

ALSO BY JAMES OLIVER HORTON AND LOIS E. HORTON

Slavery and the Making of America

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Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700–1860*

*Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle
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*A History of the African American People: The History,
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Hard Road to Freedom: The Story of African America

SLAVERY AND PUBLIC HISTORY

The Tough Stuff
of American Memory

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*Southern Comfort Levels:
Race, Heritage Tourism, and
the Civil War in Richmond*

Marie Tyler-McGraw



The placement of a statue of Abraham Lincoln seated on a bench with his young son Tad in Richmond, Virginia, the former capital of the Confederacy, was highly controversial. Some in the neo-Confederate movement opposed its placement, regarding it as symbolic of the defeat and humiliation of the Confederate South. Others, however, believe that this is “the most important statue of Lincoln in the world.” COURTESY OF THE UNITED STATES HISTORICAL SOCIETY

As the twentieth century drew to its close, the city that was once the capital of the Confederacy tried again to revitalize its old central business district. Richmond, Virginia’s downtown was a scene of classic urban blight—boarded-up department stores, fast-food franchises, and more blowing newspapers than pedestrians. Over decades the city had tried most of the nationally popular remedies for postindustrial blight, but to little avail. The strategy now adopted by city leaders was a riverfront development project, a popular form of urban renewal in the 1990s. Designed to draw tourists, developers, and retailers to the James River area at the heart of the city, the plan featured a James River canal walk, a Civil War exhibition and visitor center housed in a nineteenth-century iron works, and an outdoor recreational space. Partners in this new effort were the Richmond Historic Riverfront Foundation, a coalition of local businesses and government, and the Richmond National Battlefield Park of the National Park Service. The latter had a Civil War visitor center that was poorly located and seriously in need of funds for reinterpretation and renovation.

Park superintendent Cynthia MacLeod saw the riverfront project as an opportunity to enlarge and reinterpret the Civil War exhibition, adding current scholarship and better design, when the center was moved. The space for the expanded and updated exhibition, to be called

the Richmond Civil War Visitors' Center, was a large renovated section within the old Tredegar Iron Works, famous for its contribution to the Confederate military. The riverfront outdoor recreational plan included a mile-long walk on the restored Kanawha Canal and murals depicting themes in Richmond's history. Intended to be tied to the floodwall that separated the James River from the Canal Walk, these murals were printed on thirteen vinyl panels that held a total of twenty-nine images. General Robert E. Lee was on the eleventh panel, under the heading of "war," sharing that section with Indian chief Powhatan, images of the burning of Richmond during the Civil War, and a World War I soldier. The design work was done by the well-known New York firm of Ralph Applebaum and Associates with the aid of a local historical interpretation committee.

Panel 11 was among the first to be put up, just before the official Memorial Day 1999 opening, and a newspaper photographer caught General Lee as he rose in lonely splendor over the Canal Walk. When this image appeared next morning in the local paper, black city councilman Sa'ad El-Amin called members of the Richmond Historic Riverfront Foundation, saying that Lee's image was offensive to African Americans and that its inclusion could precipitate a boycott and a protest. By the end of the day, it was down. Almost immediately, there was a general outcry among southern heritage groups, especially the Heritage Defense Committee of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Still, the opening went on as planned, with most of Richmond's public officials in support of the Canal Walk and hoping for a compromise on the Lee image.¹

On the day of the opening of the Canal Walk, with Lee's image still down, ex-governor Douglas Wilder, the first elected black governor of Virginia—or any state—was riding on a canal boat full of dignitaries that passed under the Fourteenth Street canal overpass. A contingent of the Sons of the Confederacy had stationed themselves on the overpass and draped the Stars and Bars over the side. In Wilder's words, "As the canal boat on which I was riding . . . was about to glide under a bridge draped with the stars and bars of the Confederacy, I rose, smiled and saluted the flag. The taunts, shouts and invective subsided . . . and we sailed on." Wilder later explained, "I acted to defuse the tensions . . . I believe in inclusiveness." But, he emphasized, white Richmonders needed to comprehend that "some things symbolize, to a degree unfathomable to persons

who are not aggrieved parties, images of a past replete with segregation and subordination."²

Once again Richmond had a conflict that was irresistibly cinematic and thus attractive to national media under the general theme of race-based divisions over the interpretation of local history. The motto of the Richmond Chamber of Commerce is "Richmond: Still Making History," and it is so true as to be painful for local businesspeople who devoutly wish they could settle on a story of the city that would satisfy both black and white residents and—most of all—draw visitors and customers to the city's historic, cultural, and commercial sites. Richmond is just one of many postindustrial American cities that have, in the past three decades, turned to tourism as a strategy for overcoming the loss of an industrial base. But because it has a more dramatic and contentious history as the capital of the Confederacy, the dilemmas of heritage tourism as applied to the interpretation of race and slavery are more sharply drawn and more visible on the landscape.

Richmond's history is displayed on a terrain of monuments, memorials, plaques, buildings, cemeteries, and streetscapes that commemorate not just the ultrahigh drama of the Civil War years but a particular version of that event and its meaning. For one hundred years after the end of the Civil War, Richmond was the central site for the production and maintenance of the Confederate version of the causes of the Civil War, the nature of African American enslavement, and the postwar sufferings of the southern people. This version argued for the relatively benign nature of slavery, the states' rights origins of the Civil War, the ruthlessness of military Reconstruction and the necessity for keeping the races separate. It was a white, patrician and self-justifying narrative known collectively as the "Lost Cause."³ This historical emphasis obscured Richmond's long history as a commercial and industrial city, and the tensions generated by a historical commitment to racial segregation threatened, by the late twentieth century, to delay the city's desired transformation into a New New South banking, business, and governmental center.

But a region could reach the New New South only by passing through the New South. In the decades after the Civil War and Reconstruction, Richmond's white leadership had several goals: to memorialize the Confederacy, to make Richmond part of the New South industrial economy, to embrace at least part of the 1890s City Beautiful urban design move-

Confederate
Space

ment, and to effectively separate the city's black population from the white. Planning for public space was one city function that harmonized all these goals. The space that commemorated the Confederacy also staked out boundaries. Commemorative space was seen as part of the real city and as quality space for white people. A series of decisions about what to memorialize and where to place monuments and plaques defined the city's governmental and cultural sectors and was part of planning for elite new neighborhoods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴

Memorialization of the Confederacy included Monument Avenue, a broad tree-lined expanse of large late-Victorian and colonial revival homes along an avenue of statues to Confederate heroes. While it was still a vast field, in the 1880s, the developers of the tract wisely offered a section of land for the statue of Robert E. Lee that was subsequently placed there and dedicated in 1890. As hoped, the developers saw the remaining land rise in value and be taken into the city. Downtown, near the state capitol and its growing complex of buildings with plaques honoring aspects of the Confederate capitol, other commemorative sites evolved. The Valentine Museum, founded in the 1890s and housed in an old mansion, displayed the collections and curiosities of local elite families and reflected their interests. Ultimately, it served the function of a celebratory city museum. Two blocks away, the Confederate Literary Memorial Society opened what is now the Museum of the Confederacy, with the wartime home of Jefferson Davis restored and opened next door as the Confederate White House.⁵

The 1919 celebration for the unveiling of the Stonewall Jackson equestrian monument marked the last of the constellation of Confederate heroes to be enshrined on Monument Avenue.⁶ The imposing new homes that faced the monuments added weight to the avenue's effort at historic interpretation. At the same time that Monument Avenue was being constructed to center the new Richmond in harmony with the Lost Cause vision, another once-central neighborhood was becoming politically and historically peripheral. In the antebellum years, the downtown neighborhood of Jackson Ward had housed both black and white families. Following the Civil War, this community of large and solidly built freestanding dwellings and frame row houses became the acknowledged political and economic center of black Richmond. Slowly, after Reconstruction, black

political representation was first confined to Jackson Ward and then effectively eliminated.

This manipulation of the political and cultural landscape did not efface the black presence. For generations before and after the Civil War, Richmond's black citizens constructed and preserved an alternative version of Richmond's townscape history that was expressed in parades, protests, oral traditions, counterinterpretations of historic sites and events, and a private mental geography of the city with its own sacred spaces. Black resistance to the dominant narrative in Richmond was a particularly herculean task, given the city's six generations as the center of the romanticized version of the Old South and the Civil War. The heightened historical awareness in Richmond, however, encouraged a more engaged and sophisticated black response to the city's efforts to control public space.

black
space

At the end of the Civil War, it was quickly apparent that ordinary black citizens understood the importance of claiming public space. As early as the summer after Robert E. Lee's April 1865 surrender, black Richmonders wrote to a New York newspaper about their inability to walk freely on the public streets without special passes reminiscent of slavery.⁷ African Americans also quickly began to celebrate four holidays after the Civil War: New Year's Day, George Washington's birthday, April 3 as their own emancipation day, and the Fourth of July. Black militias paraded on these and other occasions, while black parades for occasions such as funerals and conventions were frequent occurrences, often featuring the uniformed members of various benevolent societies. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most of these activities had been restricted to black neighborhoods, although parades were known to march from one black neighborhood to another through the center of town.⁸

It was in this context of parallel histories that Richmond's civic leadership decided to promote heritage tourism. The Richmond Historic Riverfront Project, with its heritage tourism components, was not the city's first attempt at revitalization or preservation. Beginning in the 1950s, Richmond shared the fate of many of America's cities with an old industrial core, losing first its industrial base and then its commercial sector. Post-World War II federal housing and transportation policies and the Supreme Court desegregation decision made many American cities, in-

cluding Richmond, lose middle- and working-class white population to black families restricted from buying in the suburbs. From the late 1950s onward, Richmond tried every form of urban planning, including wholesale demolition of homes in the form of "slum clearance," a renewal strategy that characteristically destroyed African American neighborhoods and landmarks in order to put up such structures as civic centers, freeways, and sports arenas. From the 1940s through the 1960s, white historic preservationists among local elites frequently allied with black families in the central city to oppose the destruction of central neighborhoods, but with little success.

By the late 1970s, Richmond had a black mayor, and the City Council was predominantly black. Integration of service industries, public facilities, and retail stores had seriously undermined downtown black businesses, and the flagship department stores of once-proud Broad Street were failing. The suburbs were booming and stretching farther into the countryside. Black and white businessmen and politicians made their first efforts to work together to revive the downtown shopping area with the formation of Richmond Renaissance, a racially balanced public-private partnership to set priorities for downtown. Since the advent of Jim Crow, white Richmonders had shopped on one side of Broad Street, Richmond's main commercial thoroughfare, and black Richmonders had shopped on the other. One important effort sponsored by Richmond Renaissance in the 1980s linked the two sides of Broad Street with a symbolic overpass. Residents hoped it was a bridge between the black and white communities and a turn from the past to a new future.

Part of this effort was a festival marketplace, a popular urban solution of the 1970s and 1980s that frequently contained small shops and performing arts space. But in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in a final spasm of downtown department store, hotel, and small shop closings, the festival market closed, too. Near the James River, private entrepreneurial efforts with city assistance raised tall glass and steel insurance and banking buildings, too far from the old downtown for a lunch crowd. In the old tobacco warehouse district and docks area, a restaurant district was slowly created, but the old downtown remained virtually empty. By the mid-1980s, the city's leaders had determined to put more emphasis on a marketing strategy for heritage tourism.⁹

Heritage tourism appeared more in harmony with the dominant his-

tory of Richmond, long on display, than with the research well under way by academic and public historians in 1980s Richmond. Indeed, it appeared at first that it might be a simple ratcheting up of Lost Cause history. Public monuments and displays are a form of civic education, and control of their sites, forms, and inscriptions is control of the meaning of local history. The right to create and participate in public discourse is at the heart of claims to public space, and these rights had been very effectively asserted by the Lost Cause advocates. How could Richmond, as a majority black city with a majority black city council, reconcile this Lost Cause landscape of tourism with the perspectives of the people they represented? How could heritage tourism be useful as an economic development strategy when blacks saw historicizing the city as a way of claiming it for whites and ignoring or destroying the physical representations of black history? To further complicate historic interpretation, many of the city's blacks saw any reference to slavery, or "subordination," as Wilder phrased it, as inherently embarrassing or shameful, reinvoking a sense of powerlessness, especially against wealthy and literate white elites.¹⁰

The city hoped to add African American history to the walking tours, site plaques, and memorials in the city, but not to erase the Lost Cause landscape that continued to draw tourists. African American tourism had become an important economic force, especially in the South, and it attracted both black and white visitors to sites.¹¹ Promoters of heritage tourism also assumed that adding African American monuments to the landscape would "heal wounds" and promote reconciliation. Perhaps the hard questions of interpretation, agency, and responsibility could be avoided in the rapid proliferation of monuments. And perhaps African American history and the Lost Cause could coexist in comfort in the interests of diversity and heritage tourism.

A remapping of the historic landscape by city museums began the process of modifying Confederate historiography. Local museums, long the conservators of a distinctly Lost Cause history, might seem unlikely frontline troops in an assault on tradition. But the New New South that arose after the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s needed not only to revitalize downtown but to signal to the world of commerce that its racial conflicts were over, reconciliation had taken place, and nothing would interfere with the global transaction of business. The generally conservative white business progressives of most southern cities could

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find common cause with predominantly black city councils and businessmen in an effort to create public memorials and a new city narrative that signaled an era of racial harmony.¹²

The museum of the history of Richmond, then the Valentine Museum and currently the Valentine Richmond History Center, produced controversial and well-documented exhibits on race issues in Richmond, and these exhibits attracted black Richmonders to the museum for the first time, won National Endowment for the Humanities awards, and received national notice. The Virginia Historical Society and the Museum of the Confederacy, with nationally important archives and a large visiting public, were also successful in obtaining public humanities grants for exhibits that employed national scholars and designers and engaged aspects of southern and Virginia history previously unaddressed. By 1990, the director of the city museum had set his sights on an enlarged museum, one in which the entire physical city was used to tell the story of four centuries of a racially inclusive history.¹³

The black and white leadership of the city invested heavily in these plans and arranged a lease with the owners of the Tredegar Iron Works for a historical park and a cutting-edge exhibit center there that would be called Valentine Riverside. Valentine Riverside opened at the Tredegar in May 1994. The next February, it cut its days of operation from five to three per week, and it closed after Labor Day 1995. The entire concept failed in a swirl of accusations and counteraccusations about fiscal accountability. The fall of Valentine Riverside was due to an interplay of factors that included an overextension of its financial and intellectual resources, while attention was increasingly focused on public relations and marketing strategies. There was also a sense among many people that board members and financial backers had grown tired of supporting exhibitions that appeared to privilege African American history rather than simply include it. The city of Richmond took over the museum later that year, as part of a deal with Crestar Bank that included the assumption of the \$9.1 million loan that the Valentine owed Crestar.¹⁴

Regrouping as the Richmond Historic Riverfront Foundation, a coalition of public and private organizations tried again with the Civil War exhibit and the Canal Walk. But as they organized, another major dilemma of public commemoration arose. In 1993, Arthur Ashe, the Richmond-raised tennis star, died prematurely. An ambitious local sculptor joined

forces with an educational foundation created by Ashe to promote a statue of Ashe in the city. In 1995, the City Planning Commission decided to place the statue in the Confederate historic district of Monument Avenue, not in Jackson Ward or near the sports center dedicated to Ashe.¹⁵ To this point, Jackson Ward had received such memorials to African Americans as the city offered. Progressive-era bank president and social reformer Maggie Walker's home was authorized as a National Historic Site in 1978, and the commemorative statue of Richmond-born and nationally known tap dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson was placed in Jackson Ward.

Efforts at inclusiveness and diversity in heritage tourism often depend on keeping the narrative very general or the conflicting stories geographically separate. Richmond was entering a period when these conventions would no longer work. In the public debate that followed the announcement that the Arthur Ashe statue was to go on Monument Avenue, four local positions and an aesthetic caveat were discernible. An African American weekly newspaper contended that Ashe was too good for "Rebels Row." One African American columnist for the city's leading paper, who first wrote that Ashe's statue on Monument Avenue would be "a symbol of racial reconciliation," changed his mind and concluded that Monument Avenue was "a painful reminder of black subjugation." Others argued that Ashe's accomplishments as a tennis player did not qualify him for Monument Avenue. Still others argued that such an inclusion would be good for the city and its image. Adding to the problem was the fact that there was no real review process for the Ashe statue, and many people thought that the sculpture was just bad art. Finally, largely outside these local assessments, those who argued that Monument Avenue was reserved for Confederate heroes were mostly members of southern heritage organizations, particularly the Heritage Defense Committee of the Sons of the Confederacy.¹⁶

Significantly, the *local* arguments were about placement and not about whether or not Arthur Ashe should have a statue. It would have been difficult for anyone to object to a statue of the high-minded and very talented Ashe.¹⁷ While the city was ready for African American history, some were not ready to abandon segregated spheres of memorialization. In this, the city exemplified the American experience where residential neighborhoods remained racially segregated while work and public space were in-

tegrated. Black neighborhoods still seemed the logical place for African American history markers, as white neighborhoods were for the placement of markers to white heroes. Space such as the Canal Walk area was seen as neutral. With the Arthur Ashe statue, versions of inclusive history that had avoided direct confrontation for two decades appeared to collide in public space.

Still, when the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) convened in Richmond a month after the dedication of the statue, they ignored the statue and direct confrontation by marching only beneath the generals. "We have no objection to the statue," was their public statement. "We aren't going anywhere near it. It's not one of our concerns."¹⁸ The Virginia SCV did not want to appear to be attacking the idea of a statue to Ashe, but only marking off and protecting Monument Avenue's Confederate space. While the SCV was present at the margins of the Ashe statue controversy, that controversy remained a Richmond debate, with a local resolution reached through public hearings. But when the vinyl image of Robert E. Lee was removed from the neutral space of the Canal Walk, the southern heritage groups led a more visible protest. Southern heritage organizations from outside the local area and even outside the state soon became involved in Richmond's heritage tourism efforts at the Canal Walk. These groups were recently energized and politicized by efforts to remove Confederate symbols from state flags, and they had determined to confront what they defined as, at best, "revisionists" in Richmond.

To resolve the unexpected crisis of the Lee image, the city appointed a multiracial group of civic leaders—nine whites, nine blacks, and one Chickahominy—who agreed, within a month, on this compromise: Lee would return to the Canal Walk, but in civilian dress, and he would share space with two other images—a black Union soldier and Abraham Lincoln, who walked through Richmond two days after the Confederate departure from the city.¹⁹ This compromise appeared to satisfy the Lee supporters in the city more than those who wanted the banner down. Two African American City Council members who voted for the compromise were briefly threatened with a boycott by a coalition of black church, political and civic groups.

Sa'ad El-Amin, the black city councilman who first protested it, did not accept the compromise. The most common complaint of black Richmonders was that even if they were not as militant as El-Amin, they were

still tired of encountering Lee everywhere in the city. One black man spoke for many when he said, "We have too many things reminding us of General Lee." A poll showed that slightly more than half the city's African Americans favored taking down the vinyl banner, and 73 percent of white Richmonders wanted it up.²⁰ White Richmond tended to say that, like it or not, Lee was part of the city's history. The chairman of the Heritage Defense Committee of the Sons of Confederate Veterans was more positive: "it sounds great . . . I have no problem with the others . . . though I'm certainly not a Lincoln fan." One woman said, "As long as it's Robert E. Lee, I don't care if he's in his shorts."²¹

Professionals in urban studies and interracial civic groups in Richmond had another perspective on the removal of the Lee image. "We keep tripping over the same racial wire," said one, adding that the selection process for the images "was kept very private, isolated . . . we cannot do business like that." "We have to lower our defenses," said another, and talk openly about Richmond's history.²² These comments echoed earlier complaints that decisions about the form and placement of the Arthur Ashe statue had been rushed through by the City Council without time for public comment on either the statue's depiction of Ashe or its placement.²³ The riverfront project had tried to avoid racial divisions by using an informed and diverse group of citizens and historians as the advisory committee for the Canal Walk images and the reinterpretation of Civil War history, but the perception in Richmond that the public had not been sufficiently involved remained.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans had a different interpretation of what removal of the Lee image meant. Just as freedmen in Richmond in 1865 understood the importance of freedom in public space, so the current SCV adopted the language of multiculturalism for their own ends and insisted that Confederate heritage was one more heritage within an overall diversity. They said that taking down the Lee mural was a violation of their right to celebrate their Confederate heritage, and the Southern Heritage Movement filed lawsuits and complaints alleging "heritage violations" for such actions. This was part of an effort to persuade Americans that they were just another self-respecting ethnicity and not motivated by racism.²⁴

Since that 1999 compromise, the interpretation of Richmond's long history of slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow segrega-

tion has remained contentious, unpredictable, and very public. The display and interpretation of historic symbols is as contested in the early years of the twenty-first century as at any other time since the end of the Civil War. Virginia currently celebrates Lee-Jackson-King Day in January, an effort to merge the old Lee-Jackson Day with the new Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Although awkward in phrasing, dysfunctional in its grouping, and pleasing no one entirely, it meets the state's need to have just one paid holiday in January. On Lee-Jackson-King Day in January 2000, arsonists torched the new banner with Lee's image. A new copy was soon up, and all public officials condemned the incident.²⁵ More positively, in June 2000 the new Richmond Civil War Visitor's Center opened. Sa'ad El-Amin visited the exhibition and declared himself "favorably impressed," saying that the center struck "a sensitive balance." Visitors commented that the exhibit had presented a balanced view of racial life and death in Civil War Richmond.²⁶

In 2001 former Virginia governor Douglas Wilder announced that a National Slavery Museum would be built in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and Virginia governor James Gilmore declined to designate April as Confederate History and Heritage Month.²⁷ But the black mayor of Suffolk, Virginia, recognized Confederate History and Heritage Month. The mayor assured the president of the local NAACP that he had gone to the local library and looked it up and could say with assurance that slavery was not the defining issue in the Civil War.²⁸ In 2002, the new director at the Museum of the Confederacy put up the Confederate battle flag at the door as an "education piece." "We are going to be a professional proponent of Confederate history," the new director said, labeling his approach "inclusive."²⁹

But it was the first major project of the twenty-first century that brought Richmond back into the national spotlight. In March 2002, the U.S. Historical Society, a nonprofit organization directed by local businessman Robert Kline, proposed a donation of a statue of Abraham Lincoln to the National Park Service (NPS) through the Richmond National Battlefield Park. The NPS accepted the statue as part of an outdoor interpretive exhibition on the grounds of the new Civil War Visitors' Center at the Tredegar Iron Works. The statue was to commemorate Lincoln's visit to Richmond two days after the city's surrender and to stress the healing words in his second inaugural address. The superintendent of the Rich-

mond National Battlefield Park, Cynthia MacLeod, said the statue was intended as a tool for education and civic discussion.

Kline, who had earlier raised money for the Museum of the Confederacy, derived most of his income from the sale of small historic and patriotic replicas but was reported to lose money on his nonprofit. He saw the Lincoln statue as part of reconciliation and understanding, and, aware of the controversy over the placement of the Ashe statue, he made his offer to the National Park Service to avoid city jurisdiction. The artist commissioned, David Frech, minimized the monumental aspects by depicting a life-size Lincoln resting on a bench with his son, Tad, and looking pensive. The base of the statue would feature a quotation from Lincoln's second inaugural address: "to bind up the nation's wounds."

The statue's proposed placement on the site of the NPS Civil War Center had the opposite effect from what Kline desired. Much more than the Ashe statue or the Lee banner on the Canal Walk, the Lincoln statue proposal brought opposition from southern heritage groups. The negative response to the statue came largely from outside Richmond. Within the city, the statue drew support from the mayor and city council, from the conservative *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, and from the city's historical and cultural organizations. The Virginia Historical Society sponsored a half-day seminar on Lincoln and the Civil War. The *Times-Dispatch* responded to the placement of the statue with an editorial entitled "At Last!" Lincoln as a figure of reconciliation fit well with both the city's southern business progressives and most of its African Americans. Kline was among many businessmen who equated healing with commerce. The cost of the project was more than \$675,000, and the U.S. Historical Society intended to raise funds by selling 750 miniatures of the statue at \$875 each.³⁰

The controversy came at an opportune time for various neo-Confederate historians, heritage groups, and fringe hate groups who decided in the 1990s to declare war on the image of Lincoln as the great moderate who would have prevented radical Reconstruction. This version had been a prominent part of Confederate history since its origins. But Lincoln as devious and dishonest fit the needs of those attempting to revive old arguments about states' rights as the cause of the Civil War, even as scholars appeared to have put that argument finally to rest. The archives at the Richmond National Battlefield Park contain some four

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hundred e-mails and letters, some letters painstakingly handwritten, that poured into the office of Superintendent MacLeod from all over the United States, but predominantly from the South outside Richmond. Most were very hostile to the idea of a statue of Lincoln in downtown Richmond and eager to explain why Lincoln was not a friend to the fallen South. Arguments that it was not on federal land, that it was a private donation, and that it was not a monument did little to mollify the protesters. Opponents said this privately funded statue was like placing a statue of John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theater or Osama bin Laden in New York City.

There was a pattern to these communications. They argued first that secession was legal and "Lincoln's war" illegal. Just as damning in this indictment were Lincoln's motives: he was a "war criminal" who was no friend to blacks, seeking simply to deport them. They further argued that, as a former Whig and advocate of Henry Clay's American system, Lincoln served the interests of northern rich elites in declaring war. He "killed 620,000 Americans so rich Northern industrialists could get richer." Further, he was a "friend of 1848 communist revolutionaries in Europe."³¹ All or some of these claims were repeated in most communications and were the product of a political effort among certain southern heritage groups to tap into white southern resentment of their perceived loss of political and cultural power since the late 1960s.

In addition to the true believers and romantics still deeply involved in the Lost Cause story, there was a political agenda, rooted in the southern strategy that had turned the solid Democratic South into the solidly Republican South over three decades.³² Working-class resistance to African American civil rights included deep resentment at the power of the federal government to impose vast social changes and anger at a national media that frequently appeared to mock their cultural beliefs. Northerners, government employees, and highly educated people of any background were frequently seen as the natural enemies of their cultural truths. Southern heritage organizations frequently warn that the South will no longer put up with the "continued bigotry and hatred articulately expressed by the United States government and through [the] entertainment industry and the 'public' press."³³ They view southern heritage as an effort to "fight the centralization of power in Washington."³⁴

On April 6, 2003, the Lincoln statue was dedicated in a ceremony in

which speakers emphasized Lincoln's preservation of the Union and his desire to treat ex-Confederates with leniency. Overhead, a small airplane trailed a banner that read "Sic Semper Tyrannis." About eighty people, mostly Sons of Confederate Veterans, held a protest at the grave of Jefferson Davis in nearby Hollywood Cemetery, the site of the graves of thousands of Confederate dead. About two dozen people marched on to the dedication site, where they provided a background chorus of whistles and chants. No official from the Philadelphia or Washington regional offices of the National Park Service attended the ceremony.³⁵ The furor over the statue did not end with its dedication, and some months later, in January 2004, Waite Rawls, the director of the Museum of the Confederacy, who had earlier vowed to reemphasize the values of the Confederacy, resigned his membership in the Sons of Confederate Veterans over their stance against the Lincoln statue.

What may be learned from this chronicle of the last few decades in one racially divided southern city where both blacks and whites have long memories? First, the unintended consequences of a heritage tourism strategy for downtown revitalization continue. If the New South perceived its needs as industrialization and racial segregation, the New New South needs the appearance, at least, of racial healing in order to attract both business headquarters and tourists. Heritage tourism as a strategy is essentially commercial and seeks to both entertain and inform its audience. Its tendency is toward the popular or dominant story, often at odds with a minority perspective. Some cities, such as New York and San Francisco, can support the niche marketing of ethnic heritages, offering Chinese, Indian, Italian, or Nordic histories without infringing on another's narrative. But Richmond is perhaps the most dramatic example of an American city where multiculturalism has meant black and white, and the narratives and sites do overlap and contradict each other. In attempting to use heritage tourism as a revitalization strategy, Richmond learned the painful lessons of trying to make *unum* out of *pluribus* on the historic landscape as well as in the narratives.³⁶

Currently in Richmond, "healing" remains an attractive thematic construct, still believed to be useful as both a reassurance to global business and a draw for heritage tourism. The latest effort at Civil War interpretation in Richmond, the proposed Tredegar National Civil War Center Foundation, promises to tell the story of Union, including African Amer-

ican, and Confederate Civil War soldiers at one site. The foundation has cultivated widespread local support and hired national scholars as consultants. Historian Charles Dew, one of the consultants, has said, "I can see the Tredegar National Civil War Center playing a healing role for our country by treating the history of this era in an open, forthright, and all-inclusive manner."³⁷

The contrast between Richmond as "holy city" of the Confederacy and the city's gritty rust-belt realities and current majority black citizenry illustrates very clearly the need for strategies of commemoration that consider all the perceptions of important symbols, including what their placement says about ownership in the city. Every historical exhibition, walk, or talk inevitably draws on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it and constitutes a contested terrain. No matter how it is organized, the subject matter is inevitably open to multiple interpretations, based on the cultural assumptions of the creators and viewers. Groups attempting to establish or maintain their own sense of community will challenge heritage tourism that overlaps with their concerns, will demand real power within such efforts, or will establish alternative institutions, memorials, and exhibits.³⁸

The challenge for public historians is to negotiate between the "stakeholders," persons with some claim to the story being told, and the historic record. One task is to strengthen institutions that help individuals and groups exert control over the way they are represented, and another task is to provide expertise in the presentation of competing cultural claims. Community planning should take primacy over economic planning, and the community must be convinced that comprehensive and accurate research and data collection are at the core of the enterprise. Issues of cultural resources and site integrity must be negotiated and mediated. The community should be an informed and discerning "first tourist." This local support is essential, and locals usually have a clear understanding of how the promotion of certain sites will affect the economics of the neighborhood. If local historians have been part of the process of cultural inventory and have made their research methods known and accepted, there will be community benefits whether or not heritage tourism is profitable. Good-faith efforts to listen to historical informants and anticipated audiences are essential, but well-researched history will be useful during

and after the current struggles over tourism destinations and real estate values are resolved.

Increasingly over three decades, Richmond has adopted some or all of these strategies. The city's residents have struggled to find a modest comfort level for the interpretation of their past, and they have succeeded to a significant extent. The goals of the southern heritage groups most recently involved in public history disputes were not the goals of the Richmond business progressives and the city government. For the most part, the latter groups had reason to feel that they had worked through their major interpretive issues and had reached at least a tentative accord. From former governor Douglas Wilder to Museum of the Confederacy director Waite Rawls, the black and white politicians and businessmen of the city had acknowledged their mutual concern and dependency.

The ongoing effort to interpret the Civil War in Richmond with due attention to the role of slavery and the perspectives of black and white leads to one overriding conclusion: heritage tourism cannot be a pilgrimage to an unchanging shrine, and sites are going to be forums, not temples. Faith in scholarship's ability to persuade communities that their interests lie in acknowledging complexity and diversity is the motivator for most of the research done by academic and public historians. But can it overcome cultural and political forces that do not accept the standards of interpretation used by historians and are primarily interested in history as a revenue enhancement or political strategy? There is reason for hope in the progress that Richmond has made in the last generation. The city has earned its higher level of local comfort with the interpretation of race. But there is also reason for concern in the national attention that Richmond's interpretive struggles now attract. Richmond is likely to remain an irresistible symbol for national controversy over the public historical interpretation of race and the Civil War so long as national political agendas have an important racial component.

8. Southern Comfort Levels: Race, Heritage Tourism, and the Civil War in Richmond (Marie Tyler-McGraw)

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16. Quotations from Michael Paul Williams, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 26, 1995, and July 3, 1995, in Kneebone, "Location."
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