for both the removal and preservation of Lee.

3.5.1 Lee Must Fall

As Demetrio and Wingo (2018: 5) present in *The Ethics of Racist Monuments*, the most widely-cited reasons for the removal of Lee and other Confederate statuary can be categorized as 'racist-offense based arguments'. The core of these arguments is that Confederate statuary celebrates and glorifies icons who championed a cause and time where white supremacy underpinned all aspects of society, condoning violence towards black people. As such, they are offensive to people who have experienced/ continue to experience racial oppression, causing them substantial harm (*ibid.;* Wilson, 2017; Morgan, 2018). Variations of this 'racist- offense' argument are reiterated throughout opinion pieces in newspapers, social media, and found in academia. The rationale is evidenced in comments

from former Albemarle-Charlottesville NAACP[56] President Rick Turner, who stated Lee's statue reinforces "white supremacy" and "terror" for African-Americans (Suarez, 2017d: n.p.). Others include Beetham (2016) who argues that Confederate monuments in public spaces represent a version of history that denies the experiences of many of citizens and are therefore problematic; Charlottesville's BRC report (2016: 2) recommends moving both Lee and the nearby Jefferson statue because they are "painful reminders of the violence and injustice of slavery and other harms of white supremacy".

Other core removalist arguments follow Russian art critic Viktor Misiano's claim that "All successful revolutions end with statues coming down" (Forty & Küchler, 1999: 10). Removalists believe that when the Confederacy and its core pillar, white supremacy, fell, its monuments should have fallen as well. Savage (2017) concurs, arguing the easiest way to repudiate an ideology and a regime is to take down the monuments that honour it; that so many Confederate monuments still stand runs contrary to this commonly applied tool of post-conflict reconciliation. As Curtis (2017: n.p.) asks: "Since when did those who lost a war get their own monuments?" (see also Brundage, 2018).

The position of New Orleans Mayor Landrieu typifies a third category of argument invoked in removal, that removal helps correct history. Landrieu, through his memoir (2018), writings and speeches (2017a; 2017b), argues that understanding the iconology behind Confederate monuments and the 'Cult of the Lost Cause', a narrative he argues is a perversion of history, will aide in supporting and understanding calls for statuary removal. "The monuments purposefully celebrate a fictional, sanitized Confederacy; ignoring the death, ignoring the enslavement, and the terror that it actually stood for" (Landrieu, 2017b: n.p.).

The rationale behind this argument is that removal would be a step towards understanding *why* the Lost Cause narrative was constructed. Once understood, supporting statue removal would be seen as a step towards a more meaningful reconciliation in hopes of "reach[ing] some sort of reckoning with that past in order to embrace a more pluralistic American society" (Gordon, 2017: n.p.). The BRC's findings (2016: 3) reiterate this, arguing removal supports a "new public history", one that helps uncover the embedded power relations that have impacted the construction of the nation's historical record, a record

[56] Acronym for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

NAACP's Turner says "leaves [black Americans] disabled and spiritually empty" (in Suarez, 2017d: n.p.).

A fourth category of argument outlined by Demetrio and Wingo includes honour-based arguments, the idea that Confederate statues not only dishonour black Americans but all colonized people. Rationale from Charlottesville's Vice-Mayor Bellamy falls in line with this, who stated Lee is "disrespectful to black citizens" (2018: 3). Lastly, removalist discourse often argues that the future consequences of statues representing single-sided narratives should be considered, asking *What does the presence of these statues foreshadow in terms of belonging, inclusion, citizenship, and dignity for people of colour?*

3.5.2 Lee Must Stay

Countering arguments for removal are equally passionate preservationist arguments, also compiled and outlined by Demetrio and Wingo (2018) and drawn from below. These include the argument that Confederate statuary such as Lee's should remain for their aesthetic value. Tweets from American President Trump attest to this: "Sad to see the history and culture of our great country being ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful statues and monuments" (in Demetrio & Wingo, 2018: 10). A related rationalisation argues that monuments are meaningful to current and future generations for their role in art and culture. Those who support this argue that the statues should be considered apolitically, devoid of racial connotations or ideology as simply symbols "honor[ing] history and celebrat[ing] a culture of the past" (Martin III in Wallace-Wells, 2017: n.p.; see also Ball, 2017; Cox, 2017). National Public Radio (NPR) reporter Wendland (2017) speaks to this in grappling with his own sentimental attachments to Confederate statues and the LC, despite their problematic aspects. He argues attachments to this history have been ingrained since childhood, often representing family who fought for 'the cause' and playing a depoliticised role in celebrating the cultural past of the South.

Preservationists also defend Confederate statues as memory markers, aiding society in remembering and teaching how "precarious civil rights can be without constant vigilance" (Demetrio & Wingo, 2018: 10). This reasoning is vocalized in North Carolina Senator Berger's (2017: n.p.) op-ed piece who likens statue removal to re-writing history and thus "taking a first step at repeating it". In an opposing view perpetuating the same argument,

Newson (2017) describes how whitewashing or editing history by removing statues can assuage white guilt and perpetuate a moral blindness in white people. Memory markers are thus needed for a nation to remember it past, both good and bad.

A final core preservationist argument revolves around the role monuments play in preserving (white) heritage and ancestry. One preservationist warns, "For the left, taking down Confederate memorials is just the beginning" (Smith, 2017: n.p.). Similar arguments can be seen in websites of Confederate preservation groups like SCV, who state they are "Fighting the narrow minded that are attacking our heritage", soliciting donations to counter pro-removal "hate groups" (SVC, n.d.: n.p.). In line with this are arguments from KKK chapters such as the Loyal Whites Knight, a member of whom commented, "The liberals are taking away our heritage…They're trying to erase the white culture right out of the history books" (Jenkins, 2017: n.p.). These fears were expressed by President Trump who said, "Stonewall Jackson is coming down, I wonder, is it George Washington next week?" (in Cox, 2017: n.p.).

It is important to note that a central theme of the rhetoric used in many of the above preservationist arguments centre around the threat of the disappearance of 'white' heritage and culture. While the hate speech capitalising on this fear, invoked both before and during UTR, has been recorded in hundreds of articles published in the wake of Charlottesville, it has been most compendiously complied in the New York Times article "*The Fight for the White Race": What Some of the Charlottesville Rally Participants Stand For* (2017, n.p.). Excerpts from this article included:

- "We're showing to this parasitic class of anti-white vermin that this is our country. This country was built by our forefathers. It was sustained by us. It's going to remain our country" (Robert Ray, writer for The Daily Stormer).[57]
- "We feel that this is the beginning of a new civil rights era. And this time it's going to be a pro-white one" (Peter Tefft, self-proclaimed pro-white activist).

Heller (2018: n.p.) explains how white nationals used the issue of Lee's removal to bring attention to the plight of the "oppressed white man" and the "injustices" imposed on him by "politically correct liberals". At UTR and other sites of Confederate statue protest, the fear of a "disappearing" white majority is a large factor motivating for preserving Confederate

[57] The Daily Stormer is an alt-right website ran by Andrew Anglin, dedicated to spreading "anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, and white nationalism" (SPLC, n.d.).

history, with statues functioning as visual assertions that "the white man will be oppressed no more" (*ibid.*).

As demonstrated in the above sections, the deep divisiveness over Lee's removal point to larger underlying issues, issues more expansive than just the removal of bronze. As with Rhodes, Lee's statue has become imbued with meaning, representing different issues for those on differing sides of the ideological spectrum. Pitted against one another, both sides impassionedly demand their right to *remain* included or their right *not to be excluded* in America's symbolic landscape and the narrative of history it tells. For those fighting to remove Lee, it is a matter of respect, justice, and righting the wrongs of history. For those on the opposite end of the spectrum, the removal of Lee can mean the removal and replacement of 'whiteness' in both the past and future.

3.6 Outcomes

Calls for the removal of Confederate symbols and statues occurred in two fairly distinct waves: one catalysed by June 2015's Emanuel AME church massacre and one resulting from August 2017's events in Charlottesville, Virginia (Gunter et al., 2018; BRC, 2017). Outrage against the massacre firstly catalysed the removal of flags, including the flags flown above Alabama's state capital (Berman, 2015). Shortly after this, in an "extraordinary move", South Carolina's Confederate flag was taken down from the State House grounds where it flew for more than half a century (Fox News, 2015; n.p.). Following suit, other cities across the South began calling for the removal of their publicly displayed Confederate relics and monuments.

One of the first calls for the removal of a monument was by the city of Memphis. Memphis' city council voted 11 - 1 in August of 2015 to remove a statue of Nathan Bedford Forrest, a Confederate general, slave owner and slave trader, as well as a co-founder and leader of the KKK (Associated Press, 2015; Glaze, 2018). Despite the city council's near unanimous vote in favour of Forrest's removal, the process took more than two years. Removal would occur after circumnavigating Tennessee's heritage law by selling the public land where Forrest stood to a private entity, making the statue privately owned and thus easier to remove (Demetrio & Wingo, 2018: 12). Similar events occurred in New Orleans, whose city council voted 6 – 1 in December of 2015 to remove four of the city's most

notorious Confederate monuments, monuments that would not be removed until April of 2017. The politics surrounding Forrest's removal and the removals in New Orleans exemplify the complex and contentious, time-consuming nature of the process, one repeated in many removals that would follow (Connolly & Wang, 2015).

The shock and outrage experienced in the wake of UTR catalysed a rapid second wave of removals. In the first five days after the rally, 10 Confederate monuments were taken down and many others were slated for removal (Morgan, 2018). By the years end, a total of 54 removals would occur. As of January 1st, 2019, publicly collected data compiled and vetted by the SPLC shows that since the 2015 massacre, the national debate over Confederate iconography has led to a confirmed 129 statue removals in 25 states, occurring on a case by case basis (Gunter et al., 2018). Despite these removals, more than 1,740 Confederate symbols still stand (*ibid.*).

3.6.1 Current state of the phenomenon

While the momentum and passion surrounding calls for statue removal have waned -- 2018 saw 27 monument removals compared to 2017's 54 (Gunter et al., 2018) -- the underlying issues are far from resolved. Calls for removal continue to surface sporadically, but the issue is generating less media attention, coverage, and public outcry. Despite three monument removals in 2019 alone (*ibid.*), Google searches of variations of "recent Confederate statue removals" often yield little more recently than the August 2018 toppling of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill's 'Silent Sam' statue by university students (Deconto & Blinder, 2018).[58] However, Confederate statues continue to be vandalized and additional removals are pending court decisions.[59]

Calls for the removal of Confederate monuments have grown alongside other social movements targeting inequality in the US, largely starting after the global financial crisis in 2008 (Knudsen et al., 2019). Most notable in relation to this thesis is the Black Lives Matter

[58] Silent Sam was erected in 1913 "in remembrance of 'the sons of the University who died for their beloved Southland 1861-1865'" (UNC, 2004). On August 20th 2018, while passing out bandanas emblazoned with "Sam Must Fall" -- a nod to the #RMF movement-- students began dismantling the statue after calls for removal were ignored by the university's administration (Deconto & Blinder, 2018). According to activists present at the monument's toppling, UNC's administration neglected to engage in the formal legal process for removal in the wake of widespread opposition to the monument (*ibid.*).
[59] Including the "Flame" monument in Salisbury, North Carolina, defaced in August 2018 (Anapol, 2018).

(BLM) movement. The movement, an "ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise" (Black Lives Matter, n.d., n.p.)[60] was formed in 2013 and gained traction after the Emanuel AME massacre.[61] As calls for racist statuary to fall increased, so did the number of monuments graffitied with "BLM". While not quite an evolution of the movement to remove Confederate statues, like #FMF to the #RMF movement, both are part of a wider, changing political climate rejecting the symbolic, structural, and physical violence continuing to be disproportionality experienced by black people in America (Beetham, 2018, Knudsen et al., 2019).

Although attention on the issue of statue removal waning, the US continues to grapple with the myriad of issues stemming from the legacy of its slave holding past; calls to reclaim previously silenced histories and narratives remain topical. This can recently be evidenced in Alabama, the heart of the Confederate South. In April of 2018, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice opened its doors as the nation's newest museum-cum-memorial, dedicated to the more than 4,000 largely forgotten victims of lynching during Jim Crow's most violent periods (Chandler, 2018). Despite scattered attempts such as the museum's to counter-balance the nation's memory landscape, America's symbolic landscape continues to be heavily skewed and imbued with over-arching white supremacist narratives of history.

[60] See, for example, the shooting and killing of an unarmed teen running away from the police in Pittsburg in June of 2018 (https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/06/20/police-fatally-shoot-17-year-old-antwon-rose-fleeing-traffic-stop-east-pittsburgh/719334002/), controversy around the police shooting of a 15 year old black teen in Chicago in August (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/20/us/steven-rosenthal-shooting-chicago-police.html) the shooting of an unarmed black men during a traffic stop in Memphis in September (https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/09/18/us/ap-us-police-shooting-tennessee.html), and the unarmed black man shot in his apartment by a white police officer who mistakenly entered his apartment, thinking it was hers in September (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/14/us/botham-jean-dallas-shooting-amber-guyger.html?login=email&auth=login-email), among others in the last few months alone; all last accessed 19 September, 2018.

[61] Fortin (2017) credits the AME massacre with "help[ing to] fan the flames" of the BLM movement.

Chapter 4. Comparative Analysis

"[I]t takes only the passage of time, the shift of circumstances, or the reversal of history, to reveal those assumptions [about heritage] as time- and context- bound, historically specific, and thus open to contestation, re-negotiation, and revision."

Stuart Hall, 1996

Over the course of this dissertation, the phenomena of calls for the removal of statues memorialising white supremacy has been explored through two case studies. The first case study, UCT's Cecil John Rhodes statue, was of a monument immortalising Rhodes' "imperialist and possessive gaze", laying visual claim to an empire Rhodes hoped to extend from Cape to Cairo (Schmahmann, 2016: 94-94). The statue was erected in 1934 during a time when institutionalising the colour bar in South African society was firmly under way, restrictions for blacks were growing, and colonial ideas were paving the road to apartheid. It was re-positioned in 1962, a move examined as a reassertion of the ideologies held by Rhodes and imbued within his statue as apartheid's iron grip was beginning to crumble under the strength of growing resistance movements.

The second case study was the statue of Robert E. Lee. The statue was unveiled in Charlottesville, Virginia ten years prior to Rhodes, during a surge of Civil War commemoration by a number of Confederate veteran memorial associations. This thesis has argued that given the emotional and political climates of its erection, the statue served to glorify a regime formed to "preserve slavery, enforce white supremacy, and impose racially motivated violence on black Southerners", and commemorate the 'Lost Cause' during a time when Southern whites feared the growing empowerment and enfranchisement of Southern blacks (Beetham, 2016: 17-19).

Against the temporal backgrounds of the statues' unveilings, the lives and legacies of Rhodes and Lee have been explored. These are legacies that for most of history have celebrated both men as heroic visionaries and leaders firmly committed to their causes, causes underpinned by racial hierarchies rooted in white superiority. As such, both men

shared disdainful, patronizing attitudes towards black people, characterising them as "lazy" and "irresponsible", requiring the supervision of whites and best utilised in positions of servitude (Rhodes, 1877; Fellman, 2009; Pryor, 2007; 2009).

Both men played active roles in supporting and maintaining systemic white supremacy. These roles have generated increasing scrutiny in light of shifting national and international tenor towards how multi-racial and multi-cultural societies with pasts marred by institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination understand and express their history, heritage, and right of belonging. This changing tenor has spurred movements which have called for monuments memorialising white supremacy to fall in both countries, movements that have had varying levels of contention, duration, and effects.

4.1 Power and the symbolic landscape

Discussion throughout this thesis has been framed in a way to establish an understanding of symbolic landscapes as manifestations of power dynamics between the historically empowered and the historically dispossessed (Osborn, 2001; Heller, 2018). As expressions of cultural values, national mythologies, and collective memory, the symbolic landscapes of SA and the US have served to reflect and perpetuate hegemonic historical narratives (Frescura, 1992; Mandziuk, 2003; Martinez, 2004; Goodrich & Bombardella, 2016). These are narratives that have been increasingly problematised and understood as rooted in ideologies of white supremacy.

Both countries now present romanticised notions of multi-racial and multi-ethnic populations who are equal under the law: SA touts itself as the 'Rainbow Nation', the US has long used the metaphor of the melting pot. However, for most of history SA and the US have shared an obsession with the construct of race; whiteness' in both countries has long been synonymous with privilege and power (Greenberg, 1980; Cell, 1982; Fredrickson, 1981). While the origins, specificities, and expressions of this white supremacy have differed, it has ingrained legacies of dispossession and inequality along racial lines (Fredrickson, 1981; Andrews, 1987). Perpetuated and maintained throughout history by racial discrimination, segregation, violence, and ideologies of "white power-cum-prejudice", white supremacy has scarred both nations' psyches and memory landscapes (Frederickson,1981: xxi). This thesis

has explored some of these scars, namely the deep imbalance in the symbolic landscapes of South Africa and the US. The problematic nature of this imbalance and its embedded symbolism has only recently captured both national and international attention, disrupting myths of post-racial societies in both countries.

As markers of memory in their respective symbolic landscapes, the statues of Rhodes and Lee are part of these wider historical narratives and have fulfilled the ideological roles they were created to fill: extolling and legitimate Rhodes and Lee as history's 'great white men' (Holmes & Loehwing, 2016). Rhodes fulfilled the role of leader and founder in Africa's 'civilising mission'; Lee fulfilled the role of gallant protector of the Southern (white) way of life (Müller, 2004). As material signifiers of ideas and ideologies immortalized in bronze (Osborne, 2001), the statues of both men publicly proclaimed white dominance during historical periods where 'white' order, rule, and superiority were perceived to be under threat. The statues also served to assert a singular, unified vision of white minority rule at times when 'white' cultural cohesion was vulnerable (Holmes & Loehwing, 2016).[62] In South Africa, this can be considered in the context of fraught relationships between white English and Dutch settlers as a result of the Anglo- Boer wars. In the US, this cohesion was deeply fractured as a result of sectional divisions from the Civil War.

The symbolic landscapes of SA and the US have served to communicate inclusion for some (namely, white males) and communicate exclusion for others, primarily non-whites and women (Mandziuk, 2003; Heller, 2018). The exclusion of black people in both SA and the US has been the product of a long process of contestation, struggle, and "symbolic annihilation", curtailing reconciliation and facilitating forgetting (Alderman & Campbell, 2008: 341; Gillis, 1996; Savage, 1996; Eichstedt & Small, 2002). In America, Foner (2017a: n.p.) has described 'forgetting' as the "other side […] of glorifying the Confederacy". In South Africa, it can be understood as the other side of exalting colonial English and Afrikaner heritage, history, and people above their indigenous counterparts (Fresucra, 1992; Van Der Wal, 2015; Hall, 1999). The systematic exclusion of people of colour has seen both the achievements and sacrifices of black people written out of history and memory in SA and

[62] Even though it is often cited that the most obvious difference between the US and SA is racial demographics (SA is majority 'black' with a 'white' minority, while the US is majority 'white' with a 'black' minority), Fredrickson (1981) and Marx (1997) argue that many agrarian Southern states had close to a black majority, making the demographic status of Southern whites and white South Africans comparable and both able to be considered minority populations.

the US. It has perpetuated an a-historic social, political, and cultural dominance of white people, particularly white men, at the expense of black people (Marschall, 2010: 21; Savage, 1994; Barnabas, 2016; Timothy & Boyd, 2003) and functioned to both reinforce racial discrimination and hinder transformation in society, both literally and symbolically.

4.2 Changing tenor towards Confederate, colonial and apartheid-era monuments

A change of tenor towards the symbolism embedded within statues such as Lee's and Rhodes' has occurred as a part of wider demographic, social and political transitions, slowly changing the cognitive landscapes in both SA and the US. These shifts have seen more people of colour better positioned socio-economically and politically, increasingly able to influence both the tone and content of past narratives affecting present life (Cobb, 2011). This change in tenor towards statues specifically has in part been catalysed by 2015's #RMF movement and Charleston's Emanuel AME church massacre, furthered by Charlottesville's 2017 UTR rally. These events galvanized both societies into critically engaging with the legacies of their pasts, pasts increasingly understood as entrenched with white supremacy in both narrative and symbolism. Movements emanating from these events have brought questions to the fore about the belonging of both men and their monuments in the nations' presents and their futures. These questions have spurred the re-negotiation of the commemoration of historically celebrated figures such as Rhodes and Lee.

Consequently, Rhodes and Lee are increasingly understood in the context of their roles as oppressors and perpetrators, complicit in fighting for systems of violence that devalue non-white lives. Likewise, their statues are increasingly understood as symbols perpetuating psycho-cultural narratives of white supremacy and are therefore problematic in the racially and culturally mixed societies in which they stand (Müller, 2004; Marschall, 2017b). These re-negotiations, however, have triggered extensive opposition.

The discourse around the issue of removal has shown that the issue is larger than just removal. Despite demands from preservationists to depoliticise the statues, they have become highly political, symbolic representations of "[larger,] deep-seated ideological differences in the interpretation of the past" and how this past should be remembered and expressed (Marschall, 2010: 8). Connecting the issue of statue removal to wider ideological stances has

triggered emotional responses and provoked impassioned protest on both sides of the issue. The politics of statue removal has become a zero-sum game. For one side, removal is a sign of societal progress and a way to redress historical grievances; a rejection of the historical, cultural, and social superiority of whiteness. For others, removal signifies the destruction of history, achievement, dominance, and ultimately existence. This is an existence that many on the political right fear is disappearing due to the "overall browning of America" (Potok, 2013: n.p.; Heller, 2018) and the growing political, social, and economic power of SA's black majority at the perceived expense of the white minority.

4.3 Outcomes

Despite similar motivations behind the movements and their ideological groundings, there have been differences in the nature, duration, and outcomes of the phenomena. Although the issue of Rhodes' removal was deeply divided on and off campus, the entire process-- from Maxwele's faecal flinging and the SCR's unanimous vote in support of Rhodes' removals on March 11th, to HWC's approval of the application to remove Rhodes on March 30th, to the University Council's vote to relocate the statue, to its removal on April 9th -- was less deeply divided. Protest to removal took just one month. It did not, however, spur any additional monument removals, something that since democratisation has proven to be rare.

Since the ANC's negotiated transition into power, the government have demonstrated an unwillingness towards altering the nation's symbolic landscape through monument removal (Schmahmann, 2016; Coombes, 2003).[63] Only the most inflammatory statues have been removed, such as those dedicated to apartheid's 'architect' Hendrick Verwoerd (*ibid.*). The controversy surrounding Rhodes' statue, it's clear link to white supremacy and colonial ideals, and the threats of violence it provoked has proven Rhodes' inflammatory nature, enough so to justify its removal. Its falling has proven to be an exception to the state's otherwise tepid attitude towards statue removal (Ndletyana & Webb, 2017).[64] However, the

[63] The post-apartheid government of SA has opted to leave most colonial and apartheid-era monuments, often choosing instead to re-contextualise them (Schmahmann, 2016: 93; Miller & Schmahmann, 2017).
[64] Engagement with SA's skewed memory landscape has been a central tenant of national reconciliation following the end of apartheid (Van Der Wal, 2015; Marschall, 2017). Despite guidance from a number of post-conflict bills and heritage bodies the ANC has proven its unwillingness to take risks in regards to altering the nation's symbolic landscape, removing only its most inflammatory monuments such as those of apartheid's so-called architect, Hendrick Verwoerd (Coombes; 2003). For further discussion, see Ndletyana & Webb (2017).

energy and passion that fuelled calls for additional removals largely dissipated once Rhodes fell, reinforcing his removal as an anomaly. As such, the 'movement' became a moment and the issue became subsumed by more pressing material issues, and longer-lasting (arguably more impactful) decolonisation and #FMF movements.

The phenomenon of calls for removal in the US has seen more deep-seated contention, polarisation, and longer impassioned protestation related to the issue of statue removals than in SA. As pushback against the US's symbolic landscape has increased, so has the backlash against calls for removal. While this contention suggests deadlock over the issue of removals, data as of January 2019 shows that 129 Confederate statues have fallen (Gunter et. al, 2018). Other will likely follow. These removals have taken place despite many lengthy removal processes and protests to the point of physical violence and death, as evidenced in Charlottesville.

While this lengthy process speaks in part to America's litigious culture, it speaks more to the deep divisions cemented in America's interpretations of its past. As explored in section 3.1, these divisions have largely originated over interpretations of the American Civil War, the reasons it was fought, and its outcomes. Those that recognise Confederate 'heroes' and their monuments as rooted in racism recognise that embracing the LC narrative and its privileging of sectional peace over protecting the lives of the previously enslaved came with devastating effects for black people (Weiner & Foner, 2000; Blight, 2001; Bergin & Rupprecht, 2016; Beetham, 2016; Savage, 2018).[65] In the US, post-war reconciliation was done at the expense of black people to unify the white population. In abandoning racial reconciliation and peacebuilding, Southern blacks were abandoned. Southern whites were able to bring their narrative to the forefront of history and the markers of this history -- their history-- have stood for centuries, largely unnoticed and unacknowledged for their roots in violence and racism and their role in memorializing and perpetuating white supremacy.

This is in contrast to SA, whose post-conflict reconciliation process addressed the nation's symbolic landscape-- albeit far from successfully--,[66] acknowledging the symbolic

[65] So deeply rooted is this narrative that as late as 2011, a Pew survey found that 48 per cent of Americans still cite "state's rights" as the primary reason for the war (Pew, 2011). Only 38 per cent of people surveyed cited slavery (*ibid.*).
[66] The ANC's approach to interrogating its memory landscape been criticized as "piecemeal at best" (Ndletyana &Webb, 2017: 10; Marschall, 2009; 2017; 2009; Coombes, 2003).

violence of colonialism and apartheid, which "neglected, distorted, and suppressed the culture of the majority of South Africans" (ANC, 1993: n.p.). Post-apartheid, heritage was used as a building block for reconciliation and a tool for unity. In the name of unity, all the heritages, histories, and stories of all people were deemed important and protected (*ibid*.).[67]

Until recently, there had been no such national acknowledgement in the US. Historically, there has been no systematic, nation-wide effort to investigate, challenge, or remove the nation's Confederate monuments, nor has there been any wide-spread national engagement with counterbalancing this imbalanced symbolic landscape (Grobler, 2007; Mills, 2003; Beetham: 2016). There has been little acknowledgement of the 'other side' of glorying the Confederacy. There has been little recognition of the consequences that privileging white Southern history, heritage, and culture over the histories of black people has had, and the oppression, suppression, and erasures that this privileging has brought about.

Further exploration of the phenomena's varying outcomes through the lens of each country's post-conflict reconciliation process would shed additional light on how divided interpretations of the past have affected the politics of statue removal. However, what can be concluded is that despite varying engagements with reconciliation, the continued presence of both Confederate, colonial, and apartheid-era memory markers (including statues) has stunted reconciliation in the nation's symbolic landscapes (Marschall, 2009).

4.4 Understanding the phenomena of the calls for removal of statues memorialising white supremacy

4.4.1 #RMF

Those advocating for removal during the #RMF campaign projected their resentment against the lack of transition in the country's social, cultural, and economic realms onto the symbolic realm and issue of statues. The rejection of Rhodes represented a larger rejection of colonialism, apartheid, and white supremacy, oppressive ideologies which have contributed

[67] For example, this is evidenced the *White Paper on Arts, Culture, and Heritage* (1996), the *National Heritage Council Act*, *No. 11 of 1999*, and the *National Heritage Resource Act (NHRA), No. 25 of 1999*, which established the *South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA)* in 2009.

to stunted transformation and continue to further exclusion and alienation for people of colour both symbolically and in society itself.

Despite being 25 years into democratisation, a "widening chasm has emerged between the promises of reconciliation and the realities of on-going widespread poverty and inequalities" in SA (Scanlon, 2016: 8). In the face of growing inequality, blacks have not been able to realise the transformation promised to them in the nation's 1996 constitution. Statistics South Africa (2014) details how the country continues to have one of the world's highest Gini coefficients, consistently rated as one of the globe's most unequal countries.[68] This inequality remains overwhelmingly experienced along racial lines, with race as the single greatest factor in explaining deprivation in SA (Burger et. al, 2017).[69] Countrywide, unemployment hovers at 30 per cent; for youth this figure nears 50 per cent (World Bank, 2014a). Among other findings, the 2018 World Bank report *Overcoming Poverty and Inequality in SA* details that wealth and wage inequality remains high, and food insecurity and chronic poverty are constants threats for the majority of black South Africans (World Bank, 2018b). With these conditions as the lived reality for a majority of black people in SA, it is no wonder that disappointment, political malaise, and the unravelling of post-apartheid dreams and expectations have replaced the optimism and enthusiasm of SA's 'transition' (Reddy, 2015: 2).

As RMF student leader Chikane said, "South Africa is coming out of its infancy years... into the teenage years of questioning everything" (in Holmes & Loehwing, 2016: 1209). The #RMF campaign and its reconceptualization of Rhodes and his legacy symbolised wider changes in tenor towards questioning and rejecting white supremacy and the colonial project. Activism aimed at removing Rhodes points to a rejection larger than Rhodes, a rejection of the lived reality of inequality statistics, exclusion from prosperity, and the continued lack of post-conflict transformation (Nyamnjoh, 2016). This rejection could most easily be projected onto tangible objects such as statues, achieving visible change in the symbolic landscape in the face of far more difficult structural changes in the social, cultural,

[68] The Gini coefficient is a number between 0 and 1 which reflects the disparity between the richest and poorest of the country's citizens; 0 indicates total equality and 1 indicates total inequality. For SA, this number ranges between .660 and .696 (depending on the data used) for data collected from 2011 (Stats SA, 2014).
[69] Burger et. al's 2017 study measures deprivation through indicators such as overcrowding, dwelling type, cooking energy, water access, telephone access, refuse removal, sanitation, employment and education, which all point to how apartheid's brutal legacy of racially entrenched poverty overwhelmingly continues to be a reality for black people in SA.

and economic realms. With Maxwele's 'poo politics', a larger growing mood of discontent among South Africans was actualised; a collective black pain catalysed into "a growing politics of radical dissent" (Pillay, 2016: 156).

4.4.2 Lee

Similar alienation, exclusion, and stunted transformation, despite the *de jure* promises of the Civil Rights era, also continue to be experienced by people of colour in the US. Whether measured by the persistence of the racial wealth gap (Hanks et al., 2018)[70] or labour market discrimination and segregation (Spalter-Roth & Lowenthal, 2005), high unemployment rates (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019),[71] disproportionate incarceration rates,[72] lower life expectancies or education levels (Cook, 2015a, b),[73,74] it is clear that the US's historical roots in slavery, race-based oppression, and white supremacy continue to impact the lived realities of black people today. For those turning to activism as a rejection of the status quo, Lee's statue and others like it are tangible reminders of a narrative that has for far too long glorified ideologies of white supremacy at the expense and exploitation of people of colour. This is a narrative that is captured in America's symbolic landscape, a landscape which reflects the historical acceptance of both the LC and white supremacy, and its history of abandoned racial reconciliation (Grobler, 2007). The intense blowback against the calls to remove Confederate statues further reflects the deep-seated, "unavoidable connection with racial oppression that has always been a part of Confederate memory" (Beetham, 2016: 10). This is a connection that highlights the direct relationship between the racial violence of the past to the continuation of systematic violence against people of colour into the present (*ibid.*).

[70] The Center for American Progress reports that scholarship over the past three decades has found that not only do African Americans have notably less wealth than whites, but that "wealth tends to be more volatile" and "that there is no trend toward a shrinking wealth gap by race". Research based off 2016 Federal Reserve data shows that "African Americans households have significantly less wealth than white households, regardless of important demographic factors" (Hanks et al., 2018).
[71] Even as unemployment rates for African Americans decrease, they remain double the rate of white unemployment rates: around 9 per cent for white men and women and 20 per cent for black men and women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). .
[72] African Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of whites (NAACP, n.d.).
[73] Among other statistics, the average white male lives five years longer than the average African American male and infant mortality rates are doubled for black infants (Cook, 2015a).
[74] Census data for 2010 shows that the education gap between white and black Americans widens at the college level; 21 per cent of white Americans have a Bachelor's degree and 12 per cent have some form of an advanced degree, while the figures are 13 per cent / 6 per cent for black Americans (Cook, 2015b).

Thus, those calling for the removal of Confederate monuments reject white supremacy as the historical status quo, one that continues to inflict both symbolic and physical violence. Social movements from BLM to the removal of Confederate monuments point to a larger disruption of whiteness, shedding light on its pervasiveness and its privilege. Activism from new, empowered voices, exemplified by movements calling for the removal of white supremacist statuary, is a "push back" against historical power structures that govern both society and the symbolism of its memory landscape (Heller, 2018). With the demands to interrogate the hegemonic Anglo-Saxon lens through which American history is taught and white American life is lived, an increasing amount of the population has become less inclined to allow for the ambiguity of symbols perpetuating white supremacy to remain (Cobb, 2011).

Chapter 5. Conclusion

"…. Where to now? Where to now? Where to now?

Time will tell.
Who knows what lies beneath the shattered rainbow?"

Brian Kamanzi, 2015
Engineer and Cape Town- based poet

The phenomena of calls for the removal of statues emerging in 2015 and gaining momentum in the US in 2017 tells the story of a shift in the symbolic capital of statues in countries with pasts divided along racial lines. This change in tenor saw statues such as UCT's Cecil John Rhodes and Charlottesville's Robert E. Lee monuments transformed from bronze works of art to symbols of deep ideological division reflecting what Contreras (2017: n.p.) notes are "changing moods around race, mythology and national reconciliation". Dissatisfaction with prevailing hegemonic narratives of white supremacy and stunted transformation for blacks in both societies has been projected onto the issue of statues, turning the politics of removal into a larger battle over ideologies and interpretations of the past. For some, the proposed changes to the national symbolic landscapes were perceived as attacks on (white) cultural hegemony, identity, and by extension, existence. For others, they were a desperately needed measure, the first step towards redressing histories long entrenched with white supremacy that continues to impact black people in the present.

Engaging in a comparative analysis has allowed for a window into comparing larger questions about the politics of how societies historically divided along 'race' deal with what Savage calls "the past in the present" (2018, n.p.). Ultimately, the phenomenon of the calls for the removal of statues can be understood as part of a wider shift towards realising and disrupting prevailing hegemonic narratives of white supremacy, both in society and its symbolic landscape. The calls for removal are rejections of narratives steeped in white supremacy. These are narratives that continue to perpetuate violence and inequality and erase the stories, struggles, and contributions of black people from history and out of the symbolic landscape.

While the actions of individual people such as Maxwele, Bryant, and Roof catalysed the movements which spurred this change in tenor, changing demographics, power relations, cognitive landscapes, and political consciousness sustained them (Marschall, 2010). These changes have demonstrating that as more black people overcome historical barriers and are better positioned politically, socially, and economically, they increasingly have the power to shape new narratives of memory and disrupt the problematic narratives of the past (Mills, 2003; Cobb, 2011). Through social movements both online and in person, young people are challenging the "monopolisation on memory" previously held by the "designated carriers of progress", white European men (Savage, 2018: n.p.; Gillis & Savage, 1994). Those supporting removals reject the 'monologic commemoration' (Holmes & Loehwing, 2016) of the past in favour of acknowledgement and commemoration reflective of the cultures, histories, and accomplishments of black people, long neglected in multi-cultural and multi-racial societies dominated by cultures of whiteness. This is part of an overall shift towards the "'democratization' of history" (Nora, 2002: 2).

Although the issue of statue removal in SA was less deeply divided and had relatively little momentum, the movement in the US resulted in a prolonged nation-wide discussion about the country's darkest period--its slave holding past-- and its link to the symbols of the Confederacy. The movement made a tangible mark on the country's symbolic landscape while SA's movement did not. While this dissertation does not allow sufficient space to thoroughly analyse the reasons for these differences, an in-depth comparison of the outcomes of the phenomena against each nation's post-conflict reconciliation processes, including approaches to redressing national post-conflict symbolic landscapes, would be a fruitful avenue to explore for further research.

Despite the high level of engagement and attention seen at the onset of the movements, this thesis has found that the phenomena of calls for the removal of statues memorialising white supremacy does not seem to be able to be sustained in the face of changing social, economic, and political concerns vying for attention and activism. Regardless of outcomes and duration, the movements demonstrated that the issue of statue removal is capable of eliciting highly emotionally charged sentiments and mass activism.

With Confederate, colonial and apartheid-era markers continuing to dot the memory landscapes of the US and SA, the issue of statue removal remans wholly unresolved,

contentious, and capable of re- igniting at any time. As Mills (2003: xxvii) writes, "The story of the southern Civil War monuments is an ongoing one", and so too, it seems, is the story of post-apartheid South Africa's.

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