

**MEMORIALISING WHITE SUPREMACY: THE POLITICS OF STATUE
REMOVAL AND RECONCILIATION: 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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ABSTRACT

In April of 2015, the 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. This was a result of the #RhodesMustFall (#RMF) movement. Two years later, bitter 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, in Charlottesville, Virginia. Although the field of comparative studies between the United States and South Africa has been extensively developed, previous work has failed to explore and understand these recent phenomena in tandem in all its

complexity. Therefore, using descriptive comparative analysis, this paper examines not only the resurgence of calls for the removal of statuary memorialising white supremacy, but aims to understand the lives, legacies and changes in tenor towards these two immortalized men in the two places where the debate has surfaced most vehemently: the University of Cape Town in Cape Town, South Africa and Charlottesville, United States. Ultimately, this paper concludes that the recent (re)conceptualization of memorialised figures, such as Rhodes and Lee, has come about as a result of sweeping changes in national tenor over understandings of heritage, history, and reconciliation. Multicultural societies with pasts marred by racism, segregation, and white supremacy are moving to

(re)negotiate and (re)claim histories and heritages. These changes, however, are bitterly contested, as they reflect deep-seated ideological differences in interpretations of the past and threaten a status quo underpinned by a long legacy of white supremacy. This paper finds that the historical narratives Rhodes and Lee represent have imparted deep, unhealed wounds in the national psyches of two countries still grappling with legacies of exclusion in their symbolic landscapes and thus, in the nations' themselves. These wounds continue to fester, remaining raw, disputed and unresolved, exposing racial fault lines and putting to bed the myth of post-racialism.

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

On April 9th, 2015 at 17:37, the 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 falling of Rhodes was the result of the #RhodesMustFall movement, a movement calling for the end of institutionalised racism and patriarchy “that has remained unchanged

since the formal end of apartheid [in 1994]” (RMF, 2015). Two years later on a continent across the Atlantic, contestation over the proposed removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee came to a head in Charlottesville, Virginia, United States (US). The events that transpired there over the 11th - 12th of August, 2017, would signify a nationwide reckoning over race, heritage, and identity. For much of the twentieth century, South Africa's racial system was broadly in alignment with a world of colonial empires, underpinned by systematically implemented racial discrimination (Welsh, 2004; Fredrickson, 1981). Many scholars have drawn parallels between the systems of racial separatism instituted in South Africa during this time with the American South (ibid.; Cell, 1980; Greenberg, 1982). While the legislated discrimination was different, and the period of this de jure discrimination has come to an end in both SA and the US, the legacies of white supremacy remain deeply ingrained in each nation's psyche and symbolic landscape (Reddy, 2015).

Calls for statue removal are not unique to the US and SA, for it is common that as regimes fall, their monumental markers fall with them. However, the statues of Rhodes and Lee remained standing long

after the regimes they immortalised were repudiated and subsequent official reconciliation processes completed. Disputes over these symbols of ‘contested histories in public spaces’ have been especially topical over the past few years, seeing an increase in scholarship and social movements calling attention to and challenging the symbolic violence of white supremacist statues. However, little research has been devoted to exploring these phenomena in tandem. Therefore, the research utilises descriptive comparative analysis to examine two case studies (Lijiphart, 1971) where the debate over statutory removal has surfaced most vehemently: Cape Town, South Africa and Charlottesville, USA.

Commencing with a discussion of the temporal backdrop in which the statues of Rhodes and Lee were constructed, the paper will then detail the lives and legacies of the men immortalised. It will also explore the recent re-negotiation of these legacies, leading to calls for removal that are as divisive as the pasts Rhode and Lee represent. Ultimately, this paper concludes that calls for statutory removal have emerged as a result of sweeping changes in national tenor towards how multicultural societies with pasts marred by racial segregation and institutionalized discrimination

understand and express their history, heritage, and right of belonging. It finds that the prevailing historical narrative that Rhodes and Lee represent is exclusionary, stunting post-conflict reconciliation and facilitating amnesia of both the traumas and contributions of non-white peoples (Gillis, 1994). This prevailing narrative has imparted deep, unhealed wounds in both nations psyche’s that continue to fester, leaving interpretations of history, heritage, and identity, as captured in the commemorative landscapes and the societies at large, raw, unresolved, and deeply contentious.

The life, legacy, and statue of Cecil John Rhodes

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 period of colonisation and settlement in the 19th - 20th centuries which are key components of South Africa’s symbolic landscape. In *Culture and Belonging in Divided Societies*, Ross (2009) discusses how a country’s symbolic landscape communicates social and political

meaning through specific public images and physical objects. These images and objects are the “most generally accessible and widely shared aide-mémoire of a culture’s knowledge[, heritage,] and understanding of its past and future” (Küchler, 1993:85). Symbolic landscapes also 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” ([1957] 2013:465). As such, cultural 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, 2017:4). It is this division that will be explored here; a division which is product of the life, times, and legacy of Rhodes, symbolically encapsulated within his statue.

The Trouble with Statues...

The now notorious statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town (UCT) was unveiled on 7th March, 1934, 22 years after Rhodes’ death. The statue

itself, interestingly, was largely an “accident of history” (UCT, 2015). After the completion of the grandiose Rhodes Memorial in 1911, the Rhodes National South African Memorial Committee (RNSAMC) had excess funds available for use (ibid.). They decided to commission English artist Marion Walgate to sculpt a “heroic statue” of Rhodes as a gift to UCT (Schmahmann, 2016:112). The committee wanted the statue to immortalize a man who “won [land] for South Africa”, who “loved and served” his country, and whose idea it was to found a teaching university in the Cape Colony (RNSAMC, 1934).

As historian Cynthia Kros (2015) notes, Rhodes’ statue was erected with deliberation and an unambiguous political agenda in mind. The bronze statue gave Rhodes an interrupted view over the city of Cape Town, symbolic of his dream of a British empire extending from the Cape to Cairo (Gwasira 2001). The statue immortalised Rhodes’ “imperialist and possessive gaze” and amplified his “immense and brooding spirit” (Schmahmann, 2016:96). Schmahmann notes that the sculpture’s pose, placement, and inscription laid the foundation for the statue’s association with “white dominance and a politics of exclusion” (ibid.)

Although Cecil Rhodes came to Southern Africa from England in 1870, it wasn't until his return to England and matriculation from Oxford College that he became vociferous in belief of the superiority of the Englishman and the imperialist cause (Lockhart & Woodhouse, 1963). In an 1877 speech composed at Oxford, Rhodes stated: "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". Upon returning to Southern Africa, Rhodes firmly committed to the project of British imperialism (Maylam, 2005). He ascended in local politics, becoming a Cape Colony Parliamentarian and years later, Prime Minister. He found success and great profit in the gold industry and secured a monopoly in the diamond industry through his De Beers Consolidated Company in the late 1880's; he founded the British South Africa Company in 1889 (ibid.). Using those assets Rhodes was able to realise his dreams of territorial expansion, leaving "a path of carnage" along the way

(ibid.:23) Of particular interest to this research is Rhodes' involvement with the Glen Grey Act, Act 25 of 1894; the "first blueprint for apartheid" (Barnabas, 2016: 110). Rhodes introduced this act into Parliament in an effort to deal both with "the labour problem of the colony" -- the necessity of a cheap, mobile, African labour force to work the Rhodes' mines -- as well as "the native question", what to do with 'natives' whose "sloth and laziness" Rhodes believed were considered a "distinct source of trouble and loss to the country" (Rhodes, 1894). The act played a definitive role in the evolution of the racially-determined labour system, pioneering the regions' cash economy and breaking up traditional communal landholding systems along the way (Hyam, 1976: 298). It also created the first 'homeland' system (Delpont & Lephakga, 2016). Rhodes' model of disenfranchising and dispossessing working class African men would later become integral to the development of apartheid's cornerstone legislations (ibid.). The act, and others of its kind, laid the foundations for legislated white supremacy and the marginalisation of people of colour in SA (Crais, 1992: 212). This would be further entrenched through the passing of draconian policies and legislation with the National Party's

rise to power in 1948, officially marking the beginning of the apartheid state (Perez & Lodon 2004). 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). In 1962, UCT’s Rhodes statue was removed from its original location and replaced above the university’s rugby field at the base of the steps leading to UCT’s central fixture: Jameson Hall. This move placed Rhodes at the very centre of the university’s picturesque Soloman axis, reasserting Rhodes’ visual, physical, and ideological dominance over university’s space and culture (Ndebele, 2013; Gwasira, 2011). This is a culture that has “to a large extent been characterized by ‘whiteness’ ” sustained far past apartheid’s official end, in part by “a particular discourse reflecting selective memory of the university’s role in [SA’s racialized] past” (Steyn & van Zyl, 2001:iii).

The symbolic value of Rhodes’ relocation is particularly interesting to consider given the socio-political climate of the university and country at the time of the re-positioning. The dawn of the 1960’s found apartheid’s tentacles firmly wrapped around many of SA’s

institutions, including UCT. While university education had been racially discriminatory prior to 1948, the Extension of University Education Act of 1959 further alienated and excluded black students, making it a criminal offense to register at formerly ‘open’ universities like UCT without special permission (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, killing 69 people and wounding 200 (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. Once penned as a visionary and heroic leader of Africa’s ‘civilising’ mission, the tenor towards Rhodes and the beliefs he held dear have largely changed (Maylam, 2005). Increasingly, scholarship on Rhodes tends to expose his racism, white supremacist views, and role in paving the way for apartheid, laying the foundations for native reserves, pass laws, Bantu education, and the disenfranchisement of African people (ibid.; Mangcu in Faber, 2015). UCT historian Rebecca Hodes

(2015) argues 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”. Even Rhodes University, Rhodes’ namesake, released a statement in the midst of #RMF proclaiming that “[i]t cannot be disputed that Cecil John Rhodes was an arch-imperialist and white supremacist who treated people of this region as subhuman” (RU Registrar’s Office, 2017). Despite revisionist understandings of Rhodes’ legacy, Rhodes is still the most commemorated figure in Cape Town and his symbolic presence has largely remained untouched (Maylam, 2005:46). Through an understanding of Rhodes’ ideologies, combined with temporally contextualising Rhodes’ unveiling, one can see how the Rhodes’ statue can be understood as a symbolic exertion of white supremacy, reinforcing the politics of exclusion to which Schmahmann (2016) speaks. This is reinforced when drawing off of Gwasira’s (2001) position on reading monuments extra-lingually as silent texts, metaphors for the ideologies of power, resistance and domination of the time and place of a monument’s fashioning. Gwasira thus credits metaphorical meaning not only to the

erection of the Rhodes statue itself, but to its deliberate re-placement in 1962, a move that brought Rhodes to a further elevated, dominant position overlooking the university and city (ibid.). This move can be considered as a symbolic repudiation of the anti-apartheid activism sweeping the nation in the 1960’s, as well as a re-assertion of and re-commitment to the tenets of white supremacy and the exclusive “character of whiteness” prized by both UCT and the nation at large (Steyn & van Zyl, 2001:iii).

#RhodesMustFall

It is resistance to the statue of Rhodes at UCT that initiated the movement that became known as #RhodesMustFall (#RMF), the inception and outcome of which will be highlighted below.

On May 9th, 2015 UCT student and resident of one of apartheid’s residual informal settlements, Khayelitsha, threw faeces on UCT’s Rhodes statue. It was an outrageous act, one meant to shock and one that many admonished, but it was one Chumani Maxwele had been scheming since 2014 (Maxwele, 2016). Though Maxwele started his campaign alone with shouts of “Where are our heroes and ancestors?” and demands that the Rhodes statue must fall, by mid-day dozens of students had joined in (Fairbanks, 2015).

Through these humble origins, #RhodesMustFall was born.

UCT's Student Representative Council (SRC) quickly lent support to the rapidly expanding movement, voting unanimously to remove Rhodes' statue. A press statement released shortly after Maxwele's faecal flinging read:

"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" (UCT SRC, 2015).

In the weeks following Maxwele's initial actions, protests, marches, songs, and demonstrations occurred daily on UCT's upper campus (Fairbanks, 2015). The protests were composed of students, professors, and tutors, as well as non-academic staff and onlookers, with numbers occasionally swelling near quadruple digits (ibid.).

A few weeks into the protests, UCT's administrative building Bremner was occupied and became a hub for

intellectual exchange; discussions on Fanon and Biko, decolonial theory, Pan Africanism and Black Consciousness abounded (Pather, 2015). From these collective influences and discourses, a Transformation Memorandum was drafted and disseminated (see RMF 2015). Aided by social media and #RMF's Facebook page, information on the movement quickly spread, capturing both national and international attention (Facebook.com/RhodesMustFall, 2015).

After less than four weeks of protest, UCT's Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price filed for an emergency application for the removal and temporary storage of Rhodes with Heritage Western Cape (HWC) (Etheridge, 2016). The permit was granted, and on April 9th, 2015, Rhodes fell to the cheers, claps, songs and dances of hundreds who had gathered to watch (ibid.). Although the final resting place of Rhodes is still being contested, as of the writing of this paper, Rhodes remains in an undisclosed storage facility under the watchful eye of HWC.

The life, legacy, and statue of General Robert E. Lee

The paper now turns to a discussion of the life, legacy, and statue of Robert E. Lee, best known as the Confederate army's Commander-in-Chief during the American Civil War. General Robert E.

Lee has been considered throughout history as an “embodiment of the Southern Cause” (Reeves 2018). Revered by the South, Lee has also been venerated by the North, mythologized by hagiographers, commemorated lavishly by Confederate memorial associations and praised by numerous standing US Presidents well after his death. Much to the befuddlement of modern historians (such as Connelly (1978) and most recently Reeves (2018), Lee’s is a legacy that has stood the test of time, as centennial celebrations of the Civil War saw adoration for Lee hit record highs, with Lee “metaphorically resurrected into a Christlike figure of perfection” (Connelly 1978: 4).

The ‘War Between the States’ broke out in 1860 after the issues of state sovereignty, chattel slavery, and national identity came to a head with the election of the 16th president of the US, Abraham Lincoln, an anti-slavery advocate (Barber, 2008). By 1861, 11 Southern states had seceded from the North, forming the Confederate States of America (CSA). Quickly enshrined in the CSA’s constitution was the right to own slaves, the backbone of the agricultural South’s way of life (Blight, 2001). When Lee’s home state of Virginia seceded the Union in May, Lee abandoned

his 32 year posting with the US Army to join the Confederate cause (Connelly, 1978). For the next four years, the undermanned, underfunded and undersupplied Southern troops, led by General Robert E. Lee, fought against the Union’s army to protect their ‘peculiar institution’, slavery, until the Confederate’s surrender in the spring of 1865 (ibid.). When the war’s dust settled, the Confederate loss was spectacular: a quarter of the white men of military age in the Confederacy had died (American Battlefield Trust n.d.).

Although the war ended in 1865, Lee’s statue was not erected until 1924, in the midst of the first spike of Confederate veneration (Gunter et al., 2018). This veneration coincided with the war’s semi-centennial and the Lost Cause, a revisionist narrative of the war tailored from the white, Southern perspective (ibid.; Pollard, 1866). After the war, white Southerners were eager to make sense of their defeat, while white Northerners were dedicated to national reconciliation (Beetham, 2016; Blight, 2001). Vital to this reconciliation was a history both sides could agree on, one 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). From these grave needs sprung the Lost Cause, a “reconciliationist” narrative that depoliticised the causes of the war, ‘nobly’ reconfiguring them as unification for the North and self-determination for the South (Blight, 2001).

Side-lining the issue of slavery became a key component of the Lost Cause narrative for white Southerners, who recast the institution of slavery as benign, “the mildest in the world” (Pollard, 1866). In the name of reconciliation and under pretences of facilitated unification, white Northerners largely accepted this narrative (Blight 2001). As any meaningful attempts to protect or engage Southern blacks in the reconciliation process were abandoned, the “hopes of newly freed men and women were quickly and decisively dashed”; the “formerly enslaved slipped back into lives that were marked by enduring poverty, racial subordination and harsh brutality” (Bergin & Rupprecht 2016:15). Thus, this first peak of Confederate commemoration, spanning from roughly 1890- 1920’s, can be understood as a re-assertion of white dominance and re-commitment to the antebellum South’s racial order. It was an order maintained by the Confederate regime who fought

fiercely to “preserve slavery, enforce white supremacy, and impose racially motivated violence on black Southerners” (Beetham, 2016:17-19). During this peak, 400 Confederate monuments were constructed, a symbolic countering of the freedoms gained by Southern blacks through emancipation and the 13th - 15th amendments, heightened by the rise of the mythologization of the Lost Cause (Gunter et al., 2018). It was during this first spike of Confederate memorialisation, lynching and Klu Klux Klan-sponsored violence that Charlottesville’s Lee statue was erected (ibid).

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 cavalry in 1865 (Demetrio & Wingo, 2018). McIntire commissioned New York artist Henry Shrady to complete the statue, but upon his untimely death acclaimed Italian sculptor Leo Lentelli took over (Patton & Camp, 1924). The monument was installed in McIntire Park in 1924, 10 years before the statue of Rhodes would be unveiled across the world at UCT. The statue’s inauguration was organized by a group of Virginian Confederate veteran memorial

associations who were hosting their annual reunions over the same weekend as Lee's unveiling (ibid.). They united for the weekend to "pay a tribute of love, and to honour [Lee,] whose name and life is a beacon ray to the men of the world" (ibid.:22).

The celebration of the Civil War's centennial came with a second peak of Confederate veneration; from the early 1950's – 1960's, nearly 50 Confederate monuments were erected (Gunter et al., 2018). This period coincided with the rise of the American civil rights movement, and as protests against racial segregation, violence and discrimination swept through the South, so did efforts by segregationists to suppress them (ibid.; Cox, 2017). Confederate statuary thus rose as a physical representation of this suppression, visible markers of a backlash against equal rights and challenges to white, male dominance (Gunter et al., 2018; Mills, 2003). It is notable that during this period many Southern state legislatures voted to place Confederate flags atop their capitol buildings for the first time (ibid.). As an "act of defiance", the flags served as a proclamation of (white) Southern pride and values against Northern attempts to impose control and assert their liberal

social beliefs regarding race and equality on the former Confederate states (ibid.).

"The world around a monument is never fixed..."

Throughout history, Lee has most frequently been commemorated as a Southern gentleman of "impeccable honesty, integrity, and kindness" (Brooks, 2015). However, it is Lee's views on slavery and race relations that are currently underpinning calls for a revisionist understanding of former icon (Foner, 2017). In her work on Lee, Pryor has undertaken an investigation of his personal letters, documenting his consistent pattern of racism and disdain for black people, asserting more than once that he believed "the relation of master and slave... is the best that can exist between the... races" (Pryor, 2007). There are various other references to Lee's cruelty towards slaves: both Pryor (2009) and Contreras (2017) note how Lee encouraged brutal beatings, while Fellman (2009) discusses Lee's racism in the post-war period, describing how he never questioned his belief in the inferiority of African-Americans. Lee is now understood for his role in furthering systematic, institutionalized racism and his white supremacist views. The fact remains if Lee had been successful in his Civil War endeavours, he would have

“preserved and prolonged the institution of slavery” (Blount, Jr., 2003); “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 ongoing systematic discrimination]” (Cobb, 2011).

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

UTR

The events that transpired in Charlottesville over the calls for the removal of Lee’s statue signified a nation-wide reckoning over race, heritage, and identity. Like #RMF, its origins were equally humble. In March of 2016, Charlottesville freshman Zyahna Bryant unassumingly started a petition on Change.org to rename Lee Park and remove the monument standing at its centre. With language evoking the alienation and exclusion expressed 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” (Change.org, 2015).

Bryant’s online petition garnered over 700 signatures, and the cause was adopted by local city council member Wes Bellamy (Wallace-Wells, 2017). Calls for Lee’s removal gained momentum and in May of 2016, Charlottesville’s city council voted to assemble the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on Race, Memorials, and Public Spaces. 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 Report, 2016: 9). After six months of meetings and research, the commission revealed their findings: “[The] Lee... statue belong[s] in no public space unless [its] history as [a] symbol of white supremacy is revealed” (ibid.:7) The commission unanimously decided to change the name of Lee Park to Emancipation Park and recommended “moving the sculpture” and/ or “transforming the park” to Charlottesville’s city council (ibid.:10).

In March, Charlottesville's city council voted to move Lee's statue and in response, 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 Sons of Confederate Veterans -- a Confederate memorial association dedicated to "preserving the history and legacy of [our] heroes" (SCVVirginia.org, n.d.) -- along with conservationist group The Monument Fund and 11 private citizens (TheMonumentFund.org, 2017).

As the initial lawsuit and subsequent counter-lawsuits made their way through the courts, far-right white civil rights groups began amassing support for upcoming rallies to protest Lee's removal. From the 11th - 12th of August 2017 the most notorious and deadly of these rallies occurred: Unite the Right (UTR). UTR was the "largest gathering [of white supremacists and white nationalists] in over a decade", with neo-Nazis, neo-fascists, KKK groups, militia groups and far right protestors across 35 states in attendance (Documenting Hate: Charlottesville, 2017).

During the rally, aggression and hate speech quickly escalated into physical violence and before the protest was officially supposed to commence,

Virginia's Governor Terry McAuliffe was forced to call a state of emergency (Jackson, 2017). Before the crowd could disperse, however, a white supremacist protestor intentionally ploughed his vehicle into a large group of counter-protestors and reversed into another (Heim, 2017). Dozens were left bleeding and injured; 19 people were rushed into critical care and activist Heather Heyer died en route to the hospital from blunt force trauma to her chest (ibid.).

Although the events of Charlottesville swayed some to support the calls for Lee's removal (for example, Charlottesville's Mayor Mike Signer), the consensus remained far from unanimous; Lee continues to stand as the case makes its way through the courts (Duggan, 2017).

OUTCOMES

In SA, the falling of Rhodes initiated a wider "Statue Revolution" of defacement and vandalism (Heritage Portal, n.d.). The National Heritage Council stated that 2015 had "probably the highest record of defac[ed] statues" in history; in the first two months after #RMF, 20 monuments were defaced, with additional defacements continuing throughout the year (NHC, 2015; Marschall, 2017). Despite Rhodes' successful removal, no

other statutory uprootings have occurred and #RMF has ultimately been appropriated by calls for decolonization and tertiary education fees to fall.

In the US, the surge in Confederate iconoclasm started with the removal of Confederate flags from Southern state capitals in 2015, catalysed by a white supremacist-motivated church massacre in Charleston, Virginia (Wallace-Wells, 2017). Since then, calls for removal have escalated to include statues. As of the time of writing in October 2018, 113 statues have been removed across the US (Gunter et al., 2018). Many additional removals are slated, but remain frozen in place as their cases work their way through the American judicial system. As Beetham (2016:27) notes, statues in the US are “governed by a wide range of local, state, and federal laws, some of which may not become apparent until a moment of monumental crisis occurs”. Such is the case of Charlottesville’s Lee, who remains standing along with 1,740 other confirmed symbols dedicated to the Confederacy (Gunter et al., 2018).

In both SA and the US, the phenomena explored through this paper has largely fizzled out, ultimately unable to sustain the public’s emotion and attention as newer, more pressing headlines vie for the national spotlight. However, the issue

continues to resurface from time to time, as there has been no unanimous consensus to this monumental debate.

How can we understand the phenomena? Rhodes and Lee, both as statues and public figures, have become increasingly scrutinized by their respective nations as those nation experience a resurgence of re-claiming and reconciling multicultural and multiracial identities with deeply racist pasts. While the understandings of why this has occurred remain varied, many recognise the overall ‘lack of transformation’ as a central theme in both phenomena.

Pillay (2016) argues that Maxwele, rather than catalysing an entire movement, simply actualized a growing mood of discontent among South Africans. This discontent has manifested itself into a “collective refusal to be silenced”, a refusal that fed into “rumbling underlying energy manifested in poverty, inequality, and exclusion- ready to erupt and disrupt” (ibid.). Poverty, inequality and exclusion that people of colour (POC) experience are all themes apparent in the #RMF manifesto, but are also themes echoed by Reddy (2015), who maintains that disappointment, political malaise, and the unravelling of post-apartheid dreams and expectations have replaced the optimism and enthusiasm of SA’s democratic

transition; continuing high unemployment, crime, inequality, and poverty are all testaments to this. Not only has SA lacked the transformation promised through democratization, but the levels of inequality continue to grow (ibid.). SA's Gini coefficient is one measure that reflects a country with some of the highest rates of inequality and deprivation in the world that continues to be largely based on racial lines (Burger et al., 2017).

It is evident that the white supremacist legacies of colonialism and apartheid continue to retain their grip on the nation's most vulnerable citizens, manifesting itself in alienation, exclusion, and the continued dehumanization of POC (RMF, 2015; Nyamnjoh, 2017; Murriss, 2016:275). This is reinforced through SA's symbolic landscape, one that Frescura's 1992 study found is grossly imbalanced, silencing and excluding the contributions and histories of POC. Frescura found that 97 percent of all declared national monuments in pre-democratic SA were dedicated to articulating the cultural heritage of the country's white minority (ibid.). Just 3 percent of monuments represented the other 84 percent of the non-white population; of this, the majority are rock art sites, which Frescura argues reinforces

a poor, a-historic stereotype of POC (ibid.; Van Der Wal, 2015)

While Frescura's study relates to the pre-democratic landscape, little has changed since the country's 1994 commitment to equality and inclusion (ibid.). After all, the divisive and exclusionary statue of Rhodes at UCT stood tall for 21 years after the official negotiated end to apartheid. Despite a country-wide reconciliation process in the form of SA's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the re-evaluation of the country's symbolic landscape (see for example analysis from Ndletyana and Webb, 2017), SA's memory landscape continues to be skewed. The over-representation of white histories and heritages disarticulates the contributions of POC, symbolically annihilating them from public history and memory, wrongly implying a lack of "any material culture of note or worthy of conservation" (Marschall, 2010:21; Gillis, 1994).

In the growing literature emerging from the US in the wake of UTR, 'lack of transformation' is a theme that also appears. Many black people continue to feel dehumanised and cite experiencing racial discrimination, especially at the hands of the state.

This is evidenced by the growing Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, centred

around police brutality against POC (Beetham, 2016). Beetham highlights the direct relationship between the racial violence of the past -- violence against black bodies glorified by commemorating leaders of the Confederacy -- and the continuation of violence into the present, with near weekly occurrences of statutory violence perpetrated against unarmed POC (ibid.). This violence has escalated, propelled by the election of an American president of African descent, manifesting itself in a backlash towards what a white civil rights expert termed “the browning of America”, the prediction that will no longer be a ‘white’ majority in America by 2043 (Potok, 2013b). This backlash has taken the form of a steep increase in hate groups and far right militias; the SPLC estimates that hate groups in America were at an all-time high of 1,360 after Obama’s first term (Potok, 2013a) There has also been a measurable increases in both explicit and implicit “anti-black attitudes”, further exacerbated by the election of President Donald Trump’s condoning of white supremacist attitudes after the Heyer’s Charlottesville death.

Conclusion

Through #RMF and calls for Lee’s Charlottesville statue to fall, Rhodes and Lee became flash points of cultural

contestation. They brought to the fore unresolved issues of identity, belonging, and the right to heritage in nations dealing with stunted reconciliation processes. Those on the side of statutory removal advocate for representation and inclusion in symbolic landscapes that have long neglected non-white heritages, essentially what Alderman and Campbell term “whitewash[ing]” history (2008:340; Barber, 2008). This lack of transformation in the symbolic realm echoes a lack of transformation in many other facets of the societies concerned, namely their social, political, and cultural realms.

As more POC in SA and the US overcome historical barriers and are better positioned politically and economically, they increasingly have the power to shape the narrative of memory (Mills, 2003). These changes are reflected in the national cognitive landscapes, which elicits corresponding changes to the symbolic, leading societies to become less inclined to allow for the ambiguity of symbols perpetuating narratives of white supremacy (Cobb, 2011). For some, this can propel society forwards, towards a more inclusive, egalitarian future. For others, this can be a source of conflict, as changing the narrative told through a nation’s symbolic/ memory landscape can

be perceived as an attack on (white) cultural hegemony and existence. This contestation continues to be exacerbated as the polarisation of political ideologies drives calls for protest and counter-protest to the point of physical violence, as seen in the case of Charlottesville.

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

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