

White Too Long - Chapter 4

Marking: Monuments to White Supremacy

This chapter examines the monuments to white supremacy that have been erected in the United States and their significance in the current cultural moment as well as the challenge they represent for the deconstruction of white supremacy and the establishment of an antiracist society.

The cultural influence of the United Daughters of the Confederacy: its legacy remains “not just in granite and bronze, but also in the ways its past educational efforts continue to shape American culture and religion, limiting white vision and hindering black equality.”

The production of lectionaries and catechisms aimed at embedding and extending the values of white supremacy into future generations. In these theological and doctrinal framings, the intuitions, assumptions, and values of white supremacy seamlessly intertwine with those of Christian faith.

Stained Glass monuments to white supremacy: the most prominent of these are four large windows honoring Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson in the nave of the National Cathedral in Washington, D. C., the most important religious space in the country because of its deep connection with national civic life.

“The historical witness is clear: as Confederate symbols migrated from cemeteries and veterans’ parades, they became less about honoring the past and more about upholding white supremacy in the present. The further the distance from the cemetery and the past, the more nakedly obvious their role is asserting white supremacy becomes.”

A corollary conclusion also extends to religion: as symbols of white supremacy “were intentionally installed in sacred spaces, where they were enmeshed with Christian symbols and justified by white Christian theology, they became religious weapons in the service of baptizing white supremacy.”

The examples of resistance to these monuments and memorials of white supremacy “are best understood as initial tremors” which are only beginning to disturb their entrenched foundations. “Ultimately, the construction of a new foundation will require white Americans to do something we have never been willing to do: reanimate our own histories and confirm a violent and unflattering past.”