



## Stars And Barred: The Sanitization of Confederate History on College Campuses Overlooks UGA

By Eli Scott

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On June 17, 2015, white supremacist Dylann Roof murdered nine African American worshippers at the historic Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. This traumatic event and the following battle over the presence of the Confederate flag in front the South Carolina State House has redefined the way that Americans struggle with their tumultuous and often guilt-inducing past. For some, especially those descended from Confederate soldiers, the Confederate flag and commemorative monuments represent tradition and family history. But for others, the call for the removal of the Confederate flag, as well as monuments and even buildings named after Confederate warriors, has been heeded, and this movement is now working its way across college campuses countrywide.

After the Confederate flag was removed from the South Carolina State House, the same battle flared around the country and disappeared rapidly. The next items on the list of Confederate history to be sanitized were monuments, including four Confederate pieces in New Orleans. One of these was the Washington Artillery Monument, dedicated to a militia that fought both in the Battle of Gettysburg, as well as in the Mexican-American War. The nuances of this statue led many to question the seemingly blind commitment of New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu to clear the city of Civil War-era landmarks.

The movement has caught fire on college campuses, too. The most successful case has been at the University of Texas-Austin, where the Student Government voted for the removal of an enormous Jefferson Davis statue. Other colleges, such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, have experienced a more convoluted process. The statue known as “Silent Sam,” a monument to 321 alumni of U.N.C. who died in the Civil War serving the Confederate Army, stands forebodingly on campus with a rifle in his hands, denoting his racist past. This statue was defaced in July with graffiti saying “Black Lives Matter” and “Murderer,” but such actions have not been enough to push the university to take action and remove the statue. The process of removing Confederate monuments has been uneven and prolonged in most cases, but hurdles have not stymied activists’ intent on removing Confederate history from college campuses.

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Others have called for the renaming of many residence halls and buildings with Confederate ties, claiming that such buildings honor the past that so actively offends present-day minority students. The University of North Carolina was successful in renaming Saunders Hall, a dormitory honoring former North Carolina secretary of state and prominent Ku Klux Klan organizer William Saunders, as Carolina Hall. But the activists won a pyrrhic victory when the UNC Board of Regents on the same day announced a 16-year freeze on renaming other buildings, such as the infamous Aycock Residence Hall named after vehement white supremacist and North Carolina Governor Charles Aycock. However, a residence hall of the same name at crosstown rival Duke University was renamed earlier this year as East Residence Hall.

Buildings named after unambiguously racist figures are rampant in the Southeast, where over 10 buildings on the campuses of the University of Mississippi, University of Alabama, and University of South Carolina are named after notable racist politicians. Two South Carolina colleges, Clemson University and Winthrop University, have faced protests requesting the renaming of Tillman Halls, named after 19th century pro-Jim Crow Governor Benjamin Tillman. But these protests were not heeded because of a unique legal challenge; after passing the Heritage Act of 2000 in South Carolina, parks and other public areas named for historical figures cannot be renamed without a two-thirds vote from the General Assembly. Similar laws exist in Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

With the wide-ranging activism surrounding Confederate history at universities, the University of Georgia has seemingly been overlooked. While confederate statues at the Capitol in Atlanta have been brought to the forefront of the issue, an ostentatious monument in downtown Athens and a handful of university buildings have missed the scrutiny, despite standing as constant reminders to students of UGA’s bigoted past.

The Clarke County Confederate Monument lies in the median of Broad Street, and it was the first county Confederate memorial in the state of Georgia. The obelisk-like shape seems incongruous with the rest of downtown Athens, and an inscription on the monument solidifies its ties to the University. While one side enumerates those that died on the Confederate side in Clarke County, another panel bears a sentimental tribute by former Chancellor of the University Andrew Lipscomb, the namesake of Lipscomb Hall.

Eulogizing the Confederate dead, though, pales in comparison to the actions of the racist namesakes of other university buildings. The first of these buildings, Joseph E. Brown Hall, is home to comparative literature and African languages. In contrast to the cultural diversity of the students who frequent Joe Brown Hall for class, Joe Brown was a vehement defender of states’ right to maintain slavery during his time as Governor from 1857 to 1865. Brown doubted that the blacks and whites could coexist peacefully

and contemplated sending freed slaves to Africa. Brown represents a stark contrast with the purpose of the building on campus that shares his name.

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Perhaps the most disturbing example of the gross disconnect between the names of buildings and their purpose is Candler Hall, the home of the School of Public and International Affairs. Students can take courses in international affairs and public administration intended to broaden their methods of thinking, yet the building’s namesake epitomizes close-mindedness. Allen Candler served Georgia in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1883 to 1891 and as Governor from 1898 to 1902. Candler also served in the Confederate Army, and as Governor, successfully lobbied for a Democratic whites-only primary based on the argument that the Democratic Party was not subject to the Fifteenth Amendment, which prohibits states from disenfranchising voters based on race or skin color. In an 1899 editorial, Candler claimed that the “enfranchisement of the Negro was a crime against civilization.” His tenure coincided with the most violent lynchings in Georgia history, and he was noted for his response to the lynching of Sam Hose in 1899, in which he admonished the black victims of the violence as well as the entire black community.

While the Confederate flag debate has motivated many to call for the removal of Confederate history in the forms of statues and buildings on campuses throughout the country, the University of Georgia has avoided such activism, mainly due to the persistence of Georgia Code 50.3.1 stating that “no publicly owned monument or memorial ... in honor of the military service of any past or present military personnel of this state, the United States of America or the several states thereof, or the Confederate States of America ... shall be relocated, removed, concealed, obscured, or altered in any fashion.” With such prohibitive laws against renaming Confederate-affiliated monuments and buildings, the University of Georgia will be unlikely to see any changes to the controversial names that adorn the University’s halls.