

The South falls again

Confederate monuments taken down in New Orleans

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Contributor

Though the Civil War took place over 200 years ago, Confederate monuments still stand in many of the nation's southern states. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a statue of a Confederate soldier named "Silent Sam" honors 321 UNC alumni that fought in the Civil War. Stone Mountain, Georgia is home to carvings of such Confederate leaders as Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. A statue of Albert Pike, a Confederate general and rumored KKK member, stands near the Capitol Building in Washington D.C.

The removal process has begun for four such monuments in New Orleans following a vote by elected officials and approval from a federal judge in Louisiana. The first of these, the Battle of Liberty Place Monument, was built in 1891 to honor members of the Crescent City White League, a group of white New Orleans residents who fought against racially integrated police and state militia. David Duke and the KKK have often used this monument as a rallying point for their

meetings.

Workers began removing the obelisk-shaped monument on April 24, which is also Confederate Memorial Day in some states. State government offices were closed in Mississippi and Alabama in observance.

Statues of Lee, Davis, and P.G.T. Beauregard are also scheduled to be removed from New Orleans in the coming weeks. The Lee statue was installed in 1884 after years of fundraising by Civil War veterans and other local citizens. It was vandalized by anti-Trump protestors during the 2016 election cycle.

The statue of Davis was built as a tribute to the president of the Confederate States of America after his death in New Orleans in 1889. Protestors painted the words "slave owner" at the base of the statue in 2004.

Beauregard, who was a notable Civil War general and longest-surviving top Confederate leader, was also immortalized in a statue after his 1893 death. In 2015, "Black Lives Matter" was spray-painted on both sides of the monument's column.

Upon hearing about the controversy surrounding these monuments, University freshman student Bella Crotti expressed

her opinion on the matter: "I don't think that it's necessarily right that [they are] still up, but I'm not surprised that [they are], especially in the south." There is merit to this statement; a 2015 CNN/ORC poll shows that while 33 percent of Americans viewed the Confederate Flag as a symbol of racism, 57 percent considered it a symbol of Southern pride. As such, it is unsurprising to many that these monuments still stand.

This "southern pride" is the main argument being used against the monuments' removal. A petition to leave the statues up developed by nonprofit organization The Monumental Task Committee has collected 31,000 signatures. Protestors have also organized candlelight vigils in support of the monuments, saying that they are deeply rooted in New Orleans culture and heritage.

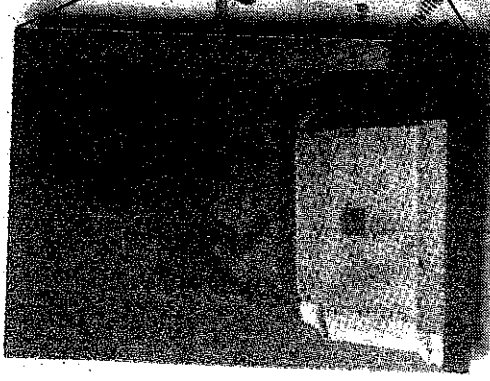
Before the first removal, the car of a worker hired to remove the statue was set on fire, and contractors have received threats due to their involvement with the project. Because of the risks posed by these acts, the city is taking extra precautions. Workers who removed the first monument wore black jackets, helmets, and face coverings to protect their identities.

The removal of these monuments is part of a larger wave of changes regarding Confederate remembrance. As Crotti also explains, "There have been so many issues with the confederate flag [recently], which I think is worse than just a statue." This statement likely refers to the July 2015 removal of the Confederate Flag from the South Carolina Capitol Building. Then-Governor Nikki Haley argued for the flag's removal after the Charleston church shooting, which took place that June.

In that instance, the flag was removed just one day after Haley signed the bill calling for its removal. However, the New Orleans removals faced more logistical difficulties. Local leaders campaigned to remove the Liberty Place Monument in 1981 and 1993, but were unsuccessful both times. The 1993 campaign did result in the city council voting to remove the monument, but only the message on the plaque was changed.

The city of New Orleans has not released any details about the three upcoming removals. At the project's conclusion, all four of the monuments will be moved into storage until the city secures a museum or other venue to display them.

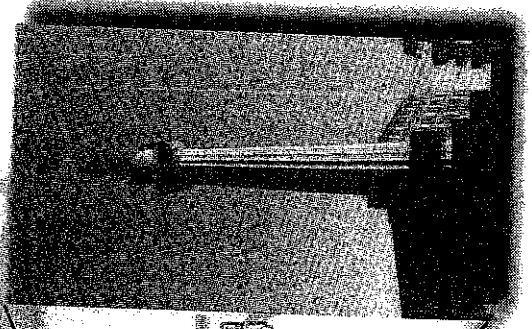
P.G.T. Beauregard Monument (Wikipedia)



Battle Of Liberty Place Monument (Wikipedia)



Robert E. Lee Monument (Wikipedia)



Jefferson Davis Monument (Flicker/Bart Everson)

