The Journal of Political Philosophy: Volume 27, Number 2, 2019, pp. 166–1

Must Rhodes Fall? The Significance of Commemoration in the Struggle for Relations of Respect*

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In June 2016, Corey Menafee, a dishwasher at Yale University, used a broomstick to smash a stained-glass window in the dining hall of Yale's Calhoun College depicting African slaves carrying bales of cotton. He had gotten sick of what he saw as a racist piece of art, unfit for a "modern era where we shouldn't have to be subjected to those … degrading images."[1] Menafee has since apologized, claiming "there's way better ways you can handle problems than just smashing something physically."[2] In Oxford, student activists led protests for the removal of a statue of British imperialist Cecil Rhodes. The attempt to emulate the successful movement to topple a Rhodes Statue at the University of Cape Town was met with an enormous backlash and Oriel College refused to comply, after pressure from some of its biggest donors. With many arguing the students were setting the wrong priorities, Oxford University Chancellor Chris Patten went as far as to accuse them of leading an attack on the "open society."[3]

The statue of Cecil Rhodes and the stained-glass window in Calhoun College are commemorative symbols. To commemorate is to publicly remember a historic figure or event taken to play an important role in a community's history and in the formation of its self-understanding. The world is full of commemorations of the unjust past, in the form of paintings, monuments, flags, public holidays, or names on buildings. Demands to see them removed from the public sphere

*Earlier versions of this article were presented at the 2016 Mancept Workshops in Political Theory, the 2017 Princeton Graduate Conference in Political Theory, and the Political Science Colloquium at the University of Lucerne. I am grateful to the participants at these events for their valuable comments and lively discussions. For helpful conversations or feedback on previous drafts, I would also like to thank Lawrie Balfour, Mahmoud Bassiouni, Daniel Callies, Daniel Hutton Ferris, Amy Hondo, Alasia Nuti, Alan Patten, Timothy Waligore, Fabio Wolkenstein, and two anonymous referees for the *Journal of Political Philosophy*.

[1] *Democracy Now*, "Exclusive: meet Yale dishwasher Corey Menafee, who smashed racist stained-glass window," <https://www.democracynow.org/2016/7/15/exclusive_meet_yale_dishwasher_corey_menafee>.

[2] Lindsey Bever, "A Yale dishwasher broke a 'racist' windowpane. Now, he's fighting to reclaim his job," <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/07/12/yale-dishwasher-resigns-after-smashing-racist-very-degrading-stained-glass-window/>.

[3] Damien Gayle and Nadia Khomami, "Cecil Rhodes statue row: Chris Patten tells students to embrace freedom of thought," <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jan/13/cecil-rhodes-statue-row-chris-patten-tells-students-to-embrace-freedom-of-thought>.

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doi: 10.1111/jopp.12176

are legion. Are we morally required to remove certain forms of commemoration or was Menafee right to apologize and Chris Patten correct in questioning the legitimacy of such actions in open societies?

I address this question in two steps. After a short elaboration of the nature of commemoration and its political significance, I explore, first, when and in which ways commemorations may constitute a moral wrong. Do we have moral reasons to support struggles directed against certain monuments or statues? I argue that commemorations constitute a wrong when they degrade or alienate. A commemoration is *degrading* when it is expressive of a disrespectful ideology which has enduring social significance. Disrespectful ideologies have enduring social significance when they are connected to an existing and wrongful social hierarchy. Commemorations may be constitutive of a commemorative infrastructure that *alienates* when this infrastructure denies sources of self-respect: that is, when it fails to assure all those who make up society of their shared equal status.

In a second step, I turn to the question of what ought to be done about commemorations that are morally suspect. Should we destroy, relocate, or leave them where they are but add narrative context that enables those confronted by them to view them in a critical light? I object to the claim that the removal of a memorial always constitutes illiberal iconoclasm that serves to whitewash history. I argue that removal can be a legitimate and effective means of addressing tainted memorials. I compare two real-world cases, one located at the University of Frankfurt in Germany and one at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. This comparison shows that whether we ought to support calls for a removal of a statue, or whether we ought to think various kinds of contextualization a good or better alternative, depends on the existence or lack of a wider process of working through the past that the commemorative symbols may be connected to. Where no such process is already in place, demands for the removal of a commemorative symbol may serve to initiate it. Finally, I put the arguments developed in this article to the test, by discussing the more ambiguous case of commemorating the American Founding Fathers George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

I. COMMEMORATIONS AND THEIR POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In public debate, symbolic politics of the kind exhibited by Corey Menafee or the members of the Rhodes Must Fall movement are often ridiculed. Such activism is, or so goes the criticism, politics for those privileged enough to ignore what really matters: a more egalitarian distribution of goods like income, education, and wealth. Criticism of this kind is unfounded. It underestimates the social and political significance of public symbolism that commemorates past events and figures. By erecting monuments, renaming streets, or celebrating public holidays, we commemorate historical figures or landmark events, taken to have played a constitutive role in the shared history of our community. Commemorations are

symbolic vehicles for a story a community tells about its past and how its past has shaped its present identity, values, beliefs, aims, and relations with other communities. Stories about a shared past are crucial in the motivation of social cohesion and in defending the community's interests.

Take the enormous Monumento Nazionale a Vittorio Emanuele II in Rome as an example. Also called the Altare della Patria (Altar of the Fatherland), it was built in honor of Vittorio Emanuele II, the first king of a unified Italy. It is topped by a quadriga, a chariot symbolizing triumph, and holds a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, commemorating all soldiers fallen in the cause of defending the nation. Vittorio Emanuele II is portrayed in military pose, riding a warhorse. The Altar of the Fatherland stands in all its symbolism for the narrative of national unification after centuries of division and a strong, self-determined nation that proved it can defend itself against its internal and external enemies in the heroic victories of Magenta and Solferino, which saw Vittorio Emanuele II triumph against the Austrian invaders. As is typical of narratives, there is a sequence of distinct events given meaning by weaving them into a coherent story, in which agents act intentionally to achieve a goal, which the receivers of the narratives can emotionally connect to, and which is meant to motivate them to act in accordance with the values, beliefs, and aims expressed by the narrative.[4]

The use of commemoration for political purposes is ubiquitous in human history. Whenever a society aims to rediscover itself, when it aims to create a new collective identity, statues are toppled, new ones built, and streets renamed. The recent violent clashes in Charlottesville, Virginia, triggered by proposals to remove a statue that commemorates the Confederate general Robert E. Lee, should give anyone pause who doubts their social and political significance. In what follows, I aim to show that they can also have *moral* significance. Struggles directed against commemorations may be justified.

II. THE WRONG OF TAINTED COMMEMORATIONS

Tainted commemorations, I argue, may constitute wrongs in two distinct ways. Corey Menafee points us to the first wrong, when he justifies smashing the stained-glass window in Calhoun College by calling it "degrading." Commemorations are *degrading*, I argue, when and because they are expressive of an ideology that is both disrespectful *and* expressively connected to an existing and wrongful social hierarchy. The second wrong of commemoration I elaborate on is that of *alienation*, which I define as the denial of sources of self-respect. A society's commemorative infrastructure may fail to provide sources of self-respect when it fails to provide expressive assurance to those who constitute society of their shared equal status.

[4]See e.g. Jerome S. Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 77.

A. Tainted Commemorations Degrade

An act or practice is degrading when it fulfills two criteria: what I call the "disrespectful ideology criterion" and what I call the "wrongful hierarchy criterion." I elaborate on both criteria in turn and show how they apply to the issue of commemorations.[5]

The disrespectful ideology criterion states that an act or practice may be considered degrading when it is expressive of a disrespectful ideology widely shared either today or in the past. By ideology I mean a cluster of narratives or other forms of consciousness which structures our perception of social reality. An ideology is disrespectful when it denies what Stephen Darwall calls "recognition respect," which is best understood when compared to esteem.[6] The latter describes the kind of respect we owe someone for their character traits or achievements—that is, for whatever individuates them and makes them uniquely valuable to us. In contrast, the former is owed to all persons simply for being persons—that is, in acknowledgment of the moral worth that all persons share equally. Recognition respect is denied either when a person is not given reasons for practices and actions that affect her or when the reasons she is given are ones that she or any other person similarly positioned has good reason to reject.[7]

Whether we can plausibly claim that an act or a practice is expressive of an ideology that denies recognition respect is dependent on the meaning the practice has in a particular socio-cultural context. Deborah Hellman uses the example of black South African prisoners being required to wear shorts in apartheid South Africa to argue the point.[8] In apartheid South Africa adult men were expected to wear trousers. In the context of meaning that the white prison guards and the black prisoners shared, the practice of forcing someone to wear shorts meant to symbolically infantilize them. To engage in this practice was to act on and perpetuate the false belief that black South Africans were uncivilized creatures, incapable of the degree of cognition and rationality typically exhibited by white adults. It was *expressive*, that is, of an ideology that took away from some the status of someone equally capable of giving and demanding reasons. We only know this to be the case, however, because we know the meaning of adult men wearing shorts in the South African context at the time.

Now let us apply the first criterion to a case that is germane to the issue of tainted commemoration: the American South is dotted with monuments that

[5]The following is indebted to Deborah Hellman's insightful work on discrimination. Hellman argues that the wrongfulness of using a certain characteristic to discriminate depends both on the (inegalitarian) meaning that this characteristic has had historically and on whether the characteristic has significance in determining the (low) social status of those who are defined by it today. See Deborah Hellman, *When Is Discrimination Wrong?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 28.

[6]Stephen L. Darwall, "Two kinds of respect," *Ethics*, 88 (1977), 36–49, at p. 39.

[7]See T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[8]See Hellman, *When Is Discrimination Wrong?*, p. 27.

commemorate Confederate soldiers and generals.[9] Specifically, I look at one such monument, the Battle of Liberty Place Monument in New Orleans, Louisiana, as an example that helps us understand how commemorations may fulfill the first criterion of being expressive of a disrespectful ideology.[10] On September 14, 1874, 5,000 members of a paramilitary organization called the White League, made up mostly of Confederate veterans, engaged in an attempted resurrection against the abolitionist Reconstruction Louisiana state government. They had to retreat when federal troops restored the elected government, but an obelisk-shaped monument to commemorate the uprising was erected in the city center, on Canal Street. In 1932, inscriptions were added that interpreted the uprising as a laudable attempt at defending "white supremacy in the South." The monument was erected, as the inscription clarified, in support of the narrative of a people unjustly deprived of their right to act on their god-given superiority over the black race.

But is this enough to establish the monument's degrading and thus wrongful nature? It is not.[11] The problem is that a commemoration may be expressive of a past ideology that was disrespectful, but which no longer has any social significance today. In 55BCE, Julius Caesar led a massacre in what is now Kessel, in the Netherlands, that left an estimated 150,000–200,000 men, women, and children of the Germanic Tencteri and Usipetes tribes dead. They had been driven from their own homelands by the Germanic Suebi tribe and were seeking asylum in Roman-controlled Gaul. After denying them asylum, Caesar ordered his troops to slaughter them as they fled the ensuing battle. Many drowned in the Rhine and Meuse rivers in their attempt to escape certain death.[12] Caesar boasted of what might be considered an early genocide as a great achievement in his *De bello Gallico*, showing utter disregard for the lives of those considered by the Roman citizenry as "barbarians."[13] Does this mean that present-day Germans have a legitimate claim to feeling degraded by commemorations of Julius Caesar on their next trip to Rome? I think not.[14] The point is that the hierarchy between the citizens and soldiers of the Roman Empire and the allegedly "barbaric" tribes in Germania and Gaul no longer has any correspondence in the social reality of

[9]According to a study by the Southern Poverty Law Center, there are 718 monuments and statues that celebrate the Confederacy in public places across the USA, with most of them in the former Confederate states; Southern Poverty Law Center, "Whose heritage? Public symbols of the Confederacy," <https://www.splcenter.org/20160421/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>.

[10]The monument was taken down by the city government in April 2017.

[11]For a similar argument applied to a different context (that of discrimination law), see Hellman, *When Is Discrimination Wrong?*, pp. 14–15.

[12]See K. H. Lee, "Caesar's encounter with the Usipetes and the Tencteri," *Greece and Rome*, 16 (1969), 100–3; and Agence France-Presse (The Hague), "Julius Caesar battlefield unearthed in southernNetherlands,"<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/11/julius-caesar-battlefield-unearthed-southern-netherlands-dutch-archaeologists>.

[13]See Julius Caesar, *De bello Gallico*, ed. E. C. Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), ch. 15.

[14]Note, however, that to make the claim that commemorating Julius Caesar is not degrading to present-day Germans does not amount to saying that there might not be other reasons for subjecting his heritage to critical scrutiny.

present-day Europe: the tribes no longer exist, no German would identify with them today, and it is the Germans, if anything, who find themselves in a position of power that allows them to dictate the rules of European cooperation to their Italian allies.[15]

This is where the second criterion comes in. It is not enough that the commemoration is expressive of a disrespectful ideology. There also needs to be an expressive connection to an existing and wrongful social hierarchy.[16] Typically the latter comes in the form of what Charles Tilly refers to as "durable inequality" and which Elizabeth Anderson calls "categorical inequality."[17] Operating on ascriptive identity, such hierarchies categorize individuals into clearly defined *social groups*, membership in which is attached to systematic advantages and disadvantages. The status "African-American", for example, is ascribed and regulates access to crucial social resources like trust, esteem, power, income, social networks, and education. Once *perceived* as African-American, you will almost inevitably suffer disadvantages on the job or housing market, in your treatment by law enforcement, local administration and the judiciary, or in the competition for political office.[18] A hierarchy that ranks African and Caucasian Americans in this way denies recognition respect.

Differential treatment might be justifiable in certain areas. There might be, to name but one example, good reasons to provide teachers with certain powers that their students do not have. It serves a valuable social function, namely the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next, and it can do so in legitimate ways: with the right institutional design in place, the powers of teachers have clear limits. They usually do not extend beyond the classroom. In contrast, no one has good reason to accept being *systematically* disadvantaged in the access to crucial social resources. Not only because such systematic disadvantage is plainly *unfair* (in the Rawlsian sense), but because it actively encourages *domination*: venues of control or at least escape from control are very limited, seeing as hierarchy is not confined to specific contexts but permeates all spheres of social interaction and *exit* is possible only by death or through the prohibitively costly option of emigration to a significantly less racist country.

The Battle of Liberty Place Monument is expressively connected to the categorical inequality suffered by African-Americans today. When a hierarchical relationship between two groups has endured across generations, the commemoration of figures that legitimized and struggled to defend this very hierarchy in the past can plausibly be understood as a symbolic statement in its defense today. The analysis of the circumstances of a commemoration's

[15]For a fuller account of why only past injustices that have social significance today deserve our attention, normatively speaking, see Alasia Nuti, *Injustice and the Reproduction of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[16]See, among others, Philip Pettit, *Republicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[17]Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 7; and Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[18]See e.g. Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, esp. chs 2 and 3.

genesis may, among other things, reveal that this was precisely its purpose. Most Confederate monuments were built during two postbellum periods: first, from 1900 to the 1920s, as symbols of support for the enactment of the Jim Crow laws; second, in the 1950s and 1960s, as symbols of support for the backlash against the civil rights movement.[19] Some, like the Battle of Liberty Place Monument, had been erected during the Reconstruction period, in the 1860s and 1870s, as symbolic endorsement of the enactment of the Black Codes, which disenfranchised former slaves.[20] The monuments were not erected simply to commemorate military leaders, that is, but were intended as political statements in defense of the white supremacist ideology of the Confederacy, threatened by the abolition of slavery and the civil rights movement.

Commemorations are wrongful when they are degrading. The term "degrading" refers to an expressive and contextual wrong: we can only account for their wrongfulness against the backdrop of a wider understanding of both the history of a society and the way in which it currently orders its social relations.

B. Tainted Commemorations Alienate

Some will feel degraded by the presence of a statue or monument. For others, the opposite may hold: they might feel empowered in so far as it celebrates the achievements of individuals or a cause they identify with. Commemorations may act, that is, not only as symbols of disrespect, but also as sources of *self-esteem* or *self-respect*. I say self-*esteem* or self-*respect* because we may distinguish between two forms of perceiving your own worth which track the distinction, introduced earlier in this article, between *esteem* and (*recognition-*)*respect*. To have self-*esteem* is to see yourself as someone whose specific life-projects are worth pursuing, who meets the specific standards she sets for herself, and who is a valuable member of particular communities (for example, her family, congregation, or nation). To have self-*respect* is to have a robust sense of yourself as a person, a moral equal, with the same rights and duties that all other persons have. Self-respect, unlike self-esteem, does not require regarding your specific life-projects as worthwhile or considering yourself a valuable member of a particular community, but it does require seeing yourself as someone who is, in principle, worthy of esteem, as someone with the ability to rationally choose and act on a plan of life.

We have a collective duty to provide the sources of self-*respect*, because we can only act upon the duties and claim the rights we have as persons when we *perceive* ourselves as persons with an equal standing in the moral community. To find ourselves in a state that frustrates our ability to perceive ourselves as persons is

[19]I thank Desmond Jagmohan for bringing this to my attention.

[20]See Southern Poverty Law Center, "Whose heritage?".

to find ourselves in a state of (what I call) *alienation*.[21] The egalitarian society may seek to prevent or overcome alienation by providing *assurance*—that is, by establishing social practices and institutions that are expressive of the idea that all persons have equal standing in the moral community.[22] Traditionally, these include the practice of awarding all those who constitute a political community equal citizenship: the same set of rights and duties, as well as a democratic process of collective decision making that gives everyone equal opportunity to contribute, and a legal system of adjudicating conflicts that gives everyone the equal opportunity to be heard.[23]

Similarly, a society's commemorative infrastructure may play an important role in providing *assurance*. Statues, monuments, or holidays may be expressive of the idea of equality, say, when they celebrate those who stood up against an unjust social hierarchy. In a society tainted by past injustice, it may often be necessary to (re)-shape the commemorative infrastructure in ways that allow it to act as a source of self-respect. When we fail to do so, we commit the wrong of alienation. In contrast to the wrong of degradation, the wrong of alienation may be suffered by both those who identify with former oppressors and those whose identities are tied to formerly (and currently) oppressed groups. I address both groups in turn.

The earlier distinction between self-esteem and self-respect suggests that not all sources of self-*esteem*, say our membership in a particular community, are also sources of self-*respect*. Membership in the Ku-Klux-Klan may be a source of self-esteem, but it can never constitute a source of self-respect. To draw self-esteem from membership in the Klan is precisely *not* to see yourself as someone who shares the same equal moral status with all other persons. In fact, the ideology that comes with membership in the Klan actively discourages or prevents members from seeing themselves in this way. In so far as we have a duty to provide the sources of self-respect, we have a duty to create the kind of conditions that discourage drawing self-esteem from morally inappropriate sources, like membership in the Klan.

The commemorative infrastructure may constitute a morally inappropriate source of self-esteem. Statues of Confederate generals, for example, constitute a source of self-esteem to all those who identify with the Confederacy—that is, to

[21]Catherine Lu, in her recent *Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), esp. ch. 6, argues that a central wrong of enduring structural injustice is that of existential alienation. My understanding of alienation differs from existential alienation, which Lu defines as a form of estrangement from oneself and the world (pp. 188–9). For an understanding of alienation closer to mine, see Rainer Forst, "Noumenal alienation: Rousseau, Kant and Marx on the dialectics of self-determination," *Kantian Review,* 22 (2017), 523–51.

[22]On the notion of "assurance" in relation to that of "self-respect," see also Timothy Waligore, "Rawls, self-respect, and assurance: how past injustice changes what publicly counts as justice," *Politics, Philosophy and Economics,* 15 (2016), 42–66.

[23]For a fuller account of how the institutions of the state may be expressive of the idea of equality, see Corey Brettschneider, *When the State Speaks, What Should It Say? How Democracies Can Protect Expression and Promote Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

those who see themselves as having standing in an intergenerational community of white Southern Americans and who value the standards associated with membership in this community. Given the exclusionary and oppressive nature of the community, and the disrespectful nature of its standards, Confederate monuments cannot, however, act as a source of self-respect. The duty to provide assurance is a duty to create the kind of conditions that promote the ability to see yourself and others as persons with an equal moral status. In so far as the Southern commemorative infrastructure helps to stabilize an ideology that prevents (some) white Americans from seeing themselves and others in this way, they are alienated and thus wronged by a society that fails to reshape its commemorative infrastructure.

Reshaping the commemorative infrastructure may be necessary to help overcome the alienation not only of those who identify with the former oppressor, but also of those whose identities are tied to those formerly (and currently) oppressed. Indigenous peoples in settler societies like Canada, the USA, or Australia, for example, are often alienated from settler institutions usually thought to serve the purpose of providing egalitarian assurance, including the institutions of citizenship, representative democracy, or the rule of law. Not only because these institutions might not be perceived by indigenous peoples as acting on the idea of equality—the system of representative democracy may be seen as rigged in favor of wealthy white citizens, courts as failing to give equal weight to the testimony of indigenous peoples, and the institution of citizenship itself as providing only second-class status to them—but because, as Timothy Waligore notes, indigenous peoples were forcibly included into them in the past.[24] Where liberal institutions typically thought to act as sources of self-respect cannot fulfill this function, the commemorative infrastructure gains special significance. Rather than just removing statues or monuments that are disrespectful to a formerly oppressed social group, which may already be required to address the wrong of degradation, the commemorative infrastructure, in order to act as a source of self-respect, may have to be actively reshaped, including the erection of new statues and monuments.

The process of reshaping the commemorative infrastructure can only be effective, however, if we take seriously, in two ways, the specific socio-historic circumstances that make it so difficult for members of certain social groups to draw on liberal institutions as sources of self-respect. First, it needs to actively include the voices and perspectives of those who constitute a marginalized group. To see yourself as an equal, you need to see yourself as someone with the right to participate in shaping the social world that surrounds you. Indigenous peoples cannot currently see themselves as equal participants in the project of collectively narrating their societies' past. This needs to change if settler societies want to overcome the wrong of alienation.

[24]See Waligore, "Rawls, self-respect, and assurance," p. 55.

Second, the provision of commemorative symbols generally thought to be expressive of the idea of equality may not be sufficient. In the USA, a statue that commemorates Abraham Lincoln, widely respected for his role in the abolition of slavery, may generally be perceived as an expression of the ideal of equality and thus act as a source of self-respect. This may not be true, however, for Native Americans. Lincoln's relationship to the indigenous peoples of North America is symbolic of their relationship to the American settler society at large, in which they have suffered from a systematic and enduring denigration of their cultural identities and plans of life. Not only did Lincoln's signature of the Homestead Act and his support for the transcontinental railroad give a significant boost to Western settlement—which, more than anything, threatened the basis of existence for indigenous communities in the West[25]—but his justification for the removal of indigenous communities mirrored the narrative that had justified the dispossession of indigenous lands since the beginnings of settler colonialism in North America.[26] In his third "Annual Message to Congress," Lincoln expresses hope that "measures provided … for the removal of certain Indian tribes … will result in the establishment of permanent friendly relations with such of these tribes as have been brought into frequent and bloody collision with our outlying settlements" and urges "constant attention … to their progress in the arts of civilization, and … that moral training which … will confer upon them the elevated and sanctifying influences, the hopes and consolations, of the Christian faith."[27]

The widespread narrative of the "wild Indian" who needs to be "civilized" and led away from his "irrational" ways of life endures to this day in commemorative practices like the celebration of Columbus Day across several American countries. The celebration of Columbus's "discovery" of America tells a counterfactual story that marginalizes the history and culture of indigenous peoples by ignoring everything that happened before the arrival of the European colonizer and which portrays a forerunner of violent colonization as a great discoverer and pioneer of American civilization.[28] It is expressive, that is, of the narrative of the European settler as the culturally and morally superior savior who brought civilization to

[25]See Dale Mason, "The Indian policy of Abraham Lincoln," *Indigenous Policy Journal,* 20 (2009).

[26]Prominent defenders of dispossession, like Robert Cushman or John Winthrop, argued that the "helpless and idle" Amerindians had no right to their land because it was "untilled," (Cushman) "they enclose[d] no ground" (Winthrop), and were generally not "industrious … to use the land" (Cushman); John Winthrop and Robert Cushman, cited in Barbara Arneil, "The wild Indian's venison: Locke's theory of property and English colonialism in America," *Political Studies,* 44 (1996), 60–74, at pp. 64–5. This is a narrative, which appears not only in Emer de Vattel's influential *The Law of Nations* (Philadelphia: P. H. Nicklin & T. Johnson, 1835), but which some interpreters of John Locke believe to have inspired his famous theory of property. See James Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[27]Abraham Lincoln, "Annual message to Congress, December 8, 1863," *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings 1859–1865,* ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Library of America, 1989), pp. 538–54, at p. 548.

[28]See also Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), ch. 1.

the “wild” Indians. This enduring narrative has done more than express disesteem for certain aspects of particular indigenous cultures. It has portrayed indigenous peoples as lacking the very ability to rationally choose and act on a plan of life. A loss of a sense of yourself as someone capable of rationally choosing and acting on a plan of life would be neither an unexpected nor an unreasonable reaction to this portrayal if it is dominant, enduring, and targets a group that your identity is tied to.[29]

To counter the pernicious effects on self-respect of such systematic and enduring denigration, we must make sure that existing commemoration expressive of the “civilization” narrative, such as Columbus Day, is appropriately addressed. It may further be necessary to facilitate the establishment of new places of memory and symbols of commemoration that express symbolic support for the life projects or past achievements of particular indigenous communities. While we are not usually required to provide esteem for particular ways of life, this may change where esteem has been systematically denied over generations and where this denial has been tied to disrespect towards certain social groups. Here esteem for the cultural identities and past achievements of particular communities may be a precondition for the development of a robust sense of self-worth.

A good example of a place of memory which has the potential to act as a source of self-respect for a group that suffered under systematic degradation in the past is the Martin Luther King Jr National Memorial in Washington, DC. The memorial provides assurance in two distinct ways. First, and much like a statue of Abraham Lincoln would be for most, it is expressive of the idea of equality in a general way: by publicly acknowledging the wrong of hierarchy between social groups and by celebrating those who stood up against it. By commemorating the African-American leader Martin Luther King Jr specifically, however, it is, secondly, expressive of symbolic support for the identities and past achievements of those who make up a *particular* community in American society, one whose achievements have hitherto been largely omitted from narratives about the society’s past.

III. WHAT TO DO ABOUT TAINTED COMMEMORATIONS?

We ought to confront tainted commemorations. I have not yet addressed the question of *how* we should confront them. We can either remove them entirely or contextualize them in a number of ways. The latter might include adding a plaque to a painting or a statue, critically engaging with the legacy of an actor or an event as part of a walking tour, or relocating a memorial to a museum, where it could be embedded into a critical exhibition about a certain period of history.

[29]The idea of self-respect is that of a sense of self-worth that is robust under adversity, including conditions of injustice. There are social conditions, however, under which the development of a robust sense of self-worth becomes increasingly unlikely. I argue that the systematic denigration of certain ways of life and cultural identities over generations constitutes such a condition. See also Christian Schemmel, “Real self-respect and its social bases,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, forthcoming (2018), at pp. 11–12.

The debate triggered by the demands for removal of monuments honoring colonialist Cecil Rhodes in Cape Town and Oxford brought to the fore two opposing viewpoints on the matter. Student activists were adamant that social justice would be served only if the offensive statues were removed, but many others argued that removal should not be considered an option. Mary Beard, a classics professor at Cambridge University, and one of the more prominent defenders of the latter position, argued that:

> the campaign to eradicate Rhodes from our consciousness was in many ways a foolish enterprise, which probably did more harm to our understanding of history … than the campaigners will admit. [We ought to] look history in the eye and reflect on our awkward relationship to it, and what we are actually beneficiaries of, not simply ... photoshop the nasty bits out.[30]

The iconoclasm the removal of the Rhodes monument represents may be seen as an attack on public art and culture, much like ISIS's destruction of Palmyra. What Beard is most worried about, however, is that it might serve to whitewash history.

The opposition between both positions is too stark. The most appropriate way of dealing with a tainted commemoration is the one most likely to further the establishment of relations of respect. But whether a particular way of reacting to a tainted commemoration is best suited to do so depends largely on the specific socio-historic context the practice is embedded into. Specifically, I argue that whether we ought to support calls for a statue's removal or whether we ought to think various kinds of contextualization a good or better alternative depends on the existence of a wider process of working through the past that the commemoration may be connected to.

A. Working Through The Past

Much like Mary Beard, Theodor W. Adorno argues that we should not "close the books on the past" and "remove it from memory."[31] He urges us to engage, rather, as Jürgen Habermas elaborates, in an "unrelenting reflection of an aggrieving past, which confronts us with a different self from the one that we wish to portray."[32] Following Sigmund Freud's notion of *durcharbeiten* (working through), Adorno and Habermas believe that we have to be honest about our moral failures in the narrative creation of our own identity. As self-respecting, responsible human beings, we must be willing to learn from our past mistakes.

[30]Mary Beard, "Cecil Rhodes and Oriel College Oxford," <https://timesonline.typepad.com/dons_life/2015/12/cecil-rhodes-and-oriel-college.html>.

[31]Theodor W. Adorno, "The meaning of working through the past," Theodor W. Adorno (ed.), *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 89–103, at p. 89.

[32]Jürgen Habermas, "Was bedeutet ‚Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' heute," Jürgen Habermas (ed.), *Die Normalität einer Berliner Republik: Kleine Politische Schriften VIII* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), pp. 21–45, at p. 21 (my translation).

This is true for individuals and collectives, as Habermas stresses. When "we" have committed barbarous acts in the past, "we" ought not to cover them up, but rather push them out into the open arena of the public sphere, where they become a matter of public debate and political struggle. The ultimate goal of this exercise of working through the past is the incorporation of the darker parts of our own history into our collective identity.[33] A collective that knows of its past failures and has morally condemned them is less likely to repeat them in the future and more likely to establish respectful relations in the present.[34]

Defending the project of working through the past sounds, at first, like a vindication of Beard's objection to iconoclasm. Is the removal of a Cecil Rhodes statue or the smashing of a stained-glass window depicting antebellum plantation slavery not to "close the books on the past", as Adorno has put it? Are we not removing an opportunity for learning from our dark past, for an open and self-critical confrontation with it? I argue that we can simultaneously commit to Adorno's project and support claims for the removal of certain public symbols. This, however, is a matter of socio-historic context or, more specifically, a question of whether a wider process of working through the unjust past has already taken hold.

When a tainted commemoration is connected to a wide social effort of working through the unjust past, it may play a part in furthering rather than hindering relations of respect. The connection occurs by supplementing the commemoration with narrative elements that point to the role an event, an individual, or collective agent played in the perpetuation of injustice. Such contextualization may occur in a number of ways, including the use of plaques and critical walking tours, or the relocation to a museum. If a wider process of working through the past is in place, the connection may turn the tainted commemoration into an everyday reminder of the existence of a different past, one that must never reoccur.

There is not always a clear answer to the question whether a wide process of working through the past of this kind has taken hold in each society. This is partly because a society's progress in working through its own past may be subject to internal variation—it is likely to be more advanced among the liberal elites that populate university towns, say, than in rural areas—but also because the answer to this question will always be based on a contested analysis of the socio-historic context in question.[35] Such analysis is itself a site of political struggle and must remain open to contestation and ongoing deliberation. In the following, I analyze what I take to be two relatively clear cases, one in which a wider process of working through the past has taken place and one where it has not. I discuss a more ambiguous case in the last section of this article.

In South Africa, the Rhodes Must Fall movement successfully campaigned for the removal of a statue of British imperialist Cecil Rhodes, who bequeathed

[33]Ibid., p. 23.
[34]Ibid., p. 37.
[35]I thank Dongxian Jiang for pressing me on this point.

the land the University of Cape Town was built on. A bronze statue of Rhodes, placed on the university's central square in appreciation of his gift, attracted the ire of a number of students, who engaged in highly visible protests until the administration removed it.

In Frankfurt, student activists and professors successfully spoke out against an envisaged name change. The University of Frankfurt built its new campus around an imposing edifice that was the seat of the IG Farben company until 1945. IG Farben was involved in the Holocaust: one of its subsidiary companies produced Zyklon B, the gas used in the gas chambers; and its political and monetary support of Adolf Hitler played a significant role in bringing him to power. While moving on to the new campus, the university administration dropped the historically tainted name IG-Farben-Haus in favor of the untainted Poelzig Bau or Poelzig Ensemble, after the building's architect. Student activists and professors protested the renaming.

I argue that the differences in the activists' demands in both cases must be understood against the background of the differences in the ways that Germany and South Africa, as societies, have addressed their unjust past. When we see the struggles as part of a wider context, both the demand to remove a tainted commemoration and the demand to keep it may be seen as legitimate.

B. The Ig-Farben-Haus And Germany's Reckoning With Its Nazi Past

The complete military and moral defeat and the Allied occupation after the war made it difficult for the Nazi generation to pass on the regime's ideology to their children, who, in West Germany, broke up the modus vivendi of postwar silence by publicly confronting their parents' crimes.[36] While it is often argued that the initial attempts at unearthing the unjust past by the left-wing 1968 movement were motivated more by the promise of symbolic triumph in the intergenerational struggle against their right-wing conservative opponents than by genuine concern for the victims of Nazi crimes, they opened the door for a public and far-reaching process of working through the Nazi past.[37] Whatever its initial motivation, this process had led, by the 1980s, to the formation of a collective national identity at least partially constructed around the promise never to let the crimes against humanity committed by the Nazi regime occur again.

The case of the IG-Farben-Haus on the University of Frankfurt's new campus and the push against renaming it can only be understood against this background. The dominant public discourse about memories of past wrongs sees them, in line with Adorno and Habermas, as something we have a moral duty to keep alive and present, as a guiding thread in shaping the nation's identity and its internal

[36]In East Germany the process of publicly working through the past began to take hold only after the fall of the communist regime and it was concerned mainly with the latter's crimes.

[37]See among others Aleida Assman, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur: Eine Intervention* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2013), p. 47.

and external politics.[38] Against this background, students and the administration agreed on contextualizing the building, rather than renaming it.[39] A large plaque to the right of the building's main entrance now alludes to the involvement of IG Farben in the Holocaust. A critical analysis of the company's as well as the university's actions during the Nazi period is part of campus walking tours. The plaque and the walking tours put the building's history into a context familiar from the wider societal process of working through the past. The building becomes a visible reminder of the fact that the society Germans now live in was implicated, not too long ago, in a horrible crime that had its roots in a disrespectful ideology. Even in a society like Germany, where the group of former victims is now marginal in size, this may have a significant effect on the establishment of relations of respect. To learn from the horrors that a deeply disrespectful ethos brought about in the past is not restricted to learning how to build more respectful relations with one specific group of former victims, but allows us to build them more generally.[40]

Given these particularities of the German context, we must be careful not to move too quickly into generalizing the validity of its lessons. They do show, I believe, that a process of working through the unjust past can play a significant role in shaping a more egalitarian society. But because such a process has not been properly initiated in many other contexts, the specific way in which Germans have (sometimes) dealt with commemorations cannot be readily reproduced everywhere.[41] It is in this vein that I object to those who accuse the Rhodes Must Fall movement of historical whitewashing and illiberal iconoclasm.

C. Rhodes Must Fall And Apartheid Amnesia

Nelson Mandela and his followers had to find a way of making a society work after its white minority had violently oppressed its black majority for almost a century. Mandela and the ANC leadership wanted a peaceful transition toward a representative democratic system, which would bring the formerly oppressed black majority and the party representing it into power, while preventing the prolonged bloodshed that violent resistance by the white minority (which was still in charge of the army and the police force) would have caused. This required a "Faustian bargain" with the former oppressor: the white leadership would

[38]An increasing pushback against this dominant viewpoint has recently been observable in Germany.

[39]To be more precise, a compromise was reached: both IG-Farben-Haus and Poelzig Ensemble are now accepted names for the building.

[40]Thomas McCarthy claims that this has indeed been the case in West Germany, as a comparison with both East Germany and Austria shows. Those socialized in Austria and the former GDR are much more likely to give their votes to far-right parties than those socialized in West Germany; Thomas McCarthy, "Vergangenheitsbewältigung in the USA: on the politics of the memory of slavery," *Political Theory,* 30 (2002), 623–48, at p. 630.

[41]Arguably, even in Germany, this process is mostly limited to working through the Nazi past and the crimes of the communist regime in the former GDR. It is still in its infancy concerning Germany's colonial crimes.

guarantee a peaceful transition if the ANC promised amnesty for human rights abuses motivated by political objectives.[42] The mandate of the famous Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to get as accurate a picture of the gross human rights abuses that had occurred under the apartheid regime as possible, as well as granting amnesty to those who “make full disclosure about the crimes they have committed.”[43] It was also compelled to “recommend a set of measures designed to provide reparation and rehabilitation,” but this was in no way its central task.[44]

The mandate of the central mechanism that the new nation employed to come to terms with its past was, then, extremely limited. Unlike in the Nürnberg Trials, retributive justice played no role—given the amnesty—and the focus was, more importantly, exclusively on exposing human rights abuses that *individual agents* had committed. Unlike the process of working through the unjust past in post-1968 West Germany, it failed to uncover the everyday injustice of systematic social and government-regulated oppression. The amnesty awarded by the Truth and Reconciliation commission represented a wider trend of political amnesia, the product, arguably, of a conscious attempt at reconciliation, famously pushed by Mandela. It was meant to enable the founding of what Desmond Tutu imagined as a “rainbow nation,” in which all South Africans could stand on equal footing with one another.

The rainbow nation, however, has remained a founding myth, with little substance in today’s South African reality. Instead of reconciliation, the current state is one of an ongoing modus vivendi in which political power has transitioned into the hands of a black, political elite, but in which economic, cultural, and social capital is still disproportionately in the hands of a white minority. The vast majority of the black population lives in abject poverty, and there has been no visible decrease in the social gulf between white and black South Africans.

This wider picture is mirrored in the University of Cape Town. At the time of the Rhodes protests more white than black South African students were enrolled, despite the fact that white South Africans made up 8.4 per cent and black South Africans 80.2 per cent of the South African population. Of its 256 full professors, only 10 were black South African, while 147 were white South African. This is only the numerical expression of a deeper problem. Black South African students do not feel respected or adequately represented at the university. Their history and identity are faded out by a curriculum that focuses on non-African thinking and history and which largely ignores the violent history of oppression that their parents and grandparents had to endure. The demand to remove the Cecil Rhodes statue has to be understood against this background.

[42]James L. Gibson, “Truth, justice, and reconciliation: judging the fairness of amnesty in South Africa,” *American Journal of Political Science,* 46 (2002), 540–56, at p. 541.

[43]Paul van Zyl, “Dilemmas of transitional justice: the case of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *Journal of International Affairs*, 52 (1999), 647–67, at p. 654.

[44]Ibid.

Statues and paintings on campus predominantly portray white South Africans, many of whom played a role in the oppression of the black students' ancestors.

No statue occupied so prominent a position as that of Cecil Rhodes. Rhodes led British imperialist expansion into Southern Africa. The mines run by his British South Africa Company forced its black employees to work under inhumane conditions. Rebellions were violently crushed, and large swathes of territory annexed, to be named Rhodesia and ruled by Rhodes. He also instituted the Glen Grey Act, the goals of which were to keep whites and blacks apart, and to create a huge workforce of cheap, black wage laborers for the many gold and diamond mines that made Rhodes one of the wealthiest people of his time. The former was achieved primarily through geographic segregation, prohibiting whites from living on black territories and vice versa; the latter by severely restricting blacks' access to land and landownership rights, effectively prohibiting them from farming the land, as well as introducing a heavy tax, to be paid by any black South African not employed as a wage laborer for more than three months a year. The Glen Grey Act is widely considered a blueprint for the apartheid regime. Its segregationist policies, as well as its instantiation of an enduring relationship of exploitation through cheap wage labor, constitutes the beginning of many of the structural problems that contemporary South Africa faces.

Unsurprisingly, black students at the University of Cape Town felt disrespected by the presence of Rhodes's statue on campus and the commemoration of a bequest that was only possible because Rhodes had illegitimately appropriated the land the university was built on. Nevertheless, the demands to remove his monument must be understood as the symbolic expression of a deeper indignation that is a reaction to the inequalities that run through the University of Cape Town, as well as its lack of coming to terms with its own past. This is a point Kgotsi Chikane, then a graduate student in public policy and one of the movement's leaders, stressed:

> The fact that his statue can stand there proudly, in such a prominent position, and that people can walk past it every day without questioning it, that is a problem of racism. If we can see that the statue is a problem, we can start looking more deeply at the norms and values of institutionalized racism that don't physically manifest themselves, that are harder to see. … The real issue is the broader transformation of the university. … [L]ook at the fact that there is not one black, woman, full professor at UCT. … We want a complete shift in the thinking about curriculum. It can't be Eurocentric anymore. We need a curriculum that is about our continent, and not just the negatives, but the positives as well.[45]

The statue of Cecil Rhodes is clearly an instance of a tainted commemoration, but was its removal a legitimate reaction to this fact? I think it was. In the era of post-apartheid amnesia, unlike in post-1968 West Germany, there is no discernible

[45]Dan Boroughs, "Why South African students say the statue of Rhodes must fall," <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/03/28/395608605/why-south-african-students-say-the-statue-of-rhodes-must-fall>.

background of working through the past which a narrow contextualization of the statue could have worked with. Most importantly, the radical demands of the Rhodes Must Fall movement triggered one of the most vivid and visible debates about its own past that South Africa has engaged in since the apartheid regime fell. Activism directed against commemorative symbolism can be a powerful tool for triggering a much-needed process of reckoning with the past.[46] Removal was perhaps not the only option, but certainly a good one. It is in this sense that Mary Beard fails to account for the complexity of the relationship between commemoration and the process of working through the past. Sometimes what may seem like an effort to "photoshop the nasty bits out" may constitute a legitimate attempt at initiating a process of "look[ing] history in the eye."[47]

I have attempted to show, by exploring two real-world cases, that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to addressing tainted commemorations. Removal, narrow contextualization, relocation to a museum, all these can be legitimate options depending on the specific context of the practice and the struggle surrounding it. Most importantly, however, addressing commemorations has the strongest influence on furthering relations of respect when it is either connected to an existing societal process of working through the past or when it helps initiate such a process.

IV. IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION: PUTTING THE ARGUMENTS TO THE TEST

I have argued that commemorations are normatively problematic when they are expressive of an ideology that degrades and/or when they are constitutive of a commemorative infrastructure that alienates. I have further argued that what we should do about tainted commemorations depends on the existence of a wider background of working through the past. In the following, I put these arguments to the test by applying them to a more ambiguous case than those discussed above.

After the violent clashes following demands to remove a statue of Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia, US President Donald Trump employed a slippery-slope argument. If we start removing Confederate statues, where does it end? Must we not, following the same logic, remove monuments commemorating the beloved Founding Fathers George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom were slave owners?[48] His argument was meant, of course, to put a stop to attempts at removing statues and monuments, but it gives us reason, counter to his intention, to place the celebration of Washington's and Jefferson's heritage under critical scrutiny.

[46]While removal *can* trigger such a process, it will not, as I discuss in the following section, necessarily or always do so.

[47]Beard, "Cecil Rhodes and Oriel College, Oxford."

[48]See Kristine Phillips, "Historians: no, Mr President, Washington and Jefferson are not the same as Confederate generals," <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/ retropolis/wp/2017/08/16/historians-no-mr-president-washington-and-jefferson-are-not-the-same-as-confederate-generals/?utm_term=.c159c220f05c>.

Washington is commemorated as the victorious military leader of a rebellion against a colonial empire and the charismatic co-founder of a new nation. By stepping down after two terms as its first president, the narrative goes, he created a precedent that made possible the endurance of one of the world's longest-lasting republics.[49] Jefferson is remembered as the author of the declaration that "all men are created equal." This sentiment is mirrored, according to some narratives, in his earlier work as a lawyer, where he defended freedom-seeking slaves, arguing in court that "everyone comes into the world with a right to his own person and using it at his own will."[50]

At the very least, however, since Trump's remarks, many Americans have become aware of Washington's and Jefferson's status as slave holders as well. While stating in several private letters that he hoped that slavery would be abolished in the United States of America, Washington never publicly spoke out against it. He treated his slaves harshly, allowing his estate managers to whip them. He signed the Fugitive Slave Act, which allowed for the recapture of slaves who had fled into slave sanctuaries, and vigorously pursued slaves who had fled from his estate into British territory during the war of independence.[51] While Washington arranged in his will the freeing of his slaves after his and his wife's death, Jefferson gave freedom to a mere five of the 607 men, women, and children he owned during his lifetime.[52] Recent excavations at his former Monticello estate suggest that Sally Hemmings, who for a long time was thought to be his willing mistress, was really his sex slave, kept in a windowless room that he had direct access to.[53] These facts complicate the picture and make the commemoration of the Founding Fathers an ambiguous case.

As I have argued above, commemorations may work toward establishing relations of respect, like the Martin Luther King Jr Memorial in Washington, DC. Commemorations may also alienate and degrade, as is unambiguously true of statues and monuments that celebrate the military leaders who defended the Confederacy. Unlike both these cases, the commemoration of Jefferson and Washington is Janus-faced. It may be understood, on the one hand, as expressive of the narrative of the founding of a stable republic, based on the values of freedom, equality, and democracy for which Washington and Jefferson are widely perceived as symbols. Their commemoration may help engender an emotional attachment to these values, which, as Martha Nussbaum has argued, is crucial for

[49]See Brian Darling, "George Washington's legacy lasts well into 2018," <https://observer.com/2018/02/george-washington-legacy-of-separation-of-powers-lasts-well-into-2018/>.

[50]Jon Meacham, *Jefferson: The Art of Power* (New York: Random House, 2012), p. 49.

[51]See "Ten facts about Washington and slavery," <https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/slavery/ten-facts-about-washington-slavery/>.

[52]See David R. Konka, "Revisiting Jefferson's history as a slave owner," <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/was-jefferson-a-good-slave-owner-its complicated/2018/02/16/dfa769c2-10fc-11e8-9570-29c9830535e5_story.html?utm_term=.19922a94f884>.

[53]See Britni Danielle, "Sally Hemings wasn't Thomas Jefferson's mistress: she was his property," <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/sally-hemings-wasnt-thomas-jeffersons-mistress-she-was-his-property/2017/07/06/db5844d4-625d-11e7-8adc-fea80e32bf47_story.html?utm_term=.08a6ab950d0a>.

the functioning and survival of liberal democracies.[54] The more widely the Washington/Jefferson heritage is seen as tainted, however, the more the other face of their commemoration is revealed. African-Americans may reasonably resort to the claim that the public celebration of those who held their ancestors as slaves and who failed to publicly disavow an ideology that justified this cruel practice degrades them. While commemoration of Abraham Lincoln, who actively fought to overcome the oppressive system of slavery, may serve as a source of self-respect for African-Americans, the same may not be true for the commemoration of Jefferson or Washington. It may constitute, on the contrary, one element of a commemorative infrastructure whose celebration of the past oppressor leads to alienation.

How should we address an ambiguous case like this one? We must address tainted commemorations in ways that will further rather than frustrate relations of respect. Following Adorno and Habermas, I have argued that the best way of achieving this goal is a transparent and open reckoning with the past. If American society wants to provide assurance to all its members that they are indeed equals worthy of respect, it must stop narrating its past in ways that ignore how some of the most celebrated achievements in its history, from the settlement on a new continent to the founding of a prosperous republic and the New Deal legislation, were either carried out on the backs of African and indigenous Americans or excluded them.[55]

It is this ambiguity in America's history that is mirrored in the actions of some of its most beloved presidents, including Jefferson and Washington, but also Woodrow Wilson or Franklin D. Roosevelt. An uncritical commemoration of their achievements would reinforce the impression that the values of freedom and equality they defended were only ever understood as the freedom and equality of some. American society has good reason to draw on their commemoration as symbolic anchors for a democratic ethos; but they must be commemorated in ways that appropriately complicate the picture if Americans are to understand not only the contradictions in their own nation's history, but the contradictions that this history's structural legacy has led to today. While African and indigenous Americans are no longer formally disenfranchised, they are still excluded from the benefits of social cooperation in important ways. A critical, transparent, and public process of reconfiguring America's commemorative landscape can help open Americans' eyes to these enduring structural inequalities and serve as a warning to stay forever vigilant that the values of freedom and equality truly and effectively extend to all members of society.

How might we engage with Jefferson or Washington monuments to achieve this aim? Many American communities have recently begun to confront tainted

[54]Martha C. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[55]For a similar call to working through America's history of racial oppression, see McCarthy, "Vergangenheitsbewältigung in the USA."

commemoration, but not all are willing to work through the unjust past. The goal must be to keep alive the nascent conversation about the unjust past and how it affects the community today. Statues of ambiguous figures like Jefferson or Washington may be incorporated into this process, but more than just plaques may be needed. For example, at the University of Virginia—which has recently seen virulent debate about its founder, Thomas Jefferson, and the commemorative reminders of his heritage that adorn the campus—one possible proposal might be to require all first-year students to take a class on the history of slavery and Jefferson's relation to it.

The university campus or the college town is a special context, however. Where no willingness to work through the unjust past has been forthcoming, as is certainly true of many communities in the former Confederacy, there might be no effective way of addressing ambiguous cases like Jefferson or Washington. Plaques or other forms of contextualization are likely to be ignored and chances are that demands for removal or relocation will meet confusion or outright resistance rather than trigger a much-needed conversation about the unjust past. Here, a better strategy might be to tackle less ambiguous cases, like the Confederate generals, first.

What is true of Jefferson or Washington in the former Confederate states is true of addressing tainted commemoration more generally. There might not always be a way to deal with a particular monument, statue, or holiday that is both sufficiently sensitive to its moral taint and effective in triggering an open and transformative conversation. This should not worry us too much, however. What matters far more than getting it right in each and every case is that we embark on a process of re-narrating our past which helps us understand and reshape our present in ways essential to the establishment of relations of respect. Such a process will never be easy, straightforward, fast, or uniform, but rather ambiguous, contested, slow, and fractured. There is no infallible formula that we might use to guide it and it has no clear cut-off point. Every generation must engage in it anew and in ways that are sensitive to its own social realities.