

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

History, Heritage, or Propaganda: Should Confederate Monuments Come Down?

13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32

Dr. Elizabeth Swearingen
Foundational Studies Program
Boise State University

Transcript
September 28, 2017

33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41

DR. GILL

Good afternoon everybody. On behalf of the Marilyn Shuler Human Rights Initiative and our fabulous partners at Albertsons Library I want to welcome you guys to the first Teach -In of the fall series. I'm a historian and teach-ins go back to 1965 when folks were confused about the Vietnam War, particularly students. They didn't feel like they were getting the truth from their government and the news was confusing, and so they called upon professors who might know a little somethin' to help them understand the facts. They weren't academic lectures. They weren't research talks. They were designed to give you information that you could use in about 30 minutes to better understand the world outside your front door, and they continued ever since and that's our objective here today. Is that, we try to pull something out of the news that's confusing and grab on to somebody who knows a little something. They're going to tell us - Elizabeth is going to share with us about 30 minutes of information she thinks we should know about this topic and then the next 30 minutes is for you guys. So you're here for a reason. Your opportunity is to ask questions of this expert to try to unpack what you want to know about this debate over historical monuments. We know that history is not just about knowing the past. It's about identity and it's about narratives that can be politicized for a variety of ends. Dr. Elizabeth Swearingen got her Ph.D. in cultural - huh, um - Educational Anthropology and did work on Civil War reenactments and how the folks who do those things develop an identity out of that, and she can unpack the economics and politics of it. She spent a lot of time thinking and writing about this, so with no further ado thank you for being here and giving us some context for this debate, and then you guys think about your questions 'cause you guys are going to be on next.

DR. SWEARINGEN

Thank you Jill. When I finished my dissertation in about...I was a little late coming in about 2002. Right after 2001. I was studying the performance of the Confederacy in America primarily through its material culture. Umm... and having a lot of fun with that. I was a guest historian, and so I was sort of really involved with the sense of Antebellum dress and artifacts. 9/11 happened...um... during the first part of my...uh, after my private study and um...I found myself all of a sudden not in an obscure dissertation anymore, but in something which was front and center post-9/11 identity politics in America I went from teaching, ah...historical dress

42 reproduction to political science in an instant, and, uh, became a women's studies professor for
43 the California State University system. Educational anthropologists you know, what in the world
44 do we do? We literally study identity. We study such things as race, class, gender, sexuality,
45 religion, geography, history, and how it affects the way we hear each other. How it affects the
46 way we learn from each other. or don't hear and don't learn from each other. I teach in the
47 Foundational Studies Program at Boise State, which has been a wonderful ride so far. The
48 Confederate flag. I was on campus yesterday and I think you probably noticed the protest that is
49 happen out in the center of campus, and the uh... the pro-life uh visuals and they had the
50 Confederate flag right in the middle of 'em and it just like - Whoa! - you know kinda slapped me
51 in the face and I thought, "Okay, so I'm pretty much an expert on the performance of the
52 Confederacy, but it's the first time I have ever seen the Confederate flag appropriated in a
53 discussion about reproductive rights." and uh, so, um, I thought there might be a question about
54 that. I'm not going to talk about that. Uh, we have a question I've prepared to sort of deal with it,
55 uh but today it's gone, and which is interesting. Equally as fascinating as to why was it put up?
56 and why was it taken down? Um...the Confederate flag, which is also known as the Rebel flag,
57 Dixie flag, the Southern Cross, were all used sparingly prior to the 1950s and 60s. In fact, um,
58 they were primarily battle flags. They were never actually, uh national flags for the Confederate
59 states of America. The one that we see most often today is the Southern Cross Army of
60 Tennessee. It is the bars and uh stars on a rectangular field um...It's interesting, um, to note that
61 the time these flags started to appear on state capitals and city halls uh was during the 1950s and
62 60s which aligned with the Civil Rights Movement and some of the push back. It became aligned
63 with um, it's worst of all signification is being aligned with the Ku Klux Klan at several of their
64 rallies. uh There is no doubt among reputable historians that the Confederacy was established
65 on the premise of white supremacy because its founding documents as under here say, "Our new
66 government is founded upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man; that
67 slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition". This was the
68 Confederate Vice President in 1861 It's difficult to make the argument today [cough] Excuse
69 me. That the Confederate flag is not a racist symbol, but despite this well documented history
70 many Southerners and many other identity groups still cling to not only the Confederacy as
71 heritage, but to its symbolism within uh the Confederate flag. There is a deeply rooted narrative
72 that has over-gone decades of whitewashing and revision and sanitizing uh in order to sort of
73 build the story. The effort to remove the truth and reality, and the brutality of the enslavement
74 of human beings um...means that this story is more about its symbolism It's more about the
75 values and beliefs shared by a community, and it's about our understanding of that history, and
76 it's about acknowledging those injustices of the past. So heritage does not equal a history.
77 Heritage is something which is very different, so I was looking at the sense of is the Confederate
78 flag history, heritage, or hate? It's actually all three depending upon uh the lens that you actually

79 look through. The American heritage industry is basically a nostalgia movement uh against the
80 backdrop of performance, of social dramas um, I've studied Civil War reenactments, but I've
81 also studied the Ken Burns series, and I've also studied all Civil War magazines, and I've also
82 studied all the ads and media, and I also study how children who are brought to a Confederate
83 memorial uh how do they process and what do they learn? and I'll share a little bit of that with
84 you. History, um, as opposed to heritage is always contentious, is always interpretive. It's always
85 viewed through a contemporary lens. It's constantly being, uh um reinterpreted, um but it is
86 based upon rigorous academic research, um and is as close as we can get to objective um,
87 standards. Uh historians themselves recognize that history is always under that very critical lens.
88 So you can say that yes the monuments of the Confederacy and the Confederate flag are history
89 in the fact that they exist. What they mean and uh, why they are there is, um, interpreted thorough
90 historical lens very different than interpreted through a, um, a heritage lens. Southern heritage is
91 replete with not only representations of dominant white cultural traditions but it's also
92 inseparable from Nationalism which serves as kind of a, um, security blanket or comfort in face
93 of the uncertain futures. Heritage exaggerates. It omits. It selectively forgets and it constructs
94 something called a "collective memory" uh which is really an identity text that is owned and
95 passed down. Um, it represents a deliberate packaging of the past into tangible and intangible
96 artifacts that you can purchase. into commodities for public consumption some of the aspects of
97 the past will be emphasized while others are minimized or left out. Authenticity becomes sort of
98 a form of cultural capital, it's almost like money that is traded and regulated by in-group
99 membership, thus heritage literally becomes that cultural space uh, where the expression of
100 dominant or major ethnic group values and beliefs happen It has little or nothing to do with
101 historical accuracy. What often fools us or makes it difficult for us to see is that buildings and
102 monuments seem so intrinsic to their environment. They seem so solid and unchanging that they
103 literally become a catalyst that goes from generation to generation because they are preserved
104 and passed down. It forms kind of what um, historians call a "cultural of continuity" so visible
105 and tangible that it masks the ideological contexts below its surface. History requires critical
106 comparative insight into whose history is represented? How has it changed? And who is left out?
107 Next slide Now, I think all of us remember um, the shock of seeing um, the University of North
108 Carolina campus, especially the night rally that happened before the next day in which we saw
109 marchers with torches. One of the protesters was recorded as saying this, "I'm not allied with
110 fascists. I am one. I'm a fascist myself. So I'm not really allying with them. Something that unites
111 us all is the belief that white heritage and white culture is vastly important and is worth fighting
112 for." In order to understand the sense of how do these alt-right identity groups form and how do
113 they use history. It's necessary to go into some other studies. One field of study is called
114 Alienation Studies, and it takes a look at how different ethnic groups feel alienated as the
115 demographics of society change. Within our post-modern uh, society in the United States and

116 the vastly different demographic landscape, many white males experience themselves as
117 influenced by forces they cannot control. Uh, and they feel that this erodes their liberties and
118 their rights. Confederate monuments serve as a form of political theatre um, that they can
119 perform against this fear of engulfment of other and also to exercise their will to power Public
120 performances and memorials act as these forms of social drama. They give participants a
121 cathartic feeling and a purification feeling that produces strong emotions of pleasure and it
122 begins to sway and affect public opinion What's interesting about this is that the body becomes
123 the central point so not only does it reflect the culture, but it constructs culture as well. These
124 collective public displays are framed by social ethnic struggles, not only in how they engage the
125 symbolic imagination, but also in how they create a space for self as subject. They take many
126 forms including rituals, myth, memorials, acting, oratory, um, monuments, plaques, and all the
127 other heritage industry artifacts that go with it. They produce very convincing sights and sounds
128 of emotional rushes and in this way the symbolism of the Confederacy becomes a very effective
129 recruiting tool, especially for young white males feeling alienated from an identity group.
130 Confederate monuments have real implications within the pluralistic society. Um, that makes
131 Confederate monuments profoundly political in relationship to public consciousness and
132 identity. The intense growing pluralism of American democracy a constant push and pull to
133 redefine national identity. Public debate around the removal of these Confederate monuments
134 actually presents us with the very unique opportunity to study those complex interactions of
135 power within what I'm calling post-9/11 American identity politics Some of the questions that
136 we would ask is how do white national groups use Confederate symbolism for recruitment and
137 identity? How do group processes cultural and struggles of power interact, and how do they
138 effect learning, especially in educational sites? What norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions
139 about America are reflected in Confederate symbolism? How are Confederate monuments used
140 as living history? How does white privilege and power reflect within what is called a hidden
141 curriculum of Confederate monuments and all living history artifacts and sites? One of the ways
142 that we can study this is to look at consumption behaviors. um, and we can see that how
143 Confederate ideology is constructed, how it's lived, and how it's played out in all of it's very
144 representational forms. Memory studies allow us to map how historical memory which then is
145 closer to heritage than it is to historical interpretation is used to uh, to construct a wide variety
146 of national, ethnic, social, and religious identities. The historical memory of a people, nation, or
147 any aggregate group evolves over time. Um, and it evolves in relationship to ever changing
148 contemporary contexts. It's a means of contending for power and place. Heritage is therefore
149 inherently the struggle for contested truths and interpretation of these symbols, monuments, and
150 events. Another thing that I find interesting is that Confederate memorials, and living history
151 contain all the elements of a passion play. Including sacrifice, atonement, resurrection,
152 reconciliation, prayer, and even hymns, ah with an overall, sort of what I call, um patrio-erotic-

153 deity, uh God's purpose to save the republic, uh literally in the market manifested through the
154 uh co-modification of confederacy um, but this symbolism neglects the broader social political,
155 and historical contexts that were in effect during the time of their creation, especially related to
156 other more marginalized groups. So one other thing Uh, you should change the slide again. One
157 of the things that we need to sort of take a look at is what is the actual history of, uh, the
158 monuments themselves? I see that the text didn't really come up on that, okay. To understand
159 the present moment we need to take a look at the actual history of monuments and how we
160 remember and it isn't just about the Confederacy. It isn't just about, um, the, uh the South. It's
161 also about the North. Both the North and the South tended to remember the war as an Anglo-
162 version. Kind of like a family reunification of a white-Christian-Anglo family. So we can see
163 here that even in the uh Emancipation Proclamation Memorial we have Abraham Lincoln, who
164 is positioned as a savior, extending a gift of emancipation to an African-American who is not
165 even making eye contact, and is still kneeled uh the uh dress is unequal, um this is very very
166 different than how African-Americans choose to memorialize uh their experience. So I don't
167 want to give the impression that this is like good North, bad South. Because it's actually sort of
168 an Anglo version across both. However there is nothing in the North that begins to valorize the
169 sense of uh winning as a military victory of the North. It's very much about emancipation and
170 Abraham Lincoln. Where it is in the south it moves very much to a militarized. The problem
171 lies, I would argue, as an educational anthropologist, that the problem really lies in the outcomes
172 of learning really that's where, kind of like the "rubber hits the road" It's a very effective learning
173 process, and you need to sort of understand, you know if we expose the younger generation to
174 this what do they actually learn? These memorials rely on such things as hero worship, a form
175 militarized masculinity, and a very romanticized version of American history that um privileges
176 honor, chivalry, and uh the lost causes of the South. Contrary, due to popular belief, it is not
177 Abraham Lincoln who emerges as the hero of the American Civil War. It is Robert E. Lee To
178 give you a taste of this, um one of the things that I did in my research is I looked at 350 fifth
179 graders that were exposed to living history and Confederate monuments, um where both the
180 North and the South was presented, and I asked them to just simply journal about what they
181 learned about the um causes um, or what they learned about the Civil War. Here's what fifth
182 graders had to say. "The brave men who all fought will rest in peace, not pain. For this country
183 united will never break again, and a nation united will never be the same." "It didn't matter if
184 you were South or if you were North. They were all God's creation they all needed help and they
185 all fought for their country." "The Confederate flag means the same thing as the US flag." "You
186 probably would be against your brother on the other side. It was a really sad thing." "It felt not
187 so good because some people were relatives on different sides fighting against each other." "Both
188 sides wanted gold [laughter] and both were American." The early Confederate monuments that
189 were erected right after the Civil War tended to be memorials of grief and profound loss and

190 they were primarily in cemeteries. They were erected to honor the sense of the value of soldiers.
191 Um, and they suggest a moment of quiet reflection. However, monuments after the turn of the
192 century uh, were basically monuments to reestablish white supremacy in a Jim Crow south, and
193 to sort of overcome the uh reconstruction as the federal government left. They celebrated literally
194 the South's return to power over reconstruction and sent a very powerful message to anyone
195 coming into the south, um beware. The heritage industry part of it meant that most of these
196 monuments were actually put up by private confederate organizations without any kind of public
197 debate or review and you could buy them in a manufacturing market, and so there ended up
198 literally hundreds and hundreds of them. The Confederate statues they were not built to depict
199 the truth of the Civil War. Eric Foner who is a, uh historian said First the telling of history
200 changes with society and our understanding of ourselves and second these historical monuments
201 are less about their period and more about the society, the kind of society that erected them. For
202 example, if the Civil War is recast as a war about tariffs or state's rights or about the minutia of
203 historical battles, you can displace, minimize or ignore racism and slavery. My three years of
204 ethnographic research demonstrated this um this clearly um so one of the things that the students
205 responded to is um claims of truth. I uh asked them what was true about their experience in Civil
206 War and these are what some of the students had to say. "Did you know that the Civil War wasn't
207 about slavery? They fought because the North was attacking the South. The South said it was
208 being overtaxed, but the North said it was because of slavery. When some people want
209 something enough, or disagree with something enough it causes fights murder and sometimes
210 war." "I learned the South point of view, state's rights." "I learned the Civil War was supposedly
211 about freedom for the slaves when it actually was really about taxes on the southerners."
212 "General Lee was interesting, but I didn't really understand him. General Lee picked the
213 Confederate side because he didn't want to fight against his own country. It was Lee's duty to
214 protect Virginia from the invasion of the North. Lee hated slavery. Then we went to the other
215 the Southern point of view civil rights." I thought it was so interesting that students were not
216 able to distinguish between civil rights and state rights. They were not, um able to distinguish
217 either with the McDonald's happy meal that they got during their presentations that McDonald's
218 didn't sponsor the American Civil War, and so their suggestions for living history was more
219 hamburgers and more refreshment sites. Now you would assume that fifth graders would
220 understand the context, but what happens is that you have sight, sounds, tastes, smell. They're
221 very very much concerned about um, how our body processes things and they are seductive and
222 they seduced everyone from the principles, to the teachers, to the students, to the uh participants,
223 uh in feeling that somehow because they had a more whole body experience that that represented
224 a truer form of history than the interpretation or the discussion that they might actually have in
225 the classroom. And there was little or no follow through afterwards uh in order to sort of unpack
226 some of those meanings. The timeline of the um, uh, monuments that were built clearly shows,

227 that uh, not only the places that they were uh built but the time frames they were built. So the
228 early ones show a lot more building in cemeteries, the later ones show a lot more building in
229 public places associated with schools, um, and um uh other government offices. The top uh next
230 slide please, the um, if you look at the Confederate monuments by state Idaho's got two?

231 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**

232 Two

234 **DR. SWEARINGEN**

235 We actually have 11. Okay? Because we have a lot of place names and environmental names
236 that uh that refer to the Confederacy, but the top states are Virginia, Texas, Georgia, North
237 Carolina, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Alabama. There are 109 public schools named for
238 Robert E. Lee. There are 80 countries and cities named for the Confederacy, 9 official
239 confederate holidays in the United States, and 10 military bases named for Confederates. This
240 issue of whether to take Confederate monuments up or leave them down really came to a head
241 with the um the horrific massacre of nine African-American church goers, um, in um, South
242 Carolina by Dylan Roof. Dylan Roof was a proclaimed white supremacist. often seen posing
243 with a Confederate flag a gun and a racist manifesto. He literally described the process of going
244 through that I talk about earlier, the sense of alienation. The sense of looking for an identity text,
245 and then the sense of of vilifying another group as being uh a threat. Some of the alt-right uh,
246 and federalist websites that I've looked at describes this as a fear that the United States is being
247 overtaking by a cultural revolution similar to China, and so the comparative analogies they're
248 making is that the destruction of the iconography of the Confederacy is a destruction of
249 America's core identity. After Dylan Roof there were about, um 20 monuments that came down
250 really quickly um, about another hundred were petitioned to come down um, and most of those
251 were blocked, um but there were over 360 counter protests across the United States since Dylan
252 Roof to try and preserve the Confederate monuments. Um, NPR/PBS did a survey of American
253 sentiment in regards to this, and they found that 80% of Americans disagree with the white
254 supremacy movement. That seems to be pretty clear. 94% disagree with the views of the KKK,
255 which is even more apparent. But 62% disagree that the Confederate monuments shouldn't be
256 taken down. So the majority in the United States feel the Confederate monuments should actually
257 stay up. Next slide please. What is interesting is that Confederate monuments are still going up.
258 So, uh, this one went up in Tennessee and it went up under the idea of heritage movement and
259 there are plans for many many more to continue to be erected. This one is Sons of the
260 Confederate Veterans, which is similar to Daughters of the Confederacy. They tend to be funded
261 and paid for through private donations, and if they're put on any kind of private land then the
262 democratic process is to get their okay really aren't there. Uh, they've shifted somewhat away
263 from the over-militarized look to something which is more about the individual soldiers valor,
264 and the argument is made um yes the Confederacy is deeply embedded with racist meanings and
265

266 beliefs, but nevertheless it still represents the valor of soldiers who lost their lives in defense of
267 country and therefore that is a worthy American family uh story to be memorialized. So we then
268 come to the idea of should we preserve them, should we move them, or should we destroy them?
269 Underlying this um debate about Confederate monuments is a bigger debate about race in
270 America, and it's a debate about the push back and what is uh, many, um editorialists are calling
271 a whitelash. Over the past several decades we have experience globalization, income stagnation
272 and downward mobility in the United States um, and we've also experienced at the same time a
273 growing change in the demographic, the um, the appearance of our populations. Now black and
274 brown Americans, women are cutting in line and they appear to be taking more away from those
275 who feel that they have a uh special ownership and right to America. Uh, Robin DiAngelo who
276 studies race at Westfield State University she described it this way, "White people in North
277 America live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race based stress.
278 That insulated environment to racial protection builds white expectations for racial comfort
279 while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress, leading to what I refer to as
280 white fragility. White fragility is a state in which even a minimum of amount of racial stress
281 becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. DiAngelo explains some of these
282 triggers that can make white folks defensive about race um, especially um not only for their
283 growing racialized politics, but as more persons of color attain leadership in America. All these
284 triggers were present in the last year especially in our election and through the presidency of
285 Barak Obama. Trumps racist rhetoric, Black Lives Matter protests, all push against the idea of
286 one uh privileged ethnicity and white privilege." You can even apply this concept to what we
287 saw in Charlottesville. Many of the people involved had likely lived advantaged lives, but
288 they've seen their racial security challenged. They saw the first black president Barak Obama.
289 They see demographic statistics that show white Americans will no longer be the majority in the
290 coming decades. They see all this talk about Black Lives Matter and the importance of diversity
291 including policies like Affirmative Action. They see recent movements to tear down Confederate
292 monuments in the south and they see themselves, um as being accused of racism at some point
293 in their lives making them defensive and angry. It forms a collective identity um, in groups that
294 feel that they have literally a divine purpose, or a God's mandate, to protect and preserve the
295 United States. In the end this makes it very difficult to have a reasonable conversation about
296 race. It effectively kind of perpetuates a status quo by allowing white Americans to avert
297 discussions about how to change existing circumstances. Meanwhile the election of Donald
298 Trump has symbolized literally how the alt-right has taken that and been invigorated by those
299 politics. So, what should we do? The American History Association um, has come out with a
300 statement that says that they welcome the emerging historical debate about Confederate
301 monuments much of this public sanctuary was created without such conversations and without
302 public decision making processes. Across the country communities face decisions about the

303 disposition of monuments and memorials. These decisions require not only attention to historical
304 facts, but also an understanding of what history is and why it matters to public cultures. Next
305 slide please. Some of the questions that the American History Association is presenting to the
306 public is to first of all acknowledge that the contemporary American South is pluralistic okay,
307 so it isn't about blame and shame. Understand that the commemorative Confederate landscape
308 is a product of white privilege and power and that African-Americans did not have a voice in
309 that. Understand that America's future landscape should be crafted under inclusive public debate
310 and democratic processes. Realizing that we've always toppled old buildings, moved and
311 renamed streets, and engaged in what is called creative destruction of historical of buildings and
312 relics. Be willing to put some money into it. Whether it is private or legislated for memorials
313 that honor those who have been left out of the historical narrative. And before a Confederate
314 monument is removed, carefully photograph, measure and document it because it is a historical
315 monument of its existence and to completely destroy it literally violates. Next slide please. The
316 children what can educators do? and why is it so important? The sensory overload of any kind
317 of living history or tangible artifact can flood students' perception and experience. It also floods
318 students who do not see themselves represented in that, so many children of color and recent
319 immigrants to the United States see themselves as forever outside of the collective identity of
320 America. Critical educational practices of history should explore this. Explore the cultural
321 capital that is actually embedded within the ideology as a hidden curriculum and challenge those
322 ideologies of whiteness in how they exist and how they are socially reproduced to create literally
323 those very critical important intellectual spaces to dismantle racism and lead to a deeper
324 understanding of how we can create a more just, ethical and moral society. The critical question
325 becomes can history be a vehicle to stimulate a more pluralistic American by opening a door of
326 understanding about ourselves as a nation, um, and how diversity begins to change American
327 identity. If history is in fact the, in the race, the critical consciousness of a citizenry heritage is
328 not meant to do that and hate is certainly not meant to create anything [*inaudible*] Thank you for
329 inviting me

330
331 [applause]

332
333 **DR. GILL**
334 And that's what a teach-in's supposed to do is to give us a broader framework to think about
335 these current issues. Now it's your time. You came for a reason. You have curiosity, questions,
336 uh observations What would you like to ask? or talk...yes?

337
338 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**
339 Um, where did you interview those 5th grade students? Right here in the area?

340
341 **DR. SWEARINGEN**
342 Um, I did an ethnographic, um dissertation over at I was only going to do one, one year, and I

343 was only studying the dress. I was only there for Antebellum dress and the uh how did that form
344 cultural capital in a living district of events? And since I was already a designer it was easy to
345 do the dress, so the first year was fun! Just [*inaudible*]. And then 9/11 happened and I realized
346 that we had this narrative of war that they were performing. The real war happening as Bush
347 sent troops into Afghanistan um, and they were, they were, collapsing over each other. And then
348 you had a lot of Vietnam War Veterans who considered themselves authentic to Civil War
349 soldiers, although they weren't. believe me, age, weight, all those kind of things.

350
351 [*laughter*]
352

353 Um, and then no women allowed. Um We're talking about give me a real gun and I'll go kick
354 their ass. And I recognized that I was in a moment in history where I was sort of capturing the
355 before, during, and after, and... Thank you. And I decided that maybe what I was studying was
356 identity politics that get embodied through artifacts and um drama, and so it completely shifted
357 and I expanded it to all of California, some of Oregon, some of Idaho Idaho has really interesting
358 living history events. And I looked at observers who come. I looked at uh, Civil War buffs who
359 participated in living history. I looked at what historians do. I looked at the media, and films,
360 and everything around it, all the literature, and then I looked at children who were studying US
361 history and there was um about uh 1,800 of them that [*inaudible*]...over several different events
362 and I arranged to get the journals of 350 of those. So sort of triangulated from several different
363 directions, but what is interesting is observers they want to see people die. So by far the number
364 one code on that ethnographic research was the performance of death. How you die? How do
365 you pretend it? How authentic can you be? so it was everything from urinating on [*inaudible*] to
366 create a patina, to holding your breath to bloat yourself. uh, but then they would have these um
367 charges in the field that would come up with smoke and they didn't really think the public was
368 watching, so they would self-resurrect. So they could stay in the game. Black powder enthusiasts
369 were given uh, a portion of black powder for the event, and they were gonna shoot until it was
370 gone. The rules were that if you made eye contact you were dead. But in actuality when I had
371 served was pretty much that everybody chased themselves around the field until they ran out of
372 black powder and then everybody died. One event that I went to that was especially interesting
373 because all of a sudden there was a whole group of women that came out on the quote "the
374 historical battlefield" with frying pans and um, uh, dough rollers. You know pins. Just clobbering
375 [*inaudible*] and um, and then the audience said, "Wow I didn't know they did that." Um, but
376 when I actually interviewed those women and said, "What happened?" and the way living history
377 is set up around the Confederacy is that the North sees itself as the good guys, ah but there are
378 no women. Historical accuracy. Authenticity. No women in the Union camp, but the
379 Confederacy is saying, "Hey we can wear anything we want. We're Jimmy Dean, rebel without
380 a cause, and we just want to fight against the federal government anyway we can, and so you

381 have all kinds of people who appropriate the Confederacy for those purposes and they can wear
382 whatever they want. But because the Civil War was fought mostly in the south they get to have
383 their wives and children. So it's this great picnic. Um, but to the public they don't want the
384 Confederacy front and center so you got to go way far away, usually in the reenactments in order
385 to get to them. Uh, and the wives and family of the North became settlers. They created what
386 was called the Civil Town and that's where you would go to see them.

387
388
389

DR. GILL

A question.

390
391
392

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yeah I was curious because one of the things that I have seen of late is this uh business of
conflating the Confederacy, the American flag, and nationalism so that hey they're the real
patriots. They're the true Americans. I'm trying to figure out how'd that conflation occur?

395

DR. SWEARINGEN

396
397

[*cough*] Well Eric Foner says that that what troubles him the most is the idea that we're seeing
the American United States Flag, the Nazi flag, and the Confederate flag conflated together He
says that clearly makes this about a nationalist movement about identity politics and clearly takes
it out of the venue of history and heritage and uh I would argue that you have, you know,
Confederate organizations that are just as horrified by what has happened in the alt-right rallies
as some of the people are in the [*inaudible*] They're really more about preserving a familial story,
a sense of family, and sort of glossing over the parts that they don't really want represented. Then
you've got sort of like a very very far right. Coming from that far right uh, there is a fear of
engulfment by a movement from the left which is compared to the French Revolution and the
Bolshevik Revolution and the um Mao Revolution in China. The idea that they're fighting for
the very cultural life of American. Um, Then you have historians that are saying, "Wait a minute
before we take everything down we need to talk about it!"

409

AUDIENCE MEMBER

410
411

You mentioned there were two monuments in Idaho. Where are they and what are they?

412
413

DR. SWEARINGEN

414

Okay I have a slide of that. [*laughter*] If I can get to um Okay so these are the monuments, um
in Idaho the two. Robert E. Lee Creek and Robert E. Lee Monument. If I could get this up farther
[*cough*] Okay, there are also um 11 other. In ah, places in Idaho

417

418
419

AUDIENCE MEMBER

420

Like Secech Meadows outside McCall?

421

422 **DR. SWEARINGEN**
423 Yeah, um hm, right, um hm. Um, so I think someone else is gonna be actually covering the
424 movement of the Confederacy into Idaho. Cause there's a pretty strong presentational [*inaudible*]
425 for that Yes?

426 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**
427 Um, you said that the monuments were put up in public spaces later after the turn of the century.
428 Was that in a...to try to combat the rise of like civil rights movements?
429

430 **DR. SWEARINGEN**
431 Exactly, and it was not only that, but it was an attempt to align it with the power of government.
432 So that when it is in the city hall or when it is on public grounds it begins to assume state power
433 as well.
434

435 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**
436 Uh, two things. One, I graduated from Robert E. Lee High School in San Antonio, Texas.
437

438 **DR. SWEARINGEN**
439 You did?
440

441 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**
442 Which was established in 1957, not coincidentally, not long after Board v. Brown v. Board of
443 Education. Uh, but my question for you is, um, there are some uh very large Confederate
444 monuments, I'm thinking of Stone Mountain in Georgia
445

446 **DR. SWEARINGEN**
447 You are.
448

449 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**
450 That are obviously impossible to move or in fact to take down. How do you feel about uh,
451 contextualizing those monuments
452

453 **DR. SWEARINGEN**
454 Exactly, that's what educators say is that you can't accept a heritage story of the monuments.
455 That you have to contextualize them in the types of societies that build them. You cannot avoid
456 women and African-Americans uh, you can't even, um one reenactment I went to, um I think it
457 was in California. [*sigh*] [*chuckle*] They had this bizarre battle against the Mormons. And uh,
458 and um, and I was raised on the essence of I was like so fascinated by this history that I've never
459 heard about, but it had nothing to do with history. It had to do with this sort of anti-Mormon
460 sentiment that was, you know, we need to kill them too while we're at it. And um, but it was
461 children who were playing it. Which means that it wasn't the children who were picking up that
462 text. That text was coming from the parents. Yes?
463
464

465
466
467
468
469
470
471
472
473
474
475
476
477
478
479
480
481
482
483
484
485
486
487
488
489
490
491
492
493
494
495
496
497
498
499
500
501
502
503
504

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Um, so you talked a little bit about alienation studies. Um, and I was wondering if there's any research on how that happens. How to stop that, and like how, like the cultural transmission, so is it a familiar cultural transmission or are people going out and just doing this? Like?

DR. SWEARINGEN

That's the \$64,000 question. okay. If you have a dominate group who's been normalized and naturalized that the cultural representations aren't about them then they tend to think of themselves as being purely human and individuals. Uh, when you start to deconstruct and unpack that you get those triggers Because what happens is if it gets embedded in identity then when you're trying to deconstruct that history in a classroom students feel as if their identity is being attacked, and you get sort of like this emotional identity crisis. And um, you have to be aware of that. Um, and you have to make classrooms safe places and you have to sort of teach self-care. But you can't shut down the dialogue either, and uh there's a lot of studies that take a look at the trajectory that um someone who is um white in American that the trajectory to them going to a more cultural pluralistic understanding of themselves. And usually the first step is, uh denial, and anger, and to kill the messenger, and then there is the sense of "well teach me what to do". You know, "you tell me what to do" and then there is this sense of "Come in and take over and leave." You know reestablish themselves as a leader Um, and then there is this really awful period of self-reflection, and grief and wanting to fix it. You know. Wanting to give privilege away! You know buying some time. It'll never work. Uh, the very difficult job of being a white ally while not co-opting it. Not leading it. Um, is something that I still struggle with. But eventually you go through a situation where you get comfortable enough which is simply naming history and naming that. So I've had some interesting experiences in Idaho as I've been in the community and I've said such things as "Oh my goodness! How white of me!" You know, uh at say Target. And you just watch the brittleness. Most of the conversations that we have about race and the media are what I call looking at the tip of the iceberg. They're looking at intentional, overt bigotry, but most of racism is systemic. Historically situated pervasive and persistent. Uh, and to look at that means that as a white person you have to recognized that you're part of that narrative

[portion of footage lost due to camera battery]

AUDIENCE MEMBER

...ask forcibly take this statue down. You can ask the person, but how do we...how, you know?

DR. SWEARINGEN

I'm not sure. Do you all know what Bedford was famous for?

[random answering]

505 The egregious massacre of black soldiers who fought for the North. So it's one of the more
506 egregious Confederate monuments. And children are going to internalize that and socialize that
507 if they see it every day, and it's going to literally be so normalized and nationalized that it's going
508 to get pushed into their subconscious. And then it's gonna take years before they maybe have a
509 critical education class that begins to give them a way to talk about it. I don't have an answer for
510 that. Does anybody else have a suggestion? How do you, uh deal with private monuments?

511

AUDIENCE MEMBER

512

513

I would love to see um, a monument nearby that realized the people that were slaughtered.

514

DR. SWEARINGEN

515

516

517

518

519

520

521

522

523

524

525

526

527

528

529

530

531

532

533

534

535

536

537

538

539

540

541

542

Okay, so I do have...another point of view there. Right. So let me show you some things I've got
that begins to ask the question "whose heritage?". Because I was curious about that too. How
many African-American monuments are there actually? So for example, these begin to tell a
narrative of the American...African-American experience. This one is a monument of at Brown
University to um [*inaudible*] of slavery. This one is the Whitney Plantation in Wallace,
Louisiana. I actually visited this plantation when I was in Louisiana uh last year. Um, I'm not
sure how I feel about plantations. They're...and I'm really conflicted about the story that they say
they present and the story that they actually present. But what is interesting about the Whitney
Plantation is that pretty much had to be done in secrecy in order for it to be African-Americans
who built the history around telling that story. You have The Ark of Return at the United States
um, National Headquarters that literally has people enter into a space that shows them how
tightly the Atlantic Slave Trade packed enslaved Africans within the belly of the ships. You have
the National Museum of African American History which has just recently been opened in 2016.
Um, and so the memorialization of those uh populations who have been left out of history,
whether it's women, African-Americans, Latinos Native Americans, Chinese Americans, um, is
now just beginning to sort of gain steam, and there's still uh an interesting amount of push back.
Like for example, there is a park in California that is part of the California State Parks called
Allensworth I don't know if many of you know about it. It's [*inaudible*] and Tulare It was the
first African-American town in California, and he was a chaplain uh, black chaplain in the Civil
War, who decided that if he migrated to California, to the west, he could escape the systemic
slavery. And he formed this town with a school and it was going really really great until the local
lands owners, primarily Anglos, decided to cut the water source and move the railroad. Uh, and
effectively passively killed the town. And then he was killed shortly after that. Uh, that memorial
is still there in California, but it's completely unfunded by the parks. So you have to make an
appointment to have a docent who will come and show it to you. So even among the parks
systems (I think I just lost this) um, it is marginalized. Yes?

543
544
545
546
547
548
549
550
551
552
553
554
555
556
557
558
559
560
561
562
563
564
565
566
567
568
569
570
571
572
573
574
575
576
577
578
579
580
581
582

AUDIENCE MEMBER

How do I then, to bring his question back into play, um I heard you talk about the hidden curriculum. Which I think is important...don't you think that a discussion should be started around the null curriculum and what's not being talked about?

DR. SWEARINGEN

That is the hidden curriculum.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

The null curriculum?

DR. SWEARINGEN

That is the hidden curriculum. Right. Exactly, the hidden curriculum is who is left out? What is not said? Uh, all of the things that frame it, you know, underneath. And can be everything from the architecture of a classroom, uh is it a circle? Is it rows of chairs? Um, to literally how questions and answers, um are done within the classroom. The hidden curriculum is basically I would argue about the body. The body literally becomes a text and we bring those identity texts and experiences with us and it filters our learning. Even the idea that we privilege a sense of learning is only about cognition. It's only about the sense of what happens at an academic brain level is to miss all of the sensory stuff and all of the architecture that happens around. So for example, when I looked at living history memorials there were a lot of um southeast Asian immigrants who'd come after the Vietnam War and you would have presentations of cannons firing, Bowie knives, and some pretty scary stuff and what these students would do is they would just kind of put their head down and pull away. If you asked the uh the people who were in the living history, "Why did they do that?" They'd say, "Well, because they're obviously passive students. What do you expect from those kinds of people?" And you'd get a very sort of marginalized, but when you actually talk to the students, themselves, they had come from war violence. They did not know that they weren't going to get sliced and diced by a Bowie knife. They were terrified, and so literally in the way we handle uh, living history events we can privilege an Anglo version simply by how we arrange it. In the Civil War reenactment that happens within Fresno. It's the largest one in the United States by the way. Largest west of Gettysburg. People like to come there cause they can die on the grass in the shade.

[laughter]

Um, the African-American community there tries to present a narrative of African-American culture. The observers who are about, the public are about 98% white continually want to collapse that to just a slave narrative. Uh, in which, or they want, it's the only place where I ever saw the audience trying to stuff dollar bills in women's bras as a thank you for a living history event, and then when they were rejected uh, they would get angry and defensive and then uh

583 they'd say, "Well what do you want us to do? We think this is really cool." Uh, how 'bout a hug?
584 How 'bout a thank you? And then the entire encampment the African-American, as the African-
585 American experiences of culture and narrative and song were more and more popular they were
586 pushed farther and farther and farther in the landscape, so that they were not the first thing that
587 you actually saw.

588
589 **AUDIENCE MEMBER**
590 So as a student, kind of going back to what you're asking, and as a white female, how do
591 you?...how can I go about talking to someone who is kind of...aggravated about the lack of, you
592 know um I guess, like a white man feeling left out and feeling like he's being knocked down, or
593 that he's not privileged, how can I have a conversation with someone like that and tell them, you
594 know, hey whether it is I think...I know that's kind of a weird thing...

595
596 **DR. SWEARINGEN**
597 I deal with that all the time. Um, my partner is a conservative Idaho cowboy. Um we've been
598 together for three years. I adore him. I've only slammed the door once. You know in three years.
599 I think there are times when you cannot have a productive conversation. It just can't happen. Uh,
600 I think there are other times in which you can sort of take "Isn't it interesting the way we look at
601 this?" or sometimes I'll say outright I would love to have a productive conversation where we
602 both listen and explore if you're willing. But there are times when I just can't have it. What is so
603 interesting is...I don't know if I'd call him my boyfriend at my age, but whatever...um Is that he
604 jumps in when someone says, "what does your sweetheart do for a living?" and he lies. You
605 know, he'll step in and say, "Um she's a kindergarten teacher." You know? and I'm going, "Why
606 did you do that?" "Well I was just trying to protect you." uh and so he has learned just by osmosis.
607 So I think what we model is important. And I think that we model intolerance or we model not
608 willing to be a bridge person and have those kinds of difficult dialogues that all we do is separate.
609 So I'm really interested in the sense of those bridge spaces where dialogs can happen. As a white
610 person I think it's on you to do your own work and to do your own studying. Um, and to be
611 willing to be uncomfortable because there's no way you can go through this process uh and feel
612 that collective guilt once it hits you. Uh, without actually experiencing it. One of the things I
613 find troubling about Idaho is that Idaho is pretty good on its LGTB population and a lot of um
614 but you will see white LGBT people defensive about racial questions. Um, and so just because
615 you have an understanding about one particular marginalized identity does not mean that you
616 have an understanding in other ones as well. So I think you know it has a continual [*inaudible*]
617 Thank you.

618
619 [*applause*]
620

621
622
623
624
625
626
627

DR. GILL

Thank you so much. [*inaudible*] In the next, uh. We're skipping next week but then following that there's going to be a series on Russia. We're gonna try to unpack that. Understand relationship with the United States and Russia and bring the politics into it. Please grab a flyer on your way out if you wish.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]