



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Notes from the President 11/2017

BCWRT Community:

On November 4, I sent my regular email to Earle Hollenbaugh detailing the information on our upcoming speaker. The next morning, before going to church, I saw an email from Earle's account; however, it was from Earle's brother Dave asking me to call him ASAP. It was then that I was informed of the sudden passing of our longtime member and newsletter editor.

In our too infrequent conversations, I discovered Earle's love of the Civil War, music and travel. We had even attended many of the same concerts as far back as 35 years ago.

The Catonsville resident was not as frequently present at our monthly meetings due to his extensive travel schedule; however his presence was always felt through our voluminous newsletter. Earle would research newspapers, magazines, historical organizations and many other sources in his effort to keep the BCWRT membership informed. It was Earle's suggestion that we get a digital projector to meet the digital needs of our speakers. He would generously allow us to borrow his when the need arose in the past.

Earle's remains have been cremated. The family is planning to host an open house/barbeque in his honor when the spring weather gets warm. We will let you know when it is scheduled.

Earle Eugene Hollenbaugh, June 28, 1948 - November 2, 2017, *Requiescat in pace.*

(A Thanks to Ray Atkins who has volunteered to temporarily edit *The Old Liner.*)

Tuesday, November 28 will feature retired NPS employee and re-enactor Mel Reid in a living history interpretation of becoming a soldier in the 54th Massachusetts- from "Plantation to Battlefield". A native of Ohio and a resident of the District of Columbia, Mr. Reid is a member of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, Co. B. He appeared as an extra on the movie *Glory* and has conducted Civil War lectures and living history presentation throughout the United States.

Our December 12 meeting (*note our usual date change for December*) will feature author and Frederick County Civil War Roundtable member Gary Dyson discussing his work "The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith, Family Ties and the Battle on the Stono, January 30, 1863".

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We are putting together a panel debating the pros and cons of removing Baltimore's Confederate monuments for our January meeting. Look for information about that debate in the future.

Did you know there were female troopers fighting during the Civil War. Historian and reenactor Anita Henderson will introduce you to a special trooper during our February 27, 2018 meeting. Author, historian Bob O'Connor will have a "first person" presentation on Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln's friend and self-appointed bodyguard, on March 27, 2018.

Our Annual Banquet is scheduled for April 24, 2018. Our speaker will be Edward Bonekemper who will speak on his latest book, *The 10 Biggest Civil War Blunders*, which will be published in January. The site of the banquet will be announced, soon.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: *Remember, it's time to renew your membership for 2018. Yearly dues are \$25.00 for an individual membership, \$35.00 for a family membership. Additionally, we are always looking for new members. Invite a friend to our meetings. The BCWRT has many good things happening. Please spread the word.*

Robert L. Ford,
President

Mark Bradford turned a bloody Civil War battle into art that will haunt and entrance you

By Philip Kennicott. Washington Post. November 8, 2017

Abstract artists will often say that although their work isn't representational or illusionistic, it nonetheless offers a picture of the world. Artist Mark Bradford, fresh from representing the United States at the prestigious Venice Biennale last summer, has used a nearly 400-foot-long interior wall at the Hirshhorn Museum to make a colorful, clotted and peeling picture of the world he calls "[Pickett's Charge](#)."

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The title of this Hirshhorn-commissioned work, which references a Southern general whose name became synonymous with military disaster, is politically volatile. It references one of the more dramatic moments of the Civil War, when three divisions of Confederate infantry attacked Union lines across a wide, open field at the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg. It was a dark moment for the South and is often cited as the turning point — the “high-water mark of the Confederacy” — in a war that until then had favored the South.

Bradford isn't interested in the drama of the war, but rather in how the narrative of that drama has been transmitted for more than 150 years. Embedded in his eight panels of thickly layered and torn paper is a reproduction of Paul Philippoteaux's 1883 panoramic painting “The Battle of Gettysburg,” which is still on view at the battlefield visitors center in a purpose-built cyclorama auditorium. The Gettysburg cyclorama is one of the few remaining 19th-century panoramas, and it offers a rare chance to see what was then a popular, highly commercial and fully immersive spectacle that gave visitors a three-dimensional, 360-degree painted view of the entire battlefield.

Using billboard-size reproductions of the Philippoteaux painting culled from the Internet, Bradford has created thickly layered palimpsests of paper, embedded with ropes and cords that create striations. In some places, these appear like the fluttering horizontal lines produced by an old television tube, as if we are getting a distorted picture beamed over fickle airwaves. In others, they look like geological layers, curving in response to tectonic forces.

Small details of the original painting, highly pixelated from the reproduction process, show through, though in a few cases Bradford allows what is supposed to be buried — the original Civil War painting — to come fully to the surface. In a panel called “Dead Horse,” one sees a haystack, cavalry and a dead horse, enlarged as a poignant detail that threatens to destabilize the abstraction with a powerful, representational and emotional focal point. In other panels, remains of the Philippoteaux are visible only if you put your nose to the surface of the work and search for colors and pixel patterns that differ from the rest of the palette and textures.

“I'm forcing the viewer to actually look at the ‘Grand American Painting,’ ” Bradford has said of his work. “What I'm saying is that that grand narrative never was; it always was a point of contention.”

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The artist has been at work on this piece for about three years, during which time conflicts about race and racism (and in particular how the Southern memory of the Civil War is a proxy for racism) have turned violent. The nation's first African American president has been succeeded by a president who refused to disavow white nationalists in the wake of protests in Charlottesville, Va., and has defended racist symbols of "Southern heritage" erected during the darkest days of the Jim Crow era.

In an interview with Hirshhorn Chief Curator Stéphane Aquin, Bradford sounds despairing: "I would say that it's absolutely impossible not to be angry. With all the things we fought for — to be more in the center of the conversation, to be more in the center of power. . . . What we see now, though, is that we were escorted to the door."

In one sense, Bradford is indeed forcing us to look at a "Grand American Painting." Unlike the specially built panorama theater, in which viewers stood on a central platform and viewed the painting at a distance, Bradford's work is right in front of us, and because we are told in advance that it references the *Philippoteaux*, it's impossible to resist the impulse to search out remnants of the older work. But Bradford is speaking metaphorically as well, using the Grand American Painting to represent ideas such as the Lost Cause myth of the noble South fighting not for slavery, but only for its independence and dignity. But even that doesn't quite capture the power of the metaphor.

Bradford's technique involves scraping and cutting and gouging into the layers of paper he has assembled, and the ropes and cords he embeds in the material are key to the larger meaning. Sometimes the ropes are left on the surface, but in other places they have been forcibly pulled out, leaving both their imprint, and a deep wound. "It is aggressive, yes," he said, when asked about what he feels during the process of removing them. But by removing the ropes, Bradford animates multiple symbolic meanings.

Perhaps Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address, in which the president spoke of "mystic chords of memory stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone," was in the artist's ear when he made this work (though this is not the first time Bradford has used this technique). Certainly the idea of a bond, something that ties us together but also is the root of the word bondage, which was a synonym for slavery, is heard in its richer, wider meaning. We might imagine the word "bond" in play when we think of how we relate to

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such images as Philippoteaux's heroic image of Gettysburg: People are in thrall to it, and often it binds them to other like-minded people who live in communities bound reflexively to misapprehension and myth.

Bradford's choice of the Philippoteaux cyclorama is canny. Although it is a popular tourist attraction, and many Americans retain fond memories of visiting it while on family holidays (this was decidedly *not* the experience of Bradford, who didn't visit until after he made his Hirshhorn work), it isn't exactly iconic. The artist might have used photographs by Alexander Gardner or Mathew Brady, or the Civil War images of Winslow Homer. But his intent wasn't to deface an icon of the Civil War in some echo of Marcel Duchamp painting a mustache on the Mona Lisa. Rather, it was to set up a powerful contrast between our desire to be fully and luxuriantly immersed in familiar narratives — the cyclorama experience — and the more anarchic and unsettling freedom of abstraction.

It is in that sense that he has indeed created a picture of the world. If we scrape the surface of any large national narrative, we soon find evidence of both wounds and healing, connections that exploit and connections that nurture. We crave the "real picture," a clarity on the past and our shared existence, that resolves into a grand, collective narrative.

That's not going to happen, at least, not anytime soon. There is too much under the surface that must still come out, and there are artists, such as Bradford, who aren't going to smooth things over. Even the idea of surface and depth is thrown into confusion, given the messiness of Bradford's process. That, too, is part of the picture.

Often we think of the surface as illusion and the depth as truth. Only through a complex process of abstraction can an artist make an image that shows us how that isn't the case. By embedding, layering, ripping and exposing an old Civil War painting in his work, Bradford creates a picture of a complicated and frustrating truth that haunts us every day in almost everything we say and think about our national divisions.

Pickett's Charge On view through Nov. 12, 2018, at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Independence Avenue and Seventh Street SW. hirshhorn.si.edu.

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Remembrance Day honors history, avoids credible threat

By [Anthony C. Hayes](#) · Baltimore Post Examiner. November 22, 2017

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: Hot and humid may best describe the summer weather faced by opposing soldiers at the Battle of Gettysburg. That early July heat was a far cry from the frigid rain their descendants brooked in this rural town last Saturday. But nothing – including heightened security and what law enforcement termed a “credible threat” – was going to stop the thousands who made their way to Gettysburg for Remembrance Day.

An annual event, Remembrance Day includes wreath ceremonies, a parade, history presentations the conflict who fell while serving their states on the field of battle. Remembrance Day also marks Gettysburg’s Memorial Day celebration, recalling the November 19, 1863 Consecration of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, with a twilight illumination of the graves and recitations of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.

Donald Williams, president of the [140th New York Volunteer Infantry Living History Organization](#), was on hand for the parade and to pay tribute to Union officer, [Colonel Patrick O’Rorke](#).

“O’Rorke is the gentleman who, on the second day of the battle, took Little Round Top,” explained Williams. “He took a bullet right in the throat, as the Confederates came up the hill. There’s a bronze monument up there to O’Rorke, and everyone rubs his nose for good luck. We were up there this weekend to lay a wreath to Colonel O’Rorke, and to some of our fallen comrades from Rochester, New York who have passed away over the last year.”

Williams said that he has been a reenactor for 32 years. “Instead of portraying a regular soldier, I do a very specialized impression – an undertaker from the Civil War period with all of the trimmings. I’ve got coffins in my garage that are 150 years old. I went to Houston to learn how they embalmed soldiers back in the 1800s.”

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How would Williams compare this year's event to others he has attended?

"I think if you take away the security part of it – which was definitely needed – and the bad weather, it was pretty much a typical Remembrance Day. We were here, and nothing was gonna stop us. Everyone seemed to have a good time. Look, we're not gonna let these threats scare us away. We've been around a long time."

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Two miles north of Little Round Top, in an area known as Ziegler's Grove, members of the Allied Orders of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) gathered to lay wreaths at the Albert Woolston Memorial. Woolston, a drummer boy in the 1st Minnesota Heavy Artillery Regiment, who died at the age of 106 in 1956, was the last surviving member of the GAR.

"I've been coming here for 20 years," said Gen. Henry Shaw. "We oversee the Woolston ceremony, the parade and original Civil War Ball. Along with music, the wreath laying's and speeches, two checks will be presented to the Gettysburg National Memorial Park: one by Maj. Gen. Robert Grim, commander of my organization, the [Sons of Union Veterans Reserve](#) (SVR); and another by the Confederation of Union Generals. Robert F. Costello, a Lincoln reenactor from New Jersey, will deliver the Gettysburg Address as part of the ceremony."

We asked Shaw if there was any connection between the GAR and the SVR?

"Absolutely. You understand that the GAR was self-limiting. You could only belong if you had honorably served during the war, so when the last guy died, that was the end of the organization. But the veterans wanted others to perpetuate their memory, so in the 1880s, they came up with the Sons of Veterans. Ultimately, in 1954, a Congressional charter was issued to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. General MacArthur was one of the incorporators. Of course, his father [Arthur](#) was a hero in the Civil War. Out of that, pursuant to regulations, we have the SVR, which is the military and ceremonial component of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War."

Shaw – a retired common pleas judge – demurred when asked about the current Confederate monument controversy, saying, "Of course I have an opinion in that matter – everybody does –"

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but I cannot speak for the organization.” Shaw did, however, share a story about an incident which happened in his home state of Ohio.

“Nobody knew that there is a Confederate cemetery in Columbus, Ohio. It’s called [Camp Chase](#). There are about twenty-three hundred Confederate soldiers buried there. They were prisoners of war who died in captivity – many to a smallpox epidemic. It’s a beautiful cemetery. At the entrance, there is a Confederate soldier on top of an arch. Not [General Lee](#) or General Longstreet – just John Q. Soldier. That statue was vandalized, for pity’s sake, and someone stole the head. When that happened, the mayor made some noise about Confederates in Ohio, but the Department of Veteran’s Affairs stepped in and said, ‘We’re going to take care of this.’

“They’re American veterans, is what they are. They may be buried in the North, but they’re as American as you or I.”

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The National Park Service manages some 1,300 monuments and markers around Gettysburg. Maryland is unique, in that it has [monuments](#) for both Confederate and Union soldiers at Gettysburg.

Jay Barringer – a member of the [Sons of Confederate Veterans, Maryland Division](#) – journeyed to Gettysburg to join an estimated fifteen-hundred other reenactors for the mile-long parade.

“We had a color guard which was in the parade today. We’ve been really looking forward to this, despite some of the events which are in the news and the threats that were made. I’m delighted to see the law enforcement presence. They have been fantastic and are to be commended. We all felt very comfortable with them around, so God Bless them for being here.”

Barringer said his contingent of Confederate reenactors hail from all over Maryland. “My particular camp is in Ellicott City. We have 12 camps in the division, with about 500 members. We had the best turnout today with 16 flags, along with pipes and drums.

“We are very concerned with what is happening around the country – particularly in Baltimore – and are completely opposed to the removal of any [monuments](#). That goes for the Revolutionary

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War and the founding fathers. It seems like everything in America is under attack. Organizations like AntiFa and Black Lives Matter are going after American History. It's cultural genocide and historical revisionism at its worst. We want to see monuments stay up. It's unfortunate that it is taking place in America today. Who would have thought that, in this country, the freedom of speech would be under attack? I personally don't see it stopping, but we hope sanity will prevail."

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Gwen Wyttenbach, a parade watcher with Southern roots is a member of the [Bull Run Civil War Round Table](#) in Centreville, Virginia. She has been attending the Remembrance Day parade for the last ten years.

The attraction?

"History – and paying homage to the soldiers on both sides who fought and died. I appreciate the police presence, and I think it is needed. I was at the [Cedar Creek](#) event a few weeks ago, and they found two bombs on the first day, so the second day's event was cancelled. I just hope nothing like that happens here today."

What did Wyttenbach think of the parade?

"It was fabulous. A lot of hard-core marchers turned out. Huzzah!"

Those participating in the parade were encouraged to attend an early morning session, where public safety officials outlined the protocol for participants and visitors alike. How strict the security measures were may be noted by several changes to this year's event, including a shortened parade route and the placement of concrete barriers in streets previously closed off with wooden saw horses.

One teen-aged reenactor's concerned mother told us she had asked a patrolman point blank if he would let his fourteen-year-old son march in the parade?

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“The officer assured me they were doing everything possible to make the city safe, but it’s a shame that they need this kind of security to protect kids involved in a hobby,” she said.

As the parade wound its way through Gettysburg, watchful eyes monitored every move. The security presence was also evident in shops, restaurants and hotels. Local authorities carefully inspected hand bags and backpacks. And mounted units of the Pennsylvania State Police were on hand, offering troopers both a saddle’s eye-view, and reliable horsepower should the need to move quickly across the park have occurred.

Originally, organizers had planned to alternate Union and Confederate groups in the parade line – the concern being the Confederate reenactors might be singled out as targets of opportunity. But as the mass moved up Taneytown Road, reenactors marched as distinct armies – separated only by company colors and two cavalry riders – one in blue, the other in grey – whose hands were joined high in the air for the hour-long ride.

Three Union reenactors paused at the end of their march to speak with us about the day’s events.

Cochranville, Pennsylvania natives Jonathan Thompson, Jacob Yoder and Steven Thompson are members of the [1st Pennsylvania Reserves, Co. D.](#)

“I think the event was really great,” said Steven Thompson. “It is important to be here, to honor the people on both sides. The rain was pretty hard, but that only added to the realism.”

The trio, who said they were en route to view the nearby Lincoln Address Memorial, also noted the heavy police presence around town. Each said they found the law enforcement officers reassuring, but maintained they were going to participate in the parade – regardless of potential threats.

“This event had to go on to show that (the anarchists) can’t stop us,” affirmed Yoder.

Jonathan Thompson agreed with both his father, Steven, and friend Jacob’s assessments, adding:

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“The way I look at it, you’ve got the Confederates, but they were Americans, too. They were citizens before the war and they were citizens after the war. We didn’t round them up and execute them like they do in other countries that have had civil wars. So I think we definitely need to celebrate that part. That we came back to be one nation again. That’s really extraordinary when you look at world history and it doesn’t happen often.”

Unity was definitely the message of the day. General Shaw would later tell me he wished more Confederate reenactors would have made the trek north for this year’s Remembrance Day.

Coming to the parade’s end at the entrance of the cemetery, the marchers were encouraged to quietly disperse. But one group – the [46th Pennsylvania Regiment Band, Logan Guard](#) from Altoona, PA., quickly re-formed along Taneytown Road.

Standing in a muddy field, with a cold, steady shower pelting their instruments and wet woolen uniforms, the band greeted the rain-soaked rebels with a lively rendition of *Dixie* – the same song President Lincoln asked a Union band to play the night the American Civil War finally came to an end.

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Lincoln, Monuments, and Memory: Harold Holzer’s Dedication Day Address

11/21/2017 • [HistoryNet, Mag: Civil War Times Featured](#)

Lincoln Prize-winning historian Harold Holzer, recipient of a 2008 National Humanities Medal, former co-chairman of the U. S. Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, co-chair of The Lincoln Forum, and *Civil War Times* Advisory Board Member, delivered a speech at Gettysburg’s Remembrance Day, November 19, 2017, celebrating the 154th anniversary of the Gettysburg Address and examining current monument issues.

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His full remarks were as follows:

Some three score and seven miles from this spot—in Washington—stands a statue of Abraham Lincoln.

Not *that* one; another one: Thomas Ball's statue of Lincoln as a liberator, with one arm clutching the Emancipation Proclamation, the other extended in a blessing, lifting a shackled, half-naked African American from his knees.

It's unique because it was funded entirely by African American freedmen. Frederick Douglass himself dedicated it. "For the first time in history," he declared that day, people of color had "unveiled [and] set apart a monument of enduring bronze, in every feature of which the men of after-coming generations may read something of the exalted character and great works of Abraham Lincoln."

But today, Douglass's endorsement has been forgotten. The statue is out of fashion—politically incorrect.

To some, the image of Lincoln looming above a kneeling slave is degrading. Critics believe it's time to take it down and erase it from both the cityscape and popular memory. Despite Douglass's hopes, it may not long endure, after all.

It is altogether fitting and proper to recall such contested sculpture here and now. We cannot re-consecrate this hallowed ground without acknowledging the statue controversy—the memory crisis—now roiling the country. We gather here above all to remember a great speech on a sacred spot. But Gettysburg is not only a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is an outdoor sculpture gallery, too, with more than thirteen hundred monuments: Meade and Lee; Longstreet and Buford; Wadsworth and Warren.

These statues recall a time when valor, more than values, elevated subjects onto pedestals, and when, let's admit, the real issue that ignited secession and rebellion receded into the shadows; when the Lost Cause was still considered retrievable, and the words that Lincoln echoed here—that all men are created equal—remained a promise unfulfilled.

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Now we are engaged in an often *uncivil* war—a day of reckoning long coming—in which some historians have condemned, civic leaders removed, and activists have defaced, statues. Today, as we remember Lincoln and his finest hour, a speech that went on to inspire statues of its own, we face a challenge to countless other statues and to collective memory itself. Do we embrace it, revise it, or erase it?

That controversial Thomas Ball Lincoln recalls an age when Lincoln held the undisputed title of Great Emancipator.

That was before African-American agency and the U.S. Colored Troops belatedly won recognition by whites as key instruments of black freedom. But does that overdue credit mean that all symbolic, if overzealous, tributes to Lincoln as the sole source of freedom should vanish, including one raised by African Americans themselves? Such a purge could leave our history over-corrected and our landscape barren ... and what Lincoln himself called his “greatest act” ignored.

Extremism on both ends of the historic pendulum can distort the arc of memory. Not enough, we must hope, to jeopardize Lincoln — still a hero in an unheroic age.

But enough, I do hope, to make us recognize that the statues of Confederates erected in the South during Jim Crow are sincerely viewed by many as emblems not just of a lost cause, but a bad cause, a treacherous cause, and a racist cause.

The question is: should they come down? And if so, what happens to the monuments here at Gettysburg, notwithstanding the National Park Service’s recent vow to keep them safe for all time, because there are no forevers in the constant reappraisal of American memory.

Let’s acknowledge one fact: this issue is far from new. Iconoclasm—the desire to destroy effigies—has been a part of the human experience ever since Moses destroyed the golden calf. The ancient Egyptians erased the memory of their only female pharaoh, Hatshepsut, by destroying her statues. Roman emperors obliterated the images of their predecessors.

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France tore down its Napoleon statues. And in both Canada and India, independence from the Commonwealth emboldened citizens to topple statues of Queen Victoria. But as good causes won, good art lost.

Nor have Americans been immune to such outbursts. In my own native New York, patriots celebrated the Declaration of Independence by hauling down a giant lead statue of King George III, breaking it to bits, and melting the fragments to make bullets to fight the British.

Lincoln iconoclasm has a history of its own. The U. S. Capitol rotunda boasts its own Lincoln-the-Emancipator statue. Never beloved, officials decided late in the 19th-century to remove it. But in the process, workmen accidentally broke off the Emancipation Proclamation that it holds in its hand.

The workers promptly declared the mission jinxed, and refused to carry it out. Instead of crating Lincoln up, they repaired the scroll and left it where it was. It has stood there ever since.

Yet consider this: on the other side of the world, where the public didn't have much to say about anything, not even the Russian Revolution could purge the most famous monument in Leningrad: the giant equestrian of Peter the Great.

The Communists simply embraced the legend that as long as that statue stood, the city would stand. Decades later, when the Nazis laid siege, the Soviets padded the bronze czar with sandbags and viewed its survival as the key to their own. It still stands today in the city again known as St. Petersburg.

More recently, when the Taliban blew up the Bamiyan Buddhas, when Isis destroyed the ancient statues at Palmyra, people all over the world lamented these affronts to our shared culture, our common civilization.

Which brings us to New Orleans—Charlottesville—Memphis—Baltimore—and back to New York, where busts of Lee and Jackson have been exiled and statues of Christopher Columbus and Theodore Roosevelt face removal because of how they treated native peoples.

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So what should we do about monuments that mark, even celebrate, what the Confederacy fought for, and the Union fought against? Statues do matter, because they compel us to look back, sometimes with pride, sometimes with anger. National ideals matter because they inspire us to look ahead.

But without knowledge and care, emotions often rule—and irreversible decisions can be rushed by recrimination, the “fake news” of cultural re-analysis from a distance.

Still, we must acknowledge together that some statues are now touchstones for racists advocating their survival in the name of white supremacy, and we must summon the courage to condemn that impulse and disavow such rationales. That will give us standing to resist when other monuments, including Lincoln statues, become splatter boards for the red paint of misguided protest.

As some have. Recently, a Native American student organization conducted what it called a “die-in” before a Lincoln statue at the University of Wisconsin.

The group’s spokesman justified the protest this way: “Everyone thinks of Lincoln as the great freer of slaves, but let’s be real. He owned slaves, and...ordered the execution of native men.”

How can we deal with such views? Of course, Lincoln never owned slaves, and did more than any man of his age to end it. Where this myth originated is baffling; that it continues to poison the Internet is regrettable; that it percolates at the college level is nothing less than tragic; and that it informs the statue controversy is frightening.

As for the other charge: yes, Lincoln did authorize the execution of 38 Sioux Indians in Minnesota convicted of rape and murder during the Dakota Uprising. But he pardoned 300 others found guilty only of accompanying the others.

Instead of a die-in at the Lincoln statue, why not a teach-in, or a plaque that explains the Sioux executions in full?

Defiling or dislodging statues reflexively—instead of reflectively—eradicates not only the original impulse for commemoration, but knowledge of the events themselves.

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Is memory really worth obliterating—rather than comprehending and, where necessary, countering?

Lincoln once said—not his most elegant phrase though he loved to repeat it: “Broken eggs can never be mended.” Neither can broken statues.

Might we here at least highly resolve to slow the rush to judgment—to consider the genuine benefit of art for art’s sake, and to consider that wonderful alternative: context. Why not explain statues instead of reducing them to dust? Why not add new plaques or computer screens to tell full stories?

All of us should deeply sympathize with the many people sincerely offended by statues of Lee or Jackson, and understandably resentful of having come of age in their shadow. Our Civil War past still haunts us. But obliterating relics cannot change yesterday; learning from them can change tomorrow.

Not all art is meant to fill us with joy. Think of the Arch of Titus in Rome, which glorifies the looting of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, yet provokes no demands that it be torn down. As art, it deserves preservation; as history, it provokes discussion.

Remember: statues can also be moved to museums, or cemeteries, or parks, or, yes, battlefields.

In the South, if they stay where they are, the fate the Soviets chose for Peter the Great—with new plaques—they should testify to vanished and banished traditions—and not the vile efforts by post-war ideologues to perpetuate white heroes to intimidate black citizens.

But when we blow up memory altogether, and leave no trace of it for our children and theirs, we forget who we were, who we are, and how we can become something even better.

Instead of leaving empty pedestals, why not raise high more monuments? Just as Richmond put up a statue of Arthur Ashe to face the Confederate leaders along Monument Avenue; just as Annapolis treated its disputed statue of Chief Justice Roger Taney, the man who ruled that black men could never be citizens.

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They did not tear it down. They raised up a statue of Thurgood Marshall, the first black man to sit on the Supreme Court, a supreme response, if ever there was one, to Taney's prejudice.

What better way to trace the arc of American history than by pointing first to Taney, and then to Marshall, to comprehend how far we've come, even if we still have a long way to go? Without Taney in place, Marshall stands at Annapolis without recognition of what he overcame.

In New York, we just green-lit a new statue of Sojourner Truth—our first. And Central Park, which has 159 statues but only two of women—Alice in Wonderland and Mother Goose—will now get a real woman, Susan B. Anthony to face nearby statues of Lincoln and Douglass.

Some statues are too misguided and offensive to survive. And they are bad artistically in the bargain. I count among these the tribute to the Battle of Liberty Place, the uprising against the mixed-race Reconstruction-era government of Louisiana.

That monument was an outrage, and we should celebrate its removal by the mayor of New Orleans. Frankly, I have no love, either, for statues of Jefferson Davis, unpopular then, irredeemable now.

But these are the exceptions, and I still hope they would not dictate the rule. Context, counter statues, and relocation should always come first.

Let me end with one more proposal, an idea that acknowledges one of Gettysburg's living heroes, Professor Gabor Boritt. He was born in Budapest, a city that has been occupied, over time, by both Nazis and Communists.

His own family fell victim to both rounds of terror. But even in Budapest, after decades of turmoil, Hungarians refused to destroy the public art once raised to celebrate villains. Instead, they created what they call "Memento Park."

Here, old statues are arranged in a permanent display that, instead of erasing the painful memories of the past, compels people to confront, comprehend, remember, and above all, learn from them.

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Maybe we can be strong enough to do that here: to place the statues of disputed Civil War figures in memento parks of our own.

Lincoln once said, "We cannot escape history. We will be remembered in spite of ourselves."

He posed for enough sculptors in his lifetime to suggest he profoundly understood the power of images to nourish that history. Let's not recoil from them. Let's use them as tools to learn from, and, when necessary, warn against. "Multiply his statues," Frederick Douglass said in dedicating the Thomas Ball Lincoln, "and let them endure forever."

Hopefully, we are now strong enough and wise enough, to preserve good art while condemning the bad impulses that inspired some of them.

If not, we might suffer empty squares, empty parks, and, eventually, empty museums too. And maybe empty memories to go with them. Isn't it better to look than look away?

Let's take the time we need, so we can be sure, to paraphrase Lincoln, that we are honorable alike in what we give, what we preserve, and what we take away.

Let's consider that even the most painful parts of our history should not perish from the earth, but long endure to be exposed and confronted.

Rather than defacing or dislodging these statues in anger, let's consider making some of them teachable instruments that illuminate neglected truths. Rather than take a sledgehammer to the unsettling past, let's fill in the gaps of our full national story.

We have aside too much hallowed ground to stop remembering, and face too much unfinished work to stop striving to make the last, best hope of earth even better. In that spirit, may old statues inspire new statues, and may the monuments to a divided and divisive past yet become the foundations of a united future.

Thank you.

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