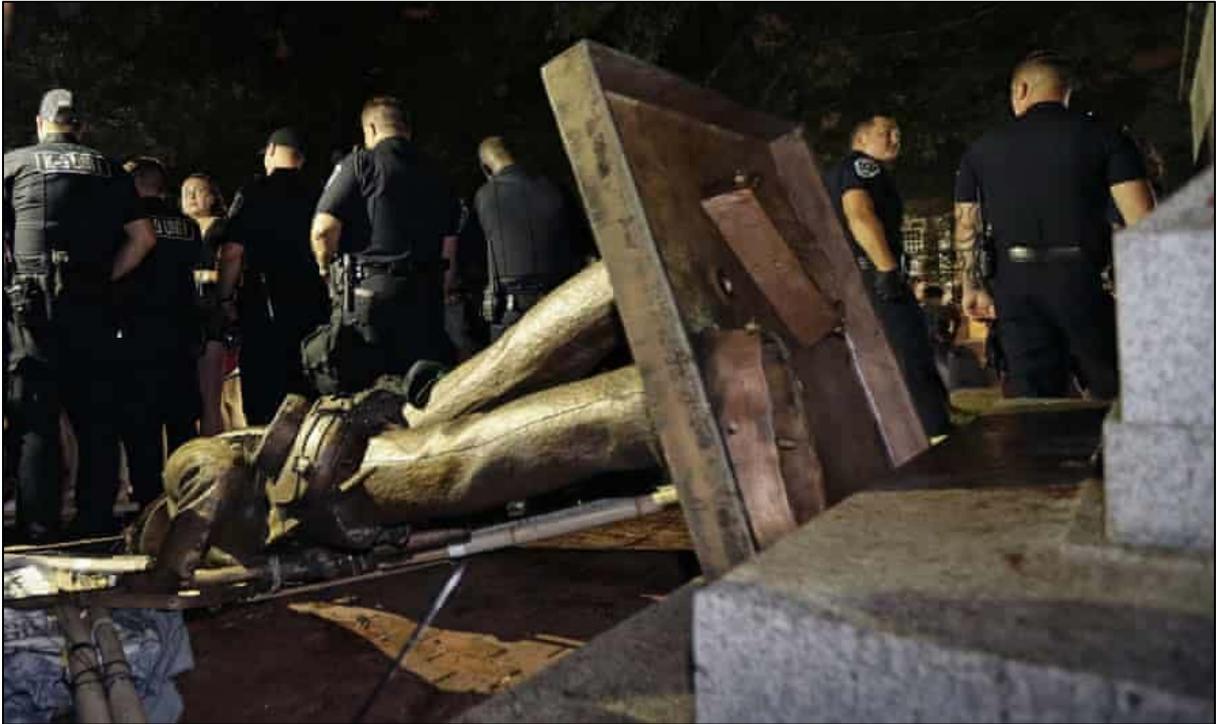


North Carolina: protesters pull down Confederate statue at university

Controversial 'Silent Sam', criticized as symbol of racism, falls after hundreds gathered at UNC Chapel Hill



Police stand guard after the Confederate statue known as 'Silent Sam' was toppled by protesters.

Guardian staff and agencies

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Police are investigating after the controversial “Silent Sam” Confederate statue on the campus of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill was toppled by protesters.

Local TV reported that more than 300 people gathered at the Peace and Justice Plaza close to campus at about 7.30 on Monday evening before marching to the Confederate statue’s base and calling for its removal. At 9pm, protesters had marched down a nearby street before returning back to the statue’s base. By 9.30, “Silent Sam” was down.

There had been some tense moments between police and protesters. One person was arrested and charged with concealing one’s face during a public rally and resisting arrest.

And on Tuesday morning it was reported that University of North Carolina police had begun a criminal investigation into the destruction, the

latest action to dismantle civil war symbols in many parts of the country amid ongoing fierce debate about race and the legacy of slavery.

The university system's board chair, Harry Smith, and president, Margaret Spellings, said on Tuesday campus police had launched a criminal investigation into the incident, which they described as "mob rule". Roy Cooper, North Carolina's Democratic governor, said in a statement he shared protesters' "frustration" over statues but condemned the violent destruction of public property.

Campus police arrested at least one person at the protest for masking their face and resisting arrest, according to Audrey Smith, a university spokeswoman.

Students, faculty and alumni have called the statue a racist image and asked officials to remove it.



Banners are used to cover the statue as people gather during a rally to remove it.

The university issued a statement on Twitter in response to the incident: "Tonight's actions were dangerous, and we are very fortunate that no one was injured. We are investigating the vandalism and assessing the full extent of the damage."

The statue was given to the university by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1909. It was erected in 1913.