

Why do Confederate monuments matter?

A Dickinson Salon, Wednesday, September 13, 4:30-6pm, Allison Community Room. (Open only to Dickinson College members)

Sponsored by the Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues, the History Department, the Office of Academic Advising and Phi Beta Kappa.

Recently neo-Nazis and other white supremacist groups rallied at a monument of Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia, and many activists showed up to resist their presence. Leaders in cities such as New Orleans and Baltimore and on campuses such as University of Texas, Austin, decided to remove their Confederate monuments because of the connection between the Confederacy and white supremacy. Opponents of removing Confederate monuments argue that the monuments should remain as symbols of heritage or because something is lost in their dismantling.

Join us to discuss the full range of questions that this moment evokes: Why is there so much concern over Confederate monuments? Who built them? Why? Whose history do Confederate monuments honor? What does it mean to “honor” history? How else might we document history? Is taking down the monuments the most effective means of addressing painful, difficult, divisive histories? Does removal erase the history of oppression and white supremacy rather than addressing it? Is it only Confederate monuments that should be of concern? Where do we stop? Should we stop? What do we think about activists taking the matter into their own hands?

To join the conversation, please rsvp to clarkeforum@dickinson.edu by 9/7/17.

Prior to our conversation, be sure to read at least 4 of the following short articles.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/20/opinion/confederate-statues-american-history.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-left-region®ion=opinion-c-col-left-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-left-region>

In this article, esteemed U.S. historian Eric Foner lays out the original reasons for Confederate monuments and his thinking on their relevance today.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/opinion/white-power-and-the-fear-of-replacement.html> In this article, Abigail Levin and Lisa Guenther lead us through the thinking that connects anti-Semitism and pro-Confederacy and white supremacy.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/08/16/the-whole-point-of-confederate-monuments-is-to-celebrate-white-supremacy/?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.9334938712ad

In this article, historian Karen Cox explores the roots of the myth of the Lost Cause and how it relates to the controversy over Confederate monuments today.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/28/world/americas/canada-john-a-macdonald-kingston.html>

In this article, *New York Times* reporter Ian Austin draws our attention to the similar battles over monuments and memorials happening in Canada—in this case, the monuments honoring Sir John MacDonald, founder of the Canadian schools for indigenous peoples.

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/opinion/mitch-landrieu-speech-transcript.html?_r=0

In this speech, mayor of New Orleans Mitch Landrieu explains in great detail why he supported taking down all of the Confederate monuments in his city.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/go-ahead-topple-the-monuments-to-the-confederacy-all-of-them/2017/08/18/6b54c658-8427-11e7-ab27-1a21a8e006ab_story.html?hpid=hp_no-name_opinion-card-b%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.eb8531e3cd26

In this article and video, activist Bree Newsome, the woman well known for taking down the Confederate flag flying over the capitol building in Columbia, S.C. (after the massacre in the Charleston church by an avowed white supremacist), urges readers to support the elimination of all monuments to the Confederacy.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/450470/charlottesville-virignia-robert-e-lee-statue-remove-right-decision-confederate-monuments-museums> In this *National Review* editorial, conservative Rich Lowry argues we should “mothball” Confederate monuments, placing them in cemeteries and museums.

A longer bibliography will also be provided at the Salon.