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Engendered in Stone: The Role of Race and Gender in the Construction and Removal of Confederate Monuments in Tampa, Florida

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Abstract

This article recounts the 2017 struggle of the Black women-led group "Take 'Em Down Hillsborough" to remove a Confederate monument in downtown Tampa, Florida. The article contextualizes the struggle historically and regionally back to the Jim Crow era. Concurrently, it examines efforts by white and Black women's organizations in the U.S. South, and in Tampa, Florida in particular, to intervene in racial formations via the remaking of cultural landscapes and places of historical memory. Around the turn of the 20th century, white women's civic groups were central to the erection of Confederate monuments to shore up white nationalist masculinity in the defeated South through the promulgation of a "Lost Cause" narrative and symbols. Simultaneously, Black women organized to contest these forgeries of public memory – and white supremacy more broadly – by engaging in a range of interconnected activities of community development, electoral organizing, placemaking, and public memory work. This study examines the historical and contemporary struggles over and around Confederate monuments in and beyond Tampa through the optics of Black Geographies, attending to continuities in Black feminist

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modes of organizing. The article highlights the historical grounding in Tampa of Black women organizers' conceptions and practices of intersectionality and coalition-building, and their refusal of the false binary between symbolic and material struggles.

Keywords

Monuments, white supremacy, Black Geographies, race, gender, social movements

Introduction

In October 2017, a plain circle of sod lay by the sidewalk on the site of the Old Hillsborough County Courthouse. No obvious trace remained of the 50-foot white marble obelisk that was unveiled with fanfare before a crowd of 5,000 in 1911, dedicated to white supremacy and "undying love" of the Confederate cause, in speeches by the Mayor and State Attorney marking the occasion (Contorno 2017). Dubbed *Memoria in Aeterna* (Latin for 'eternal memory,' hereafter *MA*), it was one of over 1,900 public symbols of the Confederacy that blanketed the United States in 2016 (Southern Poverty Law Center 2016), and one of some 50 such monuments created in Florida between 1871 and 2011 (Lees and Gaske 2014). It was also one of the over 270 public symbols removed – some through public deliberation, or what some have called "prescriptive forgetting" (Forest and Johnson 2019, 128) and some through direct action or "repressive erasure" (Forest and Johnson 2019, 128.) – in a wave of anti-racist interventions across America's cultural landscapes that began in 2015. This wave rose initially in the wake of the mass murder of Black parishioners at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC, and reached new heights in 2020 after the police murder of George Floyd (BeenVerified 2020). In Tampa, in the Spring and Summer of 2017, a Black women-led multiracial group organizing under the banner of Take 'Em Down Hillsborough (TEDH) and emerging out of the Hillsborough Community Protection Coalition (CPC), coordinated marches, rallies, press conferences, and public testimonials in favor of the removal. They galvanized public pressure that resulted, after months, in a close vote of the County Commission ordering the removal of the monument to a private cemetery outside the city. This study examines these struggles through the lens of key activists and their public activity such as speeches, public hearings, press conferences, and social media communications, as well as media coverage of the fight.

The *MA* statue was created, and removed, in the context of struggles over racial formation (Omi and Winant 2014) and white supremacy in which the cultural landscape and places of public memory served as conduits and reservoirs for contestation over cultural meaning and political and material arrangements. The original creation of such monuments was frequently facilitated by white women who participated in the "cultural work" (Johnson 2000, 526) of a white 'Redemption' backlash against Black Reconstruction. They promulgated a "Lost Cause" ideology that sought to vindicate the Confederacy through a range of interventions in literature, landscape, and school curricula, alongside others made through law, electoral politics, lynching and mob violence. Though white women were rarely portrayed in the symbology of the Confederate monuments, they played a central role in the monuments' creation, through local and national organizations that advocated and raised funds for their construction and maintenance. This drew attention to them by inventing performative traditions for the public display of mourning and memory (Brundage 2008; Cox 2003; Foster 1987; Robinson 2007). Fortunately, the Tampa struggle shows a significant loss of support for this project among white women in the area today.

Less widely recognized in mainstream historiography is Black women's active role resisting the imposition of white supremacy and pursuing racial and social justice through alternative cultural landscape and memory work. To amend this historic lacuna, this article reads the Black women-led efforts to remove Tampa's Confederate monument as part of an unbroken tradition of Black women's

political theorizing and spatial practices stretching from the Black feminisms of the 1970s and 1980s (Smith 2003; Lorde 2007; Taylor 2012) to struggles against the imposition of Jim Crow (Davis 1983; Hewitt 2001; Ortiz 2006). Following the work of Bledsoe, Eaves, and Williams (2017, 8), it supports the claim that "Black Geographies are [...] fundamentally concerned with highlighting the various ways Black communities create their own unique political practices and senses of place, thereby acknowledging the spatial capacities of Afro-descendant populations." In analyzing the spatial tactics as well as landscape and memory work of TEDH, and situating it within its historical lineage of Black feminism with the Black radical tradition, we highlight the Black feminist conceptions and practices of intersectionality and coalition building amongst Tampa's organizers (Crenshaw 1989; Combahee River Collective 2017; Gilmore 2002, 2008; Reagon 1983;), including their rejection of the false binary between "symbolic" and "material" struggles (Hawthorne 2019, 6). In so doing, we seek to highlight the relational place-making practices of Black-led multi-racial coalitions doing the memory work of reckoning with the nation's racial past and present (Allen 2019; Inwood and Alderman 2016).

Methods

This study is based on a discourse analysis of transcripts of all the 2017 Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) hearings on the monument issue, as well media statements and posts on websites made by the Hillsborough Community Protection Coalition (CPC) and Take 'Em Down Hillsborough (TEDH), that led the fallist efforts. During the BoCC hearings of summer 2017, the study authors also attended and took notes at press conferences held by TEDH to garner first-hand knowledge of the views of key activists. A database was also created to document the articles covering the controversy in the local newspaper of record, the *Tampa Bay Times.* The team also examined Facebook pages and posts of TEDH/CPC groups during the campaign. All this information was transcribed and coded. Thematic codes, including history/memory, multiculturalism/diversity, solidarity, intersectionality, change/continuity, urban development, racism, militarism, and violence were applied to sections of the texts and then grouped thematically to enable discourse analysis.

As a collective of geographers, the authors are composed of men and women, Black and white, queer and straight; our research collective is composed of geographers at different levels of the academe, from a Ph.D. candidate to a tenure-track professor to a tenured professor. Each of us have lived, worked, and organized politically in Tampa, and thus know the key activists involved as friends and comrades. When we write about Tampa, it is as current and former residents, though only one member of the research team remains in Tampa as of the time of publication.

Southern Elite White Women and Confederate Monument Construction

After the Civil War, Southern white women leveraged their gender and whiteness which signified purity and respectability to take on a political role without upsetting the existing patriarchal power structure. They formed Ladies Memorial Associations (LMAs) in as many as 100 cities, not just in the former Confederate states, but across the U.S. more broadly. In the early years, LMAs focused on arranging burials and maintaining the graves of Confederate soldiers. In the white backlash against Reconstruction, LMAs shifted their attention to commemorative monuments in public parks, plazas, and courthouse grounds to engender the cultural norms and segregation efforts of white supremacy in stone. By 1899, LMAs had erected several monuments in Florida. Most of the LMAs were organized under the aegis of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). This organization was founded in 1894 and by 1918 claimed 100,000 members. Throughout the 20th Century, the UDC was the lead sponsor of Confederate monuments, thus making white women "the prominent voice of the Lost Cause" (Lees and Gaske 2014, 11, 51-2). According to McRae (2018), elite southern white women were historically entrusted with the memorial task of acting as "segregation's constant gardeners."

Scholars have noted that in the wake of the Civil War, some white women challenged the racist and sexist assumptions underpinning the southern lady ideal, but the majority remained staunch guardians of white supremacy as they benefitted from the privileged status of their menfolk (Scott 1970; Hall, 1979; Murray, 2004; Stefani, 2011). Wealthy white women were particularly skilled and committed racial place-makers as evidenced by their role in monument construction (for longer historiography, see Cox 2003). This helps explain why white women's blatant acts of political agitation were tolerated by the white patriarchal power structures whereas in all other civic affairs, save for "health care, relief and education for the poor," white women, like all women, were largely confined politically to being "in charge of the home, of the children, and of church-related activities" (Stefani 2011).

Some scholars argue that instead of engaging in open and direct confrontation with desegregationist forces like the vigilante tactics of the Ku Klux Klan and municipal entities like White Citizens' Councils (see Stoner 2018; Savage 2018), elite southern women used the power of artistic image and discourse, notably the "objectivized and conservative stories of war, history, and nation told in stone to stand forever unchanged" (DelGenio 2019, 4). Stoner (2018) explains the discreet and stealthy infra-politics of elite southern women thus:

> Unlike governors or legislators, white women couldn't enforce Jim Crow with state power. Unlike the Klan, they generally eschewed direct violence. Their sphere of authority was family, home, and those local spaces considered extensions of the domestic sphere – most notably public schools.

By targeting their resources on monumentalizing the Confederacy and the hegemony of white supremacy, these elite white women masked their class and racial *resentment* against civil and political rights for Black people by cultivating an innocuous public image of ordinary southern ladies who were merely concerned about preserving 'white Christian culture and tradition in the South.' In the racially fraught urban built environments of both the Reconstruction and Civil Rights eras, commemorative monuments became convenient vehicles for the reproduction of white supremacy and racial inequality. Promoting monument construction offered Confederate women and unrepentant segregationists "a certain freedom to act because they did not seem to transgress gender/social norms when they presented themselves as the moral guardians of their communities" (Stefani 2011, 5; see also Johnson 2000). In this way, the quotidian socio-cultural works of the LMAs, parading as relief efforts in the postbellum South, were normalized by LMA members who portrayed themselves publicly as mothers, grandmothers, and female kin whose only concern was with ensuring the safety and security of their offspring and preserving the honor and dignity of their dead male kin.

A related reason for targeting their resources on monument construction was that many elite white women believed they had more political latitude than white men to defend the "Lost Cause" without inviting retaliation (Hall 1993; Young, Louise, February 14, 1972 interview, cited in Stefani 2011) or risking the denial of public sector investment and job opportunities on account of their regressive worldview. Many elite southern men encouraged their female kin to expand their ideological work on behalf of a "new form of southern nationalism that invoked white supremacy" (Cox 2021, 29-30; see also Rubin 2005; Brundage 2000).

Commemorating Florida's White Women and the 'Lost Cause'

In Florida, as elsewhere in the U.S. South, white women's groups such as the UDC advocated and raised funds for Confederate monuments. Two monuments in the state, in Jacksonville and Tampa, stand out as particularly significant in highlighting white women's formative roles in support of the Confederacy during the Civil War, and in promulgating the 'Lost Cause' ideology afterwards.

The visibility of white women in the cultural landscape, perpetuating the myth of the 'Lost Cause,' is perhaps most evident in what is now Florida's largest city, Jacksonville. The monument,

Florida's Tribute to the Women of the Confederacy, was dedicated in Jacksonville in 1915 with a parade, prayers, music, and speeches before a crowd of over 5,000. In his remarks, U.S. Senator Duncan Fletcher paid tribute to the women who "bore the brunt of the blow" of the war, and "endured suffering, heart breaking partings, cruel sacrifices, with inspiring fortitude and infinite patience." This homage was reiterated in the monument's inscribed dedication to the "noble women who sacrificed their all upon their country's altar." The forty-seven-foot-tall monument is a marble temple structure capped by a bronze female figure carrying a Confederate battle flag. Inside the temple is another bronze statue of a seated woman, with one arm around a boy at one side, and a girl close at the other, all three gazing at a large book in the woman's lap. According to a contemporary interpretation of the monument in *Confederate Veteran* magazine, the book contains "the true story of the Civil War" (Lees and Gaske 2014, 152-159). The monument thus fuses an enshrinement of sacrifices made by Confederate women during the war with a reverence for the ongoing cultural, educational, and patrimonial efforts by white women to inculcate the Lost Cause ideology trans-generationally after the war. As white women were embraced publicly into the memorial landscape of the 'Lost Cause,' in the same period nationally, the second Klan in the early 1920s began allowing women to affiliate through the Women of the KKK. By one estimate, some 500,000 women did so in at least 36 states – in some states making up nearly half of total Klan membership (Newton 2001, 46).

Tampa's *Memoria in Aeterna*

In Tampa, white women were active in the various efforts at public commemoration of the Confederacy and intervened in educational institutions to spread 'Lost Cause' ideology and cement white educational advantages. White women's efforts to propagate the 'Lost Cause' ideology in Tampa reached a peak with the 1911 construction of the *Memoria in Aeterna* monument. The fifty-foot monument's design and symbolism are typical in several respects. But it is unusual in giving public voice to the 'Lost Cause' by way of an inscribed poem that was written by a woman, Episcopal nun Sister Carlotta, who was Florida's UDC president from 1909-1916. The monument's white marble obelisk stands atop a pedestal, with the figures of two confederate soldiers flanking it. The Confederate battle flag is inlaid, along with a dedication "TO THE HONOR AND COURAGE OF THE PATRIOTS OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA." The Tampa Chapter of Florida's UDC, led by "some of the city's most affluent leaders," had spent eight years raising funds for the monument (Hewitt 2001, 173; see Lees and Gaske 2014). Sister Carlotta delivered remarks on behalf of the state UDC. Erasing any doubt as to the monument's relationship to the 'Lost Cause,' Mayor D.B. McKay, freshly elected as head of Tampa's White Municipal Party, proclaimed that the monument would "stand forever as a testimonial of our undying love for the cause that we of the South believe was right." Keynote speaker, state attorney Herbert S. Phillips, concurred with McKay, making openly racist statements while denouncing any form of racial equality (Contorno 2017a1).

Efforts to bolster white supremacy in the realm of education were pursued by Tampa UDC members, as well as by many of the women's clubs to which UDC members often also belonged (Hewitt 2001, 173). Their efforts to maintain and extend racial advantage in education included spreading 'Lost Cause' ideology and supporting charitable and public institutions educating white children (Johnson 2000). For example, Caroline Huber, a founding member of the Tampa Civic Association and later President of the Women's City Club, supported the creation of public libraries in the city, while also publicly advocating for preserving white advantage through school funding (Hewitt 2001). Furthermore, Tampa's Black communities' needs were largely neglected by white women social welfare activists and there were drastic racial differences in terms of teachers' salaries and school facilities. It should also be noted that when people sought to create educational opportunities for Black communities, these efforts were met with white supremacist violence. This can be seen in the case of the Harlem Academy, a school started by a Black community group and led by Bahamian-American educator-activist, Christina

Johnson, which was built in 1889 and destroyed by arson in 1892. The Jesuits and the Sisters of the Holy Names founded an elementary school for Black people in 1894, only to have it burned down ten days later by arsonists who left a note at the scene justifying their bigotry and threatening further destruction (Hewitt 2001, 54, 186; Historical Marker Project). Both schools were later rebuilt.

These episodes of intimidation and destruction of Black educational spaces were part of a wider context of white supremacist violence that was defined by the systematic underfunding of public institutions serving Black residents in Jim Crow era Tampa. The city's institutional racism was definitively epitomized by the City Council's November 1911 budgetary allocation of $500 for the maintenance of *Memoria in Aeterna*, and only $50 for the Clara Frye Hospital, founded by Clara Frye to serve Black patients denied treatment in white medical facilities (Hewitt 2001, 157, 172).

Black Geographies and Black Countermobilizations

In the face of white supremacy, perpetrated by public institutions and valorized in public monuments during and after Jim Crow, Black communities in Tampa and across the South fought for freedom and justice using an array of methods and organizational forms. In this section, we present an overview of some of the historical lineage and regional context out of which the TEDH monument removal struggle emerged. We frame this historical analysis vis-a-vis key discursive themes in Black Geographies and highlight three important areas of continuity between the efforts of TEDH and their antecedent movements: (1) the rejection of false binaries between symbolic and material struggles; (2) intersectionality; and (3) coalition building.

Hawthorne offers a useful overview and synthesis of recent work in Black Geographies, identifying "space-making and the Black geographic imagination" as a key discursive theme. As Hawthorne explains: "Black Geographies assert the inherent spatiality of Black life – the spatial imaginaries, space-making practices, and senses of place rooted in Black communities. Starting from the understanding that all social relations are grounded in spatial relations, this scholarship privileges Black world-making practices in all their multiplicities (Hawthorne 2019, 5; see also Woods and McKittrick, 2007; Bledsoe, Eaves, and Williams 2017; Hunter, Pattillo, Robinson, and Taylor, 2016). This theme guides our historical analysis and its articulation with our contemporary study of the Tampa monument removal fight. We also draw from Woods' (2017) study of the ways in which material struggles over the political economy of economic development in the U.S. South were shaped by the creative cultural practices and interventions of Black communities, a process he referred to as "blues epistemology." Moreover, we connect the overlapping multiplicities of Black cultural and political work and space-making practices by highlighting Black women's organizing around education, voting rights, anti-violence, and historical memory, and we link 19th Century abolition movements to Jim Crow era freedom struggles and innovations in Black feminist thought and organizing in the 1970s and 1980s.

As Woods argues, the white supremacist cultural and political interventions of the Jim Crow era were designed to "reproduce profitability and power" of southern economic elites through the exploitation of natural resources and low wage labor. In the face of this economic exploitation and racial repression, Black organizers and activists countered with "thousands of conscious mobilizations designed to transform society" (Woods 2017, 2, 27). These efforts were interconnected across time and space and often mutually reinforcing.

During this era, Black women were renowned for building local institutions to overcome the inequalities created by the denial of public resources to their communities. Churches, schools, literary groups, and lodges, and by the early 20th century, Black Women's' Clubs, became sites of vital social and cultural activity in Tampa and elsewhere (Davis 1983; Johnson 2000; Hewitt 2001; Ortiz 2005). Those activities that prioritized children and faith can be regarded as re-inscriptions of the gendered limits on political and economic activity in the public sphere. But, in many cases, participants themselves

saw their efforts at shaping civic life through educational projects and mutual aid institutions as linked to broader political, economic, and social struggles, contemporary and historic (see Johnson 2000). Chicago educator, feminist and political activist Fannie Barrier Williams distinguished Black women's clubs from those of their white counterparts by remarking that Black women had come to realize that "progress includes a great deal more than [...] culture, education, and contact...The club movement is...the force of a new intelligence against the old ignorance. [It is t]he struggle of an enlightened conscience against the whole brood of social miseries, born out of the stress and pain of a hated past" (Davis 1983, 133, brackets added; also see Johnson 2000, 526-532).

Struggles over voting rights were another major area of Black women's organizing during Jim Crow. Between the passage of the 15th and 19th Amendments, Black women, though denied the franchise, influenced electoral politics, and forged a "different Black, southern and American identity" (Johnson, 2000, 531) from their white counterparts. In Florida, "Black women defended polling places from white incursion, inflicted violence on Black men who offered to sell their votes and threatened would-be Democratic husbands with divorce." The latter occurred near a polling place in Jacksonville during the 1888 election, helping remove Democratic candidates from office to the "disgust" of white elites (Ortiz 2005, 23, 50). Foes of women's suffrage in Florida warned that the prospect of Black women voting would mean "feminism, socialism, and negroism" (Ortiz 2005, 188). In other words, Black women's suffrage threatened patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy. Upon gaining the vote, Black women in Florida frequently outstripped white women in their efforts to yield their votes, pursuing ambitious voter registration drives that increased Black men's political participation as well (Ortiz 2005, 189-91).

Given the centrality of state and extra-judicial violence in the imposition and maintenance of racial capitalism in the US (Gilmore 2009), it is not surprising that organizing against such violence became a central focus of Black women's activism. Organizers recognized violence as a threat, and as an obstacle to political participation. Black women community leaders in the South were often blacklisted from employment and housing by the plantation elite and targeted for violence by elite-led vigilante groups. Such was the case with Sister Cornelia McPherson, "bone and sinew" of the Starke, Florida A.M.E. church, who was gunned down by Klansmen in 1873 (Ortiz 2005, 25). Confrontations were often dramatic, such as the 1880s episode in Madison, FL, in which a group of unarmed Black women outside the county courthouse fended off a white lynch mob from assassinating Augustus Crosby for exposing electoral fraud (Ortiz 2005, 38). But Black women's activism also occurred through everyday organizing and public discourse. The first Black women's clubs in the 1890s organized against lynching, police violence, and the widespread and oft unpunished sexual assault of Black women and girls (see Barnard 1993). Figures like Ida B. Wells, Mary Talbert, and Mary Church Terrell were central to the U.S. South's anti-lynching movement throughout the 1920s (Davis 1983).

Black women also engaged in struggles over access to and the meaning of public space. Black women activists were acknowledged by men for their leading role in protests and boycotts against Florida cities' efforts to impose streetcar segregation in the wake of the Supreme Court's 1898 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision (Ortiz 2005, 119-124, 231). Black Floridian women also demonstrated their organizational agency in the realm of historical memory and culture by counteracting the Lost Cause organizing efforts of their white counterparts in the UDC. Protests of screenings of the touchstone white supremacist film *Birth of a Nation* in Pensacola were followed by a successful campaign to ban the film from being screening in Palatka (Robinson 2007; Ortiz 2005).

Though Black women were not able to directly block or match material inscriptions into the cultural landscapes of the South that white women's groups such as the UDC achieved with their

monuments,[1] they nevertheless found ways to establish and transmit counternarratives about abolition and reconstruction in public spaces. Public commemorations of the significance of the Civil War and the emancipation of Black people in the South were transformed into annual "Emancipation Day" celebrations and parades, as well as Memorial Day or Decoration Day services honoring war dead and veterans. Indeed, like their white counterparts commemorating the Lost Cause, Black youth "were introduced to [the] history [of Emancipation Day] via parades, dramatic role playing, and participatory learning," or what Ortiz (2006, 91-92, 172-3) termed "testimonial culture" and a "methodology of Black public history" (also see Johnson 2000). Black communities drew inspiration and perspective from recurring struggles from speeches, allegorical and historical floats, freedom songs, dramatic role-playing, and stories. As Ortiz puts it, African Americans countered the 'Lost Cause' narrative among whites by fashioning "democratic narratives honoring slavery's survivors, the Union Cause, and the egalitarianism of Reconstruction. These lessons enhanced Black pride by providing examples of Black accomplishments. Politically charged memories also helped to shape Black identities and aspirations for social change." Similarly, Memorial Day services operated: "to enshrine the sacrifices that African American Civil War veterans had made towards the liberation of all" (Otiz 2006, 169). In the absence of public confirmation of their contributions to equal rights in the built environment, African Americans forged and defended their own histories and memories in public space. Thus, Black communities often used public performances such as Emancipation Day commemorations to capacitate broader civic projects and political demands. For instance, the fierce struggles for voting rights that swept across Florida leading up to the 1920 election were sparked by the Jacksonville Emancipation Day celebration of 1919 (Ortiz 2005, 172).

According to Ortiz (2005), Florida's Black social movements pursued a more holistic approach to politics. He explains how cultural traditions and practices were often directly tied to material and political struggles that were a "synthesis of the cultural and the political" that "linked together voting rights, economic justice, and the fight against racial oppression." Ortiz asserts that these intertwined struggles were organic extensions of earlier struggles and Black radical traditions (2005, 86-7, 92-3, 230-1). By deliberately conjoining cultural and material struggles, Florida's Black movement thinkers prefigured a central discursive theme of Black Geographies' political-economic analysis as defined by Hawthorne (2019, 6), namely: "Black Geographies emphasizes the mutual significance of the material and the symbolic, rejecting simplistic economic determinisms and base/superstructure binaries." As described below, this rejection is clear in the practices of TEDH activists.

A particular tradition of Black counter-mobilization and abolition thought that TEDH organizers consciously drew on and participated in is Black feminism. Two central aspects of TEDH's organizing that was firmly grounded in this tradition were its intersectional analysis and its coalition-based approach to social change that follows from such analysis. While intersectionality as a term was coined and popularized by Crenshaw (1989), as a mode of analysis of the covalency of social identities such as race, class, and gender, it is prefigured in the work of Black feminist theory and practice throughout the 1970s and 1980s as evidenced by the Combahee River Collective (2017 [1977]) and Audre Lorde (2007 [1984]), and later on by Black communists like Claudia Jones (McDuffie 2011) and abolitionist scholars such as Angela Y. Davis (1983). The 1977 Combahee River Collective were intersectional activist-scholars *avant-la-lettre*. As they put it: "we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis

[1] Black representations in public landscapes commemorating the Civil War were limited for the most part to depictions of kneeling slaves in monuments praising the Union. There was one depiction of a Black Union soldier in the South, a statue in Norfolk Virginia, that was completed in 1920, and only three dating from the 19th Century, in the North (Savage 1997).

and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives" (2017, 15; see also Taylor 2012).

Abolitionist activist scholars like Davis (1983) contrasts the orthodox single-issue focus of leading white feminists of the 19th Century with the proto-intersectional commitments of abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and the Grimke sisters. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, from the 1848 Seneca Falls convention and the postbellum period, blocked, severed, or downplayed ties with Black organizers and indulged in white supremacist rhetoric as part of a broader capitulation to racism and class oppression in the hope of securing southern white women's support for their single-minded pursuit of suffrage. In essence, they sacrificed race and class solidarity in pursuit of an end to white women's oppression (Davis 1983; hooks 1981). In contrast, Black feminists recognized that fixating on single-issue struggles (such as the white women's singular push for suffrage at the expense of class and race solidarity) would diminish their experiences of multifold oppression and exploitation across various axes of public and private life and would leave disempowered groups with limited prospects for realizing justice and liberation for themselves.

This theory and politics of intersectionality, pioneered by Black feminists, was also the basis for other insights that shaped the TEDH in Tampa, including insights regarding the importance of coalition building and political solidarity across myriad lines of social difference. The Combahee River Collective viewed their political practices as ineluctable extensions of their specific positionalities, but not in ways that might preclude solidarity across different subjectivities and identities that are required to transform society (Taylor 2012; also see Butler 1990). Similarly, Reagon (1983), drawing on her experience in the civil rights movement and women's movements, offers an insightful remark about coalition politics: "watch these mono-issue people. They ain't gonna do you no good...watch these groups that can only deal with one thing at a time. [...] Watch that 'our' – make it as big as you can...The 'our' must include everybody you have to include in order for you to survive" (363-65). The idea of intersectionality is de rigueur in Black feminist scholarship as evidenced by Gilmore's (2008) call for new forms of building and coordinating social movements across subjectivity, identity, and space by using neologisms such as *stretch*, *resonance*, and *resilience* (also see Woods 2017).

As the following analysis of the Tampa monument removal fight shows, the traditions of thought and social action reviewed above, derived from "thousands of conscious mobilizations" (Woods 2017) and decades of struggle, shaped the CPC/TEDH coalition. Indeed, the organizers of TEDH consciously situated their fight to remove Tampa's Confederate monument within the historical context outlined earlier and considered themselves as part of the Black feminist tradition described above.

"Take 'Em Down, Hillsborough!"

This section of the paper focuses on Tampa's 2017 monument removal struggle, and in particular Tampa's main community-based civil rights coalition, the Hillsborough County "Community Protection Coalition" (CPC), its Black feminist leadership, and their intersectional approach to racial justice. CPC advocated for monument removal under the campaign banner "Take 'Em Down Hillsborough!" (TEDH) to reflect its members' overlapping organizational opposition to all forms of racial dispossession, symbolic and material. We analyze these dimensions of TEDH's work through their public-facing mission statements, their organizing activity, and through public testimony at the BoCC hearings to determine the fate of the *MA* Confederate monument.

The group that led the effort to take down *Memoria in Aeterna,* under the TEDH banner, was the CPC. This coalition was formed in 2015 by Black women organizers, Jae Passmore and Dev(an) Cheaves, who are openly genderqueer Black feminists who explicitly identify with and live out the Black feminist tradition. Initially, Jae, Dev, and their allies (including the authors) formed an organizing group in response to the "Biking While Black" controversy that exposed the Tampa Police Department's "'stop

and frisk`-style policy that aggressively and disproportionately targets the city's poor, Black residents who ride bicycles" (Holly 2015). This event coincided with the emergence of the national Black Lives Matter movement in 2014, which followed the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012 and Mike Brown in 2014. Just as the "Biking While Black" campaign for police accountability was demanding a subpoena-empowered civilian police review board, the anti-police campaign merged after the shock following the murder of worshippers at the AME church by an avowed Confederate sympathizer. As a response, the CPC joined a growing national fallist #takeemdown movement that was determined to remove Confederate iconography across the U.S. The CPC's Facebook page describes its origins and mission as:

> A coalition of individuals and organizations including Fight for 15 Florida, Florida Immigrant Coalition, Black Lives Matter: Tampa, LULAC Council, Dream Defenders, Faith in Florida, Florida Immigrant Coalition, CAIR Florida, Organize Florida, Restorative Justice Coalition, For Our Future, Climate Justice Committee, Women's March Florida Tampa/Hillsborough Chapter, Indivisible Action Together Tampa Bay, and others, that was born out of the uncertainties of a long history of colonization, criminalization and policing that targets our communities. CPC is impacted communities-led and individuals who are prepared to defend the right to live and love without fear and with dignity, in a world free of all discrimination, violence and oppression: Liberation (Hillsborough CPC 2017).

As this mission statement indicates, the CPC coalition included groups on an intersectional basis, that is on grounds of racial, ethnic, gender, and religious affiliation, as well as labor, immigrant rights, and criminal justice reform groups that recognized the importance of joining together in struggles for freedom and justice. In their Facebook page's "About" section, the CPC further defined its mission as one based on an explicitly intersectional approach to movement work:

> The CPC is committed to the development of an intersectional protection and solidarity coalition across social movements unified to address issues impacting our community and all its members. This coalition of community partners includes neighbors, educators, attorneys, labor unions, artists, faith-based congregations, activists, and advocates to be allies in the struggle of historically marginalized people including Black lives, immigrant and refugee lives, and LGBTQ lives (Hillsborough CPC, 2017).

In a more stripped-down representation of their intersectional ideological approach, the cover picture of CPC's Facebook page features the image of the Black, queer feminist, Audre Lorde, superimposed with her quote that: "there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single issue lives" (Hillsborough CPC, 2017). This intersectional Black feminist approach signaled the willingness of groups in the coalition to engage in the monument fight. Whereas separately, groups focused on different material and policy issues in Tampa might not have seen the monument struggle as central to their purview, as coalition members, they joined the fight over Tampa's cultural landscape in a way that was not anticipated.

The struggle over the future of Tampa's *MA* monument began when Hillsborough County Commissioner, Democrat Les Miller, made a motion to remove the monument at a May 2017 meeting of the Board of County Commission (BoCC). Local confederate groups such as Save Our Southern Heritage (SOSH) and Hillsborough Flaggers (HF) responded immediately with outrage, echoing their opposition during the mid-1990s when the BoCC narrowly voted to remove the Confederate battle flag from the County seal. The CPC mobilized quickly under the TEDH banner, using social media and appeals at meetings of allied organizations to galvanize their members and supporters to attend and give statements at public hearings, and to generate publicity and media coverage through rallies and press conferences in front of the *MA* monument.

County Commission meetings in June, July, and August 2017 were packed, with the main hearing hall having standing room only in the overflow room. At the June 21 BoCC meeting, Miller's proposal to remove the monument was voted down 4-3, with Miller joined by fellow Democrat Pat Kemp and Republican Al Higginbotham. But at the next month's meeting, Republican Sandra Murman switched her vote to support the removal, with the caveat that funds, estimated at $140,000, would need to be raised privately, for the relocation of the monument to a private cemetery in suburban Brandon (Hillsborough County 2017).

Fundraising was initially slow, but public shock and revulsion against the white supremacist violence and murder of Heather Heyer in Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 12 led to a massive outburst of support for the monument's removal. CPC quickly organized a public vigil and speakout in remembrance of Heather Heyer the next evening at a park adjacent to the monument and the county building. The vigil was attended by hundreds, with members giving speeches that drew connections between the white supremacist violence in Charlottesville, historical and contemporary realities of racist violence and oppression, and local efforts to remove Tampa's monument. Immediately following the vigil, CPC organizers led a spontaneous and unpermitted march to the site of the monument in downtown Tampa. By August 17, more than 700 donors had cobbled together a sum of money through a GoFundMe page to remove the monument. The monument was then taken down in September with little fanfare, and soon thereafter relocated to a spot in a private cemetery along the busy Route 60 in Brandon.

Public input at the BoCC meetings was so voluminous that the Commission held votes in some hearings to cut off public comment or to reduce the standard time allotted per speaker. Our team logged 127 individual speakers who made public statements on the Monument removal to the BoCC, with many speaking at multiple hearings (Hillsborough County 2017). The breadth and diversity of TEDH's organizing was reflected in the range of groups represented among the BoCC public speakers. They included criminal justice reform organizations, immigrant rights groups, women's groups, and environmental groups, among others. Just before the July 19 vote to remove the monument, TEDH leader Dev(an) Cheaves publicly reflected on the inspiration she/they drew from the power and diversity of the coalition that had been built:

> What brings me hope is again the power of the people. My comrades, my neighbors, my community showed up and they showed out in the last few weeks. They mobilized. They organized. Not just in numbers but with passion and with power. We not only have family members. We have friends, neighbors, communities, mosques, temples, churches, folks from all different walks of life. We are literally the people of Hillsborough County. And we're standing together to support the removal of this monument (Hillsborough County 2017).

In other words, Cheaves and the CPC had made the "our" of the coalition as big as they could (Reagon 1983, 365).

Some of the monument's supporters endeavored in their public remarks to present the removal of the monument as a frivolous and purely symbolic distraction from (or even an obstacle to) the Commission's business of public policy and material outcomes. Republican Commissioner Victor Crist initially marveled at the size of the crowd at the June 19 meeting, but then disparaged the high level of public interest and engagement with the monument issue:

> This was the first time in a long time I have ever seen this room this full and this energized. And in a way, that's enlightening because I like to see engagement and issues. In a way, it's also frightening. When you look at the priority of issues that face us in this board, we have lives that are on the line everyday (sic). We have crime in our communities, children that are being shot, homes that are being vandalized and broken

> into. We have significant issues that affect life everyday (sic) that we don't get a crowd like this engaged or concerned about. (Hillsborough County 2017).

Others went so far as to suggest that the quest to remove the monument was even more than a distraction and that the effort could be considered an outright obstacle to positive change in the community. Quoting approvingly from a newspaper editorial, Republican Commissioner Stacy White, the BoCC's most vocal defender of the monument, revealingly argued in this vein against the monument's removal and a related push to change the name of Tampa's Robert E. Lee Elementary School:

> 'The symbolic victory takes us off the task of real victories. Take the Lee name off the school and Blacks (sic] are not less disenfranchised. That takes real work, hard work.'

They go on to say:

> 'It requires whites, Blacks, and Hispanics to work together if things will change…Fights like the one over Lee take a toll on these relationships. The fight sometimes rekindles hate and exposes the divides, expending this capital on these symbols can mean we don't have it to expend on the more meaningful victories' (Hillsborough County 2017).

This strong dichotomy opponents of monument removal drew between the symbolism of removal and material political action was echoed by some former civil rights activists such as Andrew Young (Gabriel 2017; see also Bailey 2018). But in keeping with the tradition of Black feminist organizing described above, the TEDHC rejected this false dichotomy. This rejection was evident in the willingness of the groups in the coalition, groups otherwise devoted to a broad range of different material struggles, to make time and effort to "show up and show out" as Dev(an) put it, for white supremacist monument removal. Their rejection of false binaries between the symbolic and the material was also evident in public remarks by various TEDHC members who drew direct connections between histories of violence and oppression, the monument fight, contemporary struggles against exploitation and social neglect, police and prison violence, labor rights, immigrant rights, and women's rights, among others. Figure 1 shows Black women labor activists in front of the monument wearing orange "Fight for $15" t-shirts demanding a $15 minimum wage, holding signs reading "TAKE IT DOWN" and "TAKE IT TO THE CEMETERY." The engagement of Fight for 15 activists in the monument fight exemplified the intersectional, Black feminist approach to politics by seizing the opportunity to protest both the poverty wages of food service workers and the existence of the *MA* monument.

Figure 1. Fight-for-$15 activists supporting the removal of *MA Source: Authors' photo.*

As in past struggles over historical meaning and the cultural landscape described earlier, women played a significant role in the monument fight. In the BoCC meetings, 38% of speakers were women. Black women speakers were unanimously opposed to the monument. Among white women speakers, 58% advocated for the monument's removal. The significant opposition of white women to the monument was perhaps best illustrated by a statement from Florida's UDC President, Ginger Rudiger, who approved of the monument's removal in an interview with Fox News. Speaking in a personal capacity, Rudiger stated:

> Remove them [Confederate monuments] from public display of places and put them in cemeteries or let them be moved to veterans' parks, or private parks or private lands. I'm all for that. If it's on public property and because of the issue of slavery, and because we've had so many years in our country of unfairness in this country to minority groups, why not relocate these to places where they can be given the respect they deserve for veteran service (Fox 13 Tampa Bay 2017)?

Statements such as this marked a major shift in the role of white women in Tampa vis-a-vis the Confederacy since the early 20th century. This development was significant because it confirmed Stefani's (2011) claim that not all white women were guardians of segregationist culture and that some were indeed committed to racial integration, albeit by different means.

For many, the testimony of Black women set the tone of the BoCC hearings. As Afro-Latinx/Black feminist and CPC leader Pam Gomez put it on July 19: "two generations of Black woman shared powerful and emotional testimonies of what their lives have been like in this climate and lifetime" (Hillsborough County 2017). Another Tampa movement elder Connie Burton spoke powerfully at the August 16 BoCC meeting:

> We've come a long way, a very long way that we no longer have to say 'yes'm' to a master. [...] But as you talk about the monument, and if you choose to keep it, we have to tell the whole story here: the story of lynching, slavery, raping, robbing, stolen labor; that's *your* [white] history. What we are seeing in the world is people making a choice, of what side of history they want to be on. That if you continue to hold up in your slaver heritage, and not move forward in saying you support the long history of pain of a people that has essentially built this country, then that shows your total weakness and your values (Hillsborough County 2017).

Longtime community development activist Chloe Coney spoke of her experience desegregating Tampa schools:

> I grew up during segregation time. I was the one drinking from the water fountain riding the back of the bus. At the age of 13 here in Tampa, Florida [...]. We had students running around with [the] confederate flag. We had students standing up singing Dixie, 'I wish I was in a land of cotton.' At the age of 16, ya'll, I cried because I didn't want to be in the land of cotton. Because it was my people, my ancestors that were beaten. Working in that field for nothing being hung. I did not want to be in the land. So, 50 years later, today, I could not believe I'm standing here talking about a confederate statue or confederate flag that celebrates slavery of human beings, my people. So, commissioners, when you vote to remove that confederate monument, I want you to look through the eyes of a 16-year-old girl that did not want to be in the land.

As mentioned earlier, Gilmore uses the concepts of *stretch* and *resonance* to articulate the myriad ways of bringing strong political movements to scale, observing that: "[p]olitically, a solid but supple mix of aims and people is hard to achieve." She notes that the capacity of *resonance* works through practices of "inviting attention" and "eliciting responses" (2008, 38-9). Resonance depends in part on people's

abilities to recognize, and be moved to action by, similar experiences of oppression across social and spatial distances. In the context of the intersectional coalition built by the TEDHC, the specificity of these Black women leaders' experiences as voiced in public testimony resonated across and even beyond the coalition. Supporters of the monument removal cited experiences of oppression and violence from the standpoint of their own particular identities, families, and cultural backgrounds that resonated with Black experiences in the U.S. South and moved them towards support of the TEDHC fight. Supporters invoked multitemporal and multi-spatial experiences of the Holocaust, Portuguese colonialism in Africa, and Afro-Caribbean enslavement. Remarkably, at the July 19 BoCC meeting, the two Republicans who ended up dissenting from their previous pro-monument position of the other Republicans on the Commission both referenced their experiences of marginalization as their reasons for ultimately supporting *MA*'s removal. Al Higginbotham invoked his enduring experience of marginalization due to his disability after an accident, and Sandra Murman, who sealed the monument's fate as she switched her vote, cited discrimination and marginalization she faced as a woman in politics as her motivation for changing her vote (Hillsborough County 2017) revealing the power of intersectional solidarity.

Conclusion

While upper-class white women played an outsized role in constructing the many hundreds of Confederate monuments across the U.S., including Tampa's now-fallen monument *MA,* it is ultimately Black, often queer womyn, who led the fight for their removal. Drawing on long legacies and deep traditions of Black women's organizing, the TEDHC leaders successfully mobilized a broad coalition to make a significant intervention in Tampa's cultural landscape, removing a monument to white supremacy that had stood in front of the city's courthouse for well over a century.

In words and in deeds, the TEDHC activated "political practices" and "spatial capacities" (Bledsoe, Eaves, and Williams 2017, 8) that rejected a false binary between symbolic and material struggles (Hawthorne 2019, 6). Since the fall of *Memoria in Aeterna*, the CPC has continued to focus its time and resources on other causes based on their Black feminist approach to the politics of place, focusing not just on symbols, but also on wider interlocking systems of oppression (Combahee River Collective 2017). Ongoing campaigns included pushing back against the Trump administration's anti-immigrant crackdown; opposing Immigration, Customs Enforcement's (ICE) family separation policies; carrying on the push for the Fight for $15; resisting the Trump (and now the Biden) administration's machinations against Palestinian statehood; confronting Tampa Police Department practices; and resisting gentrification through luxury housing developments in downtown Tampa (Hillsborough CPC, 2017/2018). When cities around the country erupted in the largest street mobilization ever seen in U.S. history in the wake George Floyd's murder in 2020, it was CPC members, many of whom were drawn into the coalition during the monument fight, who would again lead the fight against anti-Black violence and oppression.

Though their subjectivities and identities along multiple differential axes of power helped to create the epistemological conditions for their struggles, the Black feminist tradition is neither narrow nor parochial. As the Combahee River Collective powerfully stated: "If Black women were free, that would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all systems of oppression" (2017, 23). The case of the fight against *MA* in Tampa highlights the ongoing power of the Black feminist tradition and offers a compelling example of the kind of radical intellectual and political leadership that is necessary for affecting real material and symbolic changes across the U.S. South and beyond.

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