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Cultural-Political Climates and African-American History Museums

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Abstract In recent years, African American history museums have received increasing publicity and support. The opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (2016) and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum (2017) captured extensive media attention, and both institutions have been lauded for their unapologetic approach to representing black history. The Association of African American Museums currently lists 108 African American museums in the United States, a figure that does not include innumerable memorials, monuments, libraries, cultural centers, heritage tours, and other forms black public history. While considering the content of these individual museums provides insight into African American public history, museological representations should also be considered within broader cultural and political frameworks that implicitly and explicitly shape the museum landscape. By analyzing the role of race in current events, museological trends, legislative funding of museum organizations, and shifting attitudes toward history and museums, this paper will assess the current state of African American history museums. In doing so, it will closely examine the reciprocal relationship between these institutions and the societal framework in which they operate, as well as demonstrating the importance of applying political and cultural lenses to museum studies research.

About the Author Dr. Laura Burnham is an early career public historian who completed her doctorate at Edge Hill University in Ormskirk, England. Her doctoral dissertation examined museological representations of African-American history, cultures, and experiences in the United States and United Kingdom. More broadly, she focuses on the role history plays in modern society and, conversely, how contemporary societal frameworks shape public perceptions of history. Her current research continues the exploration of the intersection between the past and present, identifying the various ways that history is utilized as an active component within the tapestry of modern politics, cultures, and discourses.

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Introduction

In a highly politicized time in which truth and fiction have been falsely equated, African-American history museums operate as multipurpose institutions. They are mediators, acting as the intermediary between past and present. They also serve as translators, decoding the formal language of academia into a more general language understood by the public. Moreover, museums that deal with sensitive histories of disenfranchised people can help those people form a collective cultural identity based on dignity and understanding. Social geographer Alastair Bonnett argues:

*[When the past is swept away] you also remove the memories, stories and connections that hold people together, socially as well as individually....Turning complex, diverse places into shallow, simple ones creates a more culturally vulnerable population, an unrooted mass whose only linking thread lies in the ideology that is fed to them from above.*¹

Museums serve as an important antidote to the stripping of cultural value that has defined black experiences in America, and these institutions are unique in their ability to infuse pride and a sense of worth into communities that have long been marginalized from mainstream societies. For this reason, museums representing histories of marginalized people are not just repositories, archives, and exhibitions; rather, as scholar Amina J. Dickerson writes, they serve as “a community gathering space, a community forum, and a cultural refuge.”²

In this way, then, black history museums serve a societal, cultural, educational, and political purpose. Historian Charles Forsdick summarizes this purpose in his concept of active pedagogy:

*[T]here is...a need to acknowledge the ways in which the museum has been enlisted to play an active pedagogical and even political role, asserting the place of slavery and the slave trade in collective memory, disseminating knowledge of them to the general public, and validating the deeper knowledge of the history of slavery that it now provides.*³

According to Forsdick’s concept, black history museums are not simply pedagogical but actively pedagogical due to their activation of knowledge. It is this active form of education that turns didactic energy into cultural-political power, creating a reciprocal and inimitable relationship between information and societal purpose. This connection between knowledge, empowerment, and political advancement distinguishes black history museums (and those representing similarly marginalized histories) from traditional history museums.⁴

This article will examine the dynamic between African-American history museums and modern cultural-political attitudes, ultimately arguing that the former cannot be properly analyzed without a thorough investigation into the latter. This will begin with an assessment of the current African-American history museum landscape, providing a broad overview of the recent developments within black public history and an analysis on the ways that these trends overlap with current events. The article will then closely consider the relationship between African-American history museums and political climates, arguing that these two elements are intrinsically connected and, as such, must be understood in tandem. The article concludes with a consideration of the ways that historians have contributed to recent intersections between history, heritage, and racial politics. These analyses will provide insight into the ways that museums are active sites of change that influence (and are influenced by) the societal, political, and cultural backdrops against which they operate.

Recent Developments in the African-American History Museum Landscape

In recent years, there have been developments within the African-American museum landscape that are worth highlighting in order to better understand the dynamic between

these institutions and their societal frameworks. In addition to the 2016 opening of the highly-anticipated National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, D.C., the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum (MCRM) opened in Jackson, Mississippi the following year. The MCRM has been lauded for its unapologetic representation of civil rights, and its partnership with the Museum of Mississippi History may be a harbinger for coming trends in state-level historical representation. Although the institution attracted critical acclaim for its bold displays, it garnered more media attention due to a controversial guest at its opening ceremony.⁵

The skirmish began when Republican Governor Phil Bryant invited President Trump to speak at the museum's opening, causing Congressmen John Lewis (D-GA) and Bennie Thompson (D-MS) to release a statement protesting the president's attendance. In part, they wrote: "President Trump's attendance and his hurtful policies are an insult to the people portrayed in the civil rights museum."⁶ Others also criticized the scheduled appearance, like Derrick Johnson—President and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—who said that Trump's record on "the protection and enforcement of civil rights [has] been abysmal and his attendance is an affront to the veterans of the civil rights movement."⁷ In response to these comments, White House spokesperson Raj Shah told reporters: "We think it's a little unfortunate that [at] a moment like this, that could be used for unification and for bringing people together, some folks are choosing to play politics with it. But that's not going to deter us from honoring heroes in the civil rights movement."⁸

Ultimately, President Trump participated in a brief tour and spoke only to a private audience inside before quietly departing. Meanwhile, protesters outside railed against his presence and an "alternative event" honoring civil rights veterans was held at the city's Smith Robertson Museum less than a mile away.⁹ The MCRM, like the NMAAHC before it, has contributed another powerful institution to the black museum landscape; just as importantly, however, the controversy surrounding its opening serves as a reminder about the inextricable link between African-American history museums and political climates. As a result of this intertwined relationship, any assessment of these institutions must include an overview of the key cultural and political moods that currently shape national attitudes.

To effectively contextualize the current black museum landscape, it is also necessary to consider trends in adjacent institutions.¹⁰ While these museums do not exclusively engage with African-American history, the histories represented in these institutions overlap, complement, and sometimes contrast with narratives presented in black history museums. Because of this implicit connection, the relevancy of these institutions should not be underestimated. This is particularly true of museums representing the Civil War—a topic that historically, culturally, and politically converses with black history and modern race relations. In addition to the debate over Confederate monuments, there have been two noteworthy developments within the recent Civil War museum landscape, both of which relate to current perspectives of racial history in America.

Richmond's Museum of the Confederacy, housed in the White House of the Confederacy in Virginia, had roots in the postbellum period and was originally created to honor the Confederacy. After the civil rights era, however, the museum recalibrated its focus, adopting more objective and critical interpretations of the war.¹¹ Despite these changes, the museum

faced new issues in the twenty-first century as some still considered it a “shrine to the Lost Cause.”¹² As a result, museum leaders decided to evolve and broaden the institution’s scope and, in a historic move, merged with the American Civil War Center—a museum that opened in Richmond’s Tredegar Iron Works and offers a more expansive analysis of the war. These two institutions (along with an Appomattox site) merged as the American Civil War Museum in 2013 under the leadership of Christy Coleman, an African-American woman who had previously worked with Colonial Williamsburg and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. The post-merger American Civil War Museum has been praised for its commitment to telling three sides of the Civil War narrative (that of the Union, the Confederacy, and African Americans), though it—and Coleman herself—received backlash from some Confederate advocates.¹³ Despite this, the merger has been attracting funding and visitors, and a new 28,500 square foot addition opened at the Historic Tredegar site in 2019.

The most vocal opponents to the merger are located over 600 miles away in Columbia, Tennessee. The Museum of the Confederacy had historically been supported by the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), but the evolution of the museum from the 1970s onward caused a rift that was heightened in 2007 when museum leaders considered a name and location change. Responding to the name change proposal—which contemplated the negative connotations of the term “Confederacy”—an SCV member lamented that museum visitors “don’t want another politically correct watered-down museum that does not give hard viewpoints.”¹⁴ Other perceived slights continued to sour the relationship, and the SCV permanently severed ties with the museum amid the 2013 merger with the American Civil War Museum; in fact, SCV coordinator Frank Earnest announced that the SCV was willing to “go to war” to stop the merger.¹⁵ The SCV has since built its own museum in Columbia, which will also serve as an SCV administration space.¹⁶ The website for the new National Confederate Museum at Historic Elm Springs reads in part:

The truth about the South’s struggle to form a new nation is under attack as never before. The National Battlefield Parks have [been] taken over by the ‘it’s all about slavery’ provocateurs... The forces of political correctness have gone into high gear. They attempt to ban any and all things Confederate through their ideological fascism.¹⁷

It is important to incorporate these types of developments in an analysis of the African-American history museum landscape. Broadening the scope of black history museums provides a contextualized, comprehensive understanding of America’s racial public history landscape, which in turn helps scholars understand the dynamic between these institutions. Current trends affecting African-American and Civil War museums—the former enjoying increasing popularity from the general public, the latter being split between the moderate many who are happy with objective, professional, and inclusive Civil War narratives, and the radical few who cling to Lost Cause ideology despite historical debunking—reflect contemporary cultural-political shifts and divides in American society. As such, we are reminded that black history museums should not be divorced from political forces, as doing so decontextualizes and manipulates scholarly understanding of history and its public representations.

Political Discourse and America's Racial Climate

For these reasons, it is also important to understand the political climate within which African-American history museums are currently operating. As scholar A. V. Seaton writes: “[H]eritage is never a stable, finally completed process but a constantly evolving process of accommodation, adjustment and contestation.”¹⁸ Therefore, museum analyses should be contextualized by assessments of changing cultural-political attitudes. Many considered the 2016 opening of the NMAAHC a seminal moment for the representation of black history—at long last the nation finally gained a federally-funded and centrally-located African-American history museum. Similarly, the MCRM has contributed a state-focused narrative to the black history museum landscape, demonstrating the importance of localized historical narratives and inter-institutional partnerships.

These museum advancements are likely linked to the growing popularity and increased dissemination of black history, as well as the growing visibility of African Americans in popular culture.¹⁹ Films like *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013), *Selma* (2014), *The Birth of a Nation* (2016), and *Hidden Figures* (2016) have brought black history, cultures, and experiences to the forefront of national discourse. Moreover, the explicit role of race in current events—for example, race has been central to public debates surrounding issues like police brutality, political tribalism, and renewed civil rights activism—has challenged the idea of a “post-racial society” and has served as a reminder that society’s collective racial education is far from over.

Despite the increased visibility of black history—or perhaps because of it—racial tension has increased in recent years. A Pew Research Center poll conducted in August 2017 reported that 58% of Americans think racism is a “big problem in our society” and 29% say that it is “somewhat of a problem.”²⁰ This viewpoint is largely split along party lines, with 76% of Democrats and 37% of Republicans labeling racism as a “big problem.” There is also a noticeable racial divide in the results, with 81% of African Americans and 52% of whites considering racism a “big problem.” These perceptions are corroborated by recent hate crime data, which indicates high levels of racially motivated hate crimes. The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino released an extensive report on hate crimes in 2017.²¹ The study concludes that reported hate crimes in the country’s ten largest cities rose 12.5% in 2017, resulting in the highest increase in over a decade. The breakdown of these figures reveals that the majority of hate crimes were committed toward those from the African American, Jewish, and LGBTQ communities. This study joins other recent reports—most notably, data released by the FBI—that demonstrate a rise in reported hate crime numbers.

Hate crimes peaked near Election Day 2016 and President Trump’s inauguration—a common occurrence during election season regardless of the incumbent, though continuing high numbers have led some civil rights organizations to attribute these incidents to Trump’s inflammatory rhetoric.²² NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson explicitly links the increase in hate crimes to Trump: “From campaign to election, this president has spewed the language of division and hate and it has manifested in not only racist policies but in racist acts against people of color and other groups.”²³ At times, these hate crimes even intersect directly with black history museums; for example, in May 2017 a noose was found near an NMAAHC display on segregation—an act which Lonnie Bunch, called “a painful reminder of

the challenges that African-Americans continue to face.”²⁴ On the rise of hate crimes since the election of 2016, Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) Spokesman Ryan Lenz noted: “We’ve never had reports like this ever. We are in a moment where hate and extremism have been legitimized in the public sphere.”²⁵ The rise in reported hate crimes informs us about America’s racial climate and, as such, should be monitored by scholars of black history museums.²⁶ By incorporating this information into analyses of black history museums, scholars can produce more contextualized insight into the challenges facing these institutions, the experiences that shape museum visitors, and the cultural, political, and societal significance of these museums.

Though the majority of Americans do not agree with President Trump’s racial attitudes, he is unique in his ability to influence his supporters and to create new tensions that dominate public discourse; for these reasons, it is important to understand Trump’s racial politics in order to better understand the societal framework of black history museums. During President Obama’s administration, Trump entered the political arena by conspiratorially demanding Obama’s birth certificate, accusing him of being a Kenyan Muslim.²⁷ In June 2016 he announced his presidential campaign with a speech that vilified Hispanic immigrants.²⁸ During the tragic Charlottesville clash between white supremacists and their protestors, during which activist Heather Heyer was killed, President Trump infamously argued that there were “some very fine people on both sides” of the event.²⁹

Trump and his surrogates then inserted themselves into the broader debate on Confederate monuments, their erroneous comments deleteriously impacting the national conversation.³⁰ In the midst of debates over some NFL players choosing to kneel during the National Anthem, Trump spoke derogatorily toward the players and suggested that “maybe [the protesters] shouldn’t be in the country.”³¹ Most recently, the president’s Justice Department and Department of Education committed to ending affirmative action in university application procedures, calling the process “unnecessary, outdated, inconsistent with existing law, or otherwise improper.”³² In addition to his callousness toward African Americans and Latinos, Trump has made numerous offensive comments about Muslims, and his “Muslim Ban,” which affects travel for certain Muslim majority countries, continues to divide Americans.³³ While technically these words, ideas, and behaviors are only attributable to one man, they represent the sentiment of a sizeable segment of Americans. These ideals—further fuelled by the controversy that they create—shape the state of racial discourse in America. As such, black history museums are inherently impacted by these attitudes; these institutions can respond through internal content or, as explored below, through their outward-facing communication to the American public.

The Role of Historians in a Divided America

These actions set a tone for the racial climate in the United States and combine with hate crimes, allegations of police brutality, and conflicting perceptions of race and racism to create a turbulent backdrop against which African-American history museums operate.³⁴ The current state of American politics—amid which everything from race to truth are called into question—causes the role of historians to be debated: are those in the historical profession confined to commenting on only the past, or should they play an active role in public political discourse? In recent years, many historians, historical societies, and museums have inserted themselves into these conversations, adopting an advocacy role that has proven important in the battle

over the nation's core values. The heartening insertion of museums into the public discourse has manifested itself on several mediums, such as museum displays, social media advocacy, speeches, reports, and press releases. For example, a study conducted by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) noted the importance of museums in the current cultural-political climate: "It has never been more important to have solid and grounded facts at our disposal to dispel myths and convince those who doubt the value of museums."³⁵

At times, however, the commentary is far more explicit and pointed. The Association of African American Museums (AAAM) has published several press releases directly referencing President Trump and his actions. In a "Post-Election Letter" the organization wrote, in part:

*The recent election has left many of us with a sadly familiar feeling of ambivalence toward the body politic... Presidential elections tend to unlock this sort of introspection as we try to square our individual values, morals, and beliefs with 'the choice' of the collective... Amid this uncertainty however, African American museums and cultural institutions must continue their important work unpacking and making sense of the complex and intersecting issues of race, class, nationality, and personhood that framed this combative election... Our museums and cultural centers provide safe spaces for mindful, civil, and vital exploration of our shared past and present. Unsettled moments like this are when our country needs us the most.*³⁶

The AAAM took a similarly strong stance when responding to the travel ban enacted by President Trump in January 2017:

*[T]he Association of African American Museums stands with other museum, library, archive, and history associations who condemn the executive order issued by President Donald J. Trump on January 27, 2017... We stand for open-hearted compassion and open-minded opportunity; and, we remember and encourage all U.S. citizens to remember the vibrancy that varied cultures, races, religions, and ethnicities bring to the United States of America.*³⁷

In both AAAM statements, readers can sense the power and passion from historians, curators, and other museum professionals who vehemently demonstrate a more activated merging of the past and the present.

Expanding the scope to include other public debates that directly involve racial and public history, like those surrounding Confederate monuments, can further illuminate the ways that historians have taken on active roles in politicized settings. A significant point of contention for many American historical organizations has been the use of Lost Cause sentiment to defend Confederate monuments. Like the AAAM, many historians and historical organizations adopted a strategy of outreach and advocacy, trying to contribute historical context to the myth-filled public debate. The most powerful aspect of these publications was the reinsertion of race into the debate, countering the "heritage, not hate" argument.³⁸ For example, historian Dell Upton wrote on the Society of Architectural Historians blog: "Then as now, these

monuments were surrogates for another kind of discussion, one about race and citizenship in the post-slavery nation.”³⁹ These groups also criticized the erasure argument, challenging the idea that removing or recontextualizing these monuments was akin to erasing history. The statement from the American Historical Association, for example, noted: “To remove such monuments is neither to ‘change’ history nor ‘erase’ it. What changes with such removals is what American communities decide is worthy of civic honor.”⁴⁰ These statements—and many more like them—demonstrate the ways that historians can reject apoliticism within the profession, instead choosing to lend their extensive historical knowledge and communication acumen to current societal debates.

In these ways, the unbreakable connection between history museums and politics is clearly demonstrated, reminding scholars that understanding what is happening *outside* of history museums is essential to understanding what is happening *inside* them. Whether being assessed by academics or the public, the museum landscape should be considered in tandem with political moods and cultural shifts—the combination of which reveals a complex tapestry of contemporary American society and the various ways that this tapestry manifests itself in public representations of the past. By doing so, curatorial decisions, museum representations, and institutional analyses will more authentically reflect the multi-faceted elements facing black history museums today.

Conclusion

The greatest moments of American history have occurred when people demanded progress, activating their voices to cultivate political change and challenging the nation to live up to the ideals established in the founding documents. History has long been a vehicle for this progress, providing accumulated examples of greatness, resiliency, and tenacity for subsequent generations to draw upon in their own battles. History has also been a point of contention—just as it can be cited to inspire positive progress, so too can it be manipulated to promote problematic and regressive policies. In this way, history is a multipurpose tool that lends itself to be utilized, distorted, or weaponized in the coliseum of public debate.

Due to this largely implicit relationship between the past and present, the gatekeepers of history are often called upon to enter contemporary cultural and political debates. Though there has always been some level of modern relevancy and public visibility to the historical profession, in recent years—as the nation divides, political polities drift further apart, and the boundaries between fact and fiction are increasingly blurred—these gatekeepers have been more vocal than ever before. Similarly, as a rising number of cultural-political debates stem from historical disagreement (the timeliest example being debates surrounding the Civil War), public discourse has become more inundated with politicized historical perspectives shaped by modern experiences, ideals, and leanings. For these reasons, the bond between the past and present—as contentious as it may be—is undeniably strong.

History museums, then, are the merging of two worlds. In these buildings, the storied history of America meets modern hyper-partisanship. The structures of these buildings do not serve as a barrier between the historical content within the galleries and the cultural-political polemics beyond these sites; rather, history museums connect to broader society through revolving doors—visitors go into museums shaped by modern circumstances and perspectives, and upon leaving they (ideally) apply lessons from those museum narratives to

their lives and politics. Because these elements are so seamlessly merged, it is important for those of us who study museums to periodically zoom out and assess larger cultural and political forces that impact these institutions. This is particularly true of African-American history museums, which represent a long-neglected American narrative at a moment in which the most fiercely-debated political opinions are rooted in race relations.

The product of these intersections is a complex web that connects the past to the present, the historian to the political analyst, and the public to the private. This process erodes the walls that once separated the erudite, elite pursuit of history from the experiences, attitudes, and actions of the general public. As these spheres continue to collide, museums can inspire current generations in renewed fights for civil and human rights. Expanding the scholarly gaze to incorporate the moving parts of this dynamic not only helps to better understand black history museums, but, more importantly, it reminds us to better appreciate them as arenas of progress, beacons of knowledge, and sites of change.

Notes

¹ Alastair Bonnett, *Off the Map: Lost Spaces, Invisible Cities, Forgotten Islands, Feral Places, and What They Tell Us About the World* (London: Aurum Press, 2014), p. 27.

² Amina J. Dickerson, "African-American Museums: A Past Filled with Pride, A Future Filled with Challenges," *Journal of Arts Management and Law* 18.2 (1988): 15.

³ Charles Forsdick, "Travel, Slavery, Memory: Thanatourism in the French Atlantic," *Postcolonial Studies* 17.3 (2014): 261.

⁴ In fact, Amina Dickerson has noted that "the traditional reputation of [the] museum does not communicate what Afro-American museums do." She references Marta Vega, Director of the Caribbean Cultural Center, who has argued that "'museum' may not be an appropriate term for the lively, community-conscious approach of Black museums." See: Amina J. Dickerson, "Afro-American Museums: A Future Full of Promise," *Roundtable Reports* 9.2/3: 15.

⁵ Liam Stack, "If Trump goes, John Lewis will skip Mississippi Civil Rights Museum Opening," *New York Times*, December 7, 2017, accessed June 2, 2018; Sam R. Hall, "Trump will not speak publicly at Mississippi Civil Rights Museum opening," *USA Today*, December 8, 2017, accessed July 3, 2018.

⁶ "Reps. John Lewis and Bennie G. Thompson Joint Statement on Not Attending Opening of Mississippi Civil Rights Museum," Press Releases, December 7, 2017, accessed July 3, 2018.

⁷ Stack, "If Trump goes, John Lewis will skip Mississippi Civil Rights Museum opening."

⁸ Brakhton Booker, "Trump attends opening of Mississippi Civil Rights Museum despite controversy," *NPR*, December 9, 2017, accessed July 5, 2018.

⁹ Bracey Harris, "'He does not deserve to be in Jackson': Trump's visit to civil rights museum met with protests," *USA Today*, December 9, 2017, accessed July 3, 2018.

¹⁰ "Adjacent institutions" is used here to describe non-black history museums that, due to their nature, are in conversation with African-American history museums.

¹¹ Kevin M. Levin, "This Museum Isn't Confederate Enough for These Losers," *The Daily Beast*, October 29, 2016, accessed July 3, 2018.

¹² Gregory S. Schneider, "An African American leader brings a provocative take to expanded Civil War museum," *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2018, accessed July 3, 2018.

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- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Danny Lewis, "A Controversial Museum Tries to Revive the Myth of the Confederacy's 'Lost Cause'," *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 20, 2016, accessed July 3, 2018.
- ¹⁷ *The National Confederate Museum at Historic Elm Springs*, accessed July 5, 2018.
- ¹⁸ A. V. Seaton, "Sources of Slavery-Destinations of Slavery: The Silences and Disclosures of Slavery Heritage in the UK and US," *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration* 2.3-4 (2001): 126.
- ¹⁹ Ira Berlin, "American Slavery in History and Memory and the Search for Social Justice," *The Journal of American History* 90.4 (2004): 1251-1268.
- ²⁰ Samantha Neal, "Views of racism as a major problem increase sharply, especially among Democrats," *Pew Research Center*, accessed July 4, 2018.
- ²¹ "Hate Crimes Rise in U.S. Cities and Counties in Time of Division & Foreign Interference," *Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism at California State University*, San Bernardino May 2018, accessed July 4, 2018.
- ²² Aaron Williams, "Hate crimes rose the day after Trump was elected, FBI data show," *The Washington Post*, March 23, 2018, accessed July 4, 2018.
- ²³ NAACP, "Legacy of Trump's racism: Rise in hate crimes," *Wisconsin Gazette*, June 29, 2018, accessed on July 4, 2018.
- ²⁴ Amy Held, "2nd Noose Found in D.C., This Time At African American History Museum," *National Public Radio*, June 1, 2017, accessed on July 5, 2018.
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- ²⁹ Rosie Gray, "Trump Defends White-Nationalist Protestors: 'Some Very Fine People on Both Sides'," *The Atlantic*, August 15, 2017, accessed on July 4, 2018.
- ³⁰ Max Greenwood, "Trump on removing Confederate statues: 'They're trying to take away our culture'," *The Hill*, August 22, 2017, accessed on July 4, 2018; Philip Bump, "Historians respond to John F. Kelly's Civil War remarks: 'Strange,' 'sad,' 'wrong'," *The Washington Post*, October 31, 2017, accessed on July 4, 2018.
- ³¹ Abby Phillip and Cindy Boren, "Players, owners unite as Trump demands NFL 'fire or suspend' players or risk fan boycott," *The Washington Post*, September 24, 2017, accessed on July 4, 2018.
- ³² Erica L. Green, Matt Apuzzo, and Katie Benner, "Trump Officials Reverse Obama's Policy on Affirmative Action in Schools," *The New York Times*, July 3, 2018, accessed on July 4, 2018.
- ³³ Jenna Johnson and Abigail Hauslohner, "'I think Islam hates us': A timeline of Trump's comments about Islam and Muslims," *The Washington Post*, May 20, 2017, accessed July 5, 2018.
- ³⁴ As the African-American history museum that has received the highest level of national and international attention, the NMAAHC is particularly connected to the current political backdrop. After detailing President Trump's NFL comments, Atlantic writer Adrienne Green explains: "It's within this fraught political context that the most comprehensive exhibit of black

history in America has operated for the better part of a year, almost serendipitously overlapping with the rise of the current administration.” See: Adrienne Green, “The Museum Grappling With the Future of Black America,” *The Atlantic*, September 30, 2017, accessed September 15, 2018.

³⁵ “Museums and Public Opinion,” *American Alliance of Museums* 2018: 3.

³⁶ “Post-Election Letter from the President,” *Association of African American Museums*, January 23, 2017.

³⁷ “AAAM Responds to President’s Executive Order Restricting Entry into US,” *Association of African American Museums*, February 7, 2017.

³⁸ The “heritage, not hate” argument is a dominant line of reasoning among those who believe that Confederate monuments should remain as and where they are. The argument refers to the belief that the monuments represent Southern heritage and culture rather than racism, and that removing these items signals appeasement resulting from identity politics-related pressure. Because they consider the monuments in terms of heritage rather than race or historical objectivity, advocates of “heritage, not hate” believe that the removal of Confederate monuments equates to an attack on Southern heritage.

³⁹ Dell Upton, “Confederate Monuments and Civic Values in the Wake of Charlottesville,” *Society of Architectural Historians*, accessed July 4, 2018.

⁴⁰ “Statement on Confederate Monuments,” *American Historical Association*, accessed July 4, 2018.

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