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Deposited in DRO:

15 April 2020

Version of attached file:

Published Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Waite, Kevin (2020) 'The lost cause goes West : confederate culture and civil war memory in California.', *California history.*, 97 (1). pp. 33-49.

Further information on publisher's website:

<https://doi.org/10.1525/ch.2020.97.1.33>

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The “Lost Cause” Goes West

Confederate Culture and Civil War Memory in California

ABSTRACT California once housed over a dozen monuments, memorials, and place-names honoring the Confederacy, far more than any other state beyond the South. The list included schools and trees named for Robert E. Lee, mountaintops and highways for Jefferson Davis, and large memorials to Confederate soldiers in Hollywood and Orange County. Many of the monuments have been removed or renamed in the recent national reckoning with Confederate iconography. But for much of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, they stood as totems to the “Lost Cause” in the American West. Despite a vast literature on the origins, evolution, and enduring influence of the Lost Cause myth, little is known about how this ideology impacted the political culture and physical space of the American West. This article explores the commemorative landscape of California to explain why a free state, far beyond the major military theaters of the Civil War, gave rise to such a vibrant Confederate culture in the twentieth century. California chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) carried out much of this commemorative work. They emerged in California shortly after the organization’s founding in Tennessee in 1894 and, over the course of a century, emblazoned the Western map with salutes to a slaveholding rebellion. In the process, the UDC and other Confederate organizations triggered a continental struggle over Civil War memory that continues to this day. **KEYWORDS:** Civil War, slavery, Confederate States of America, historical memory, memorials, Lost Cause, Hollywood, Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, highways, Charlottesville, white supremacy

HERE THE MONUMENT once stood, only a gentle divot in the earth remains. Visitors to Hollywood Forever Cemetery today could easily pass over the spot without realizing that, for the better part a century, this quiet corner of Los Angeles housed a six-foot granite tribute to the dead soldiers of the Confederacy. The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) erected the monument in 1925 to honor their rebel ancestors, buried in the surrounding cemetery plot. It was the first of its kind anywhere in the Far West. And it remained the most significant Confederate marker in California until it was removed from the cemetery grounds in the wake of the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017. That rally—which began with a tiki-torch-lit vigil around a statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee and ended in the murder of one of the counterprotesters—sparked

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a national backlash against Confederate iconography and the history it represents.¹ In the weeks that followed, numerous Confederate monuments across the country came down. If only fleetingly, California played an important part in this reckoning with Civil War memory and the legacies of American slavery.

The Hollywood memorial was not the only one of its kind in California. No other state beyond the South contained as many monuments, markers, and place-names honoring the Confederate States of America (1861–1865) and its soldiers.² In addition to the Hollywood Forever memorial, Californians paid homage to the Confederacy with a large granite pillar in Orange County’s Santa Ana Cemetery; schools in San Diego and Long Beach named for Robert E. Lee; the township of Confederate Corners in Monterey County; mountaintops in the Sierra Nevada range commemorating Confederate president Jefferson Davis and General George E. Pickett; the Robert E. Lee redwood in Kings Canyon National Park, plus three other large trees that bear the rebel general’s name; a scenic network of rock formations near Lone Pine named for the *CSS Alabama*, one of the Confederacy’s most feared warships; a small monument to Robert S. Garnett, the first rebel general killed in the Civil War; and five markers to the Jefferson Davis Memorial Highway.³ Many of the monuments were removed or renamed following events in Charlottesville. But for much of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, they stood as totems to the slave South in the American West.

Why did a free state, far beyond the major military theaters of the Civil War, host such a collection of rebel monuments and memorials? The answer lies partly in the Golden State’s long-standing affinity for the Old South. That transregional relationship dates back much further than 1925, when the first of these monuments appeared in California. Although admitted to the Union as a free state in 1850 and populated primarily by migrants from northern states and territories, California was coopted by southern-born politicians. They occupied a majority of California’s high offices and steered the state along a conspicuously proslavery path in the final decade before the Civil War. Many of these leaders faded from the scene after slave emancipation in 1865. But those who replaced them nurtured a nostalgia for the plantation South and hostility toward the progressive, Republican policies of Reconstruction. Due to their efforts, California became the only free state that refused to ratify both the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution—the measures that, respectively, extended citizenship rights to most natural-born Americans and granted suffrage to black men.⁴

In the coming decades, thousands of migrants from the former Confederate states arrived in California, strengthening the bonds between South and West. Although they represented a dwindling proportion of the state’s overall population, these migrants wielded an outsized cultural influence in the West.⁵ By the turn of the century, they had formed numerous chapters of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the UDC. As California’s Union veterans and their ancestors celebrated the preservation of the United States, these Confederate memorial associations crafted an alternate memory of the conflict. Through various commemorative activities, they advanced a revisionist interpretation of the Civil War known as the “Lost Cause.”

The Lost Cause is almost as old as the Civil War itself. The Southern partisan Edward Pollard laid out some of its major themes in his 1866 work of the same name.⁶ Over the coming decades, writers, orators, artists, filmmakers, and memorial associations would

build upon the major themes of the Lost Cause, as they sought to craft a sympathetic public memory of the war and imbue their rebellion with romance and dignity. Each Lost Cause warrior celebrated a slightly different aspect of the Confederate past but, over time, most came to embrace a common set of arguments. They denied the central role of slavery in triggering secession; they blamed the war on abolitionists in the North, rather than fire-eaters in the South; they exalted the gallantry of the common Confederate soldier and the virtues of their commanders; they dismissed the Union victory as a nearly inevitable consequence of superior numbers and resources; and they looked back nostalgically on the era of plantation slavery. The Lost Cause lives on in hundreds of Confederate markers and memorials across the country.⁷

Despite a vast literature on the origins, evolution, and enduring influence of the Lost Cause, little has been written on how this ideology impacted the political culture and physical space of the American West.⁸ Historians have ably described California's proslavery origins as well as its postwar record of white supremacy.⁹ But how those politics played out through a decades-long struggle over historical memory within the state is only dimly understood. By surveying the Confederate landscape of California, this essay attempts to address that historical lacuna. As an introduction to the subject, rather than a detailed analysis of the Lost Cause in the American West, it also suggests avenues for further research. Hidden in plain sight for generations, the Confederate memorials of California have an important history to tell. Together, they testify to the continental reach of the Lost Cause.

The contest over Civil War memory and the Western landscape was always that—a contest. To carry the Lost Cause into California required enormous effort and organization from dozens of Confederate memorial associations. Monuments, after all, would not dedicate themselves. And while most Californians remained ignorant of the rebel markers that dotted their state, Confederate apologists rarely had an easy time of it. They faced funding shortfalls and preoccupied local governments. Even a small group of outraged Union veterans could spell doom for a Confederate marker, as they did for an obelisk honoring Jefferson Davis, erected in San Diego in 1926. Meanwhile, Union memorial organizations dedicated monuments and renamed geographic sites in California at an even faster rate than their Confederate counterparts. Whether cast in bronze, carved in stone, or paved in asphalt, these memorials raised a thorny set of questions: Who belongs in the American pantheon? Who deserves a place on the American map? And, crucially, who does not? Recently, these questions have prompted dramatic and sometimes violent responses in the public spaces of the South. But for nearly a century, the struggle over Civil War memory has been quietly brewing in the infrastructure, graveyards, and natural landscape of the West as well.

CONFEDERATE CULTURE TAKES ROOT

Shortly after the war, and decades before any permanent monument to the Confederacy was erected in California, the language of the Lost Cause migrated west. It made an early appearance in the pages of the *San Francisco Examiner*, the leading Democratic newspaper in the state. The paper's editor, Benjamin Franklin Washington, came by his Southern sympathies naturally. Born on a Virginia plantation in 1820, Washington could trace his family lineage to the nation's first president. He retained his allegiance to the slaveholding class even after

moving to California in 1849. There, he rose to prominence within the Democratic Party and assumed the editorship of the *Examiner* in 1865. Washington filled his columns with invective against Republicans in Congress, federal Reconstruction, and black enfranchisement. He also articulated some of the major tenets of an emerging Lost Cause ideology. Unlike many other proponents of the Lost Cause, Washington was not himself a veteran of the war. His writings, therefore, focused less on military themes than on the ills afflicting the South in the immediate postwar years. But collectively, his columns amounted to perhaps the most forceful apologia for the Old South anywhere in the postbellum West.¹⁰

As slavery's staunchest postmortem defender in California, Washington looked on the emancipated South with a shudder and upon its antebellum days with longing. Slavery, he wrote shortly after the war, was the "negro birthright." The institution, he continued, granted each black person in the South "the protecting care and guardianship of his master who provided for all his wants, and made him a useful member of the community." Republicans—whom he lambasted as "Abolitionists, Free Lovers, and the rag-tag-and-bobtail of the entire fanatical tribe of New England"—had "robbed" blacks of these protections, throwing the South into disarray.¹¹ In Washington's view, African-descended people were "not only totally incapable of self-government, but wholly unfit to be free."¹² His frequent paeans to human bondage led the *San Francisco Elevator*, one of California's African American newspapers, to conclude that Washington "would doubtless like to see the old era reestablished, and slavery triumphant over the land."¹³

Washington's nostalgia extended to the leaders of the Old South and soldiers of the Confederacy. He penned tributes to deceased slaveholding luminaries such as John C. Calhoun and defended Jefferson Davis, calling his trial for treason a "shameful, disgraceful and contemptible farce."¹⁴ Like many other Confederate apologists, Washington blamed Northern abolitionists, rather than Southern rebels, for the outbreak of the war. "We believe now, and always shall believe," he wrote in 1869, "that the recent war was unnecessary, uncalled for, and wicked in its inception."¹⁵ As for the white Southerners who waged that war, Washington had only praise. "No men ever embarked in a cause with a more thorough conviction of right and justice than did they," he argued. "No men conscious of wrong could ever have made the heroic and prolonged resistance against such overwhelming odds."¹⁶ Washington directly echoed the sentiments of Robert E. Lee's so-called farewell address of April 1865, which anticipated one of the major themes—Southern courage versus sheer Northern numbers—of the Lost Cause.¹⁷

While politicians like Washington gave voice to certain tenets of the Lost Cause in the immediate postwar years, the mythology of the Old South reached full flower within California only in the early twentieth century. As was true in the South, women played the leading role in California's Confederate renaissance. They did so primarily through the UDC, a heredity organization dedicated to commemorating the Southern war effort and its soldiers. Members of the UDC perpetuated this memory through a number of initiatives. They hosted gatherings for rebel veterans, sponsored school textbooks that put a Southern spin on the Civil War, and erected memorials to the leaders and common soldiers of the Confederacy. Riffing on a common Lost Cause trope, the UDC said that its mission was to "tell of the glorious fight against the greatest odds a nation ever faced, that their hallowed memory

should never die.”¹⁸ The first chapter was founded in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1894, but within just a few years the UDC had gone continental.

By the turn of the century, several UDC chapters had formed in California, including the Jefferson Davis Chapter (1899), the Emma Sansome Chapter (1899), and the Stonewall Jackson Chapter (1901). Like their counterparts in the South, California’s Daughters dedicated themselves to the care of Confederate veterans, a number of whom had relocated to the Pacific Coast after the war, and to commemorating their military service. Although particularly active in Southern California, the UDC’s Pacific network ran the length of the state. In fact, during this period, no other part of the country beyond the former slaveholding regions contained as many chapters as California.¹⁹

Despite their prominence, these western chapters have received little attention from academic historians. Without a more extensive study of the origins of the UDC in California, the broader history of the Lost Cause and Civil War memory in the American West will remain incomplete. Fortunately, future scholars have several important archives available to them. Extensive paper collections related to these early California chapters can be found in major repositories across the state, including the University of the Pacific; campuses of the University of California at Davis and Santa Barbara; and California State University, Fullerton.²⁰ Through these records, historians might explore how the Lost Cause was manifested, not only in the physical landscape, but in popular culture, in school curricula, and in the political orientation of the American West.

The UDC and related Confederate associations played a particularly active role in the cultural life of Los Angeles County. Their prominence within the community was the product of both postwar migration and the state’s deep antebellum roots. Beginning with the gold rush, Southern California attracted a disproportionate share of migrants from the slave states. The major overland road that ran westward from the American South ended in Los Angeles. And while some of these migrants continued north into the gold diggings around Sacramento, a number of them settled in Los Angeles and the surrounding areas, where they soon constituted a majority of the U.S.-born population of the county. These migrants wed the region’s political fortunes to the Democratic Party and the slave South, even after California entered the Union as a free state in 1850. At the helm of the city’s political machine sat Joseph Lancaster Brent, a Maryland native and future Confederate general. According to one contemporary observer, Brent carried antebellum Los Angeles in “his vest pocket.”²¹ In concert with the large Mexican-born population of the county, Brent preserved a monopoly on power for the Chivalry, the proslavery wing of California’s Democratic Party.²²

When war erupted between North and South in 1861, a wave of secessionist scares swept across the West. Los Angeles was the beating heart of disunionism in California. Hundreds of rebel sympathizers, including Brent himself, fled Southern California to enlist in the Confederate Army. Among those in the exodus were the Los Angeles Mounted Rifles, a group of eighty secessionists who would become the only organized militia from a free state to fight under a Confederate banner.²³ Other rebel sympathizers stayed put in Southern California, where they constituted a Confederate “fifth column” within U.S. territory. As U.S. authorities attempted to preserve their fragile command over the region, these California rebels demonstrated their disloyalty in a number of ways, from unfurling the Confederate flag in public spaces, to hurrahing Jefferson Davis and his generals, to openly brawling with

federal soldiers. As one of Southern California's rare Unionists recalled in his memoirs, "The leading men of the county were for the Jeff Davis government first, last and all the time."²⁴ The threat became so dire that Union officials established a large military garrison outside Los Angeles to prevent the region from slipping into rebel hands. Although California, on the whole, remained loyal to the United States, secessionists in the southern counties presented a near-constant threat.²⁵

Given its long proslavery history and enduring Southern connections, Los Angeles was a fitting location for the West's first major Confederate memorial. In 1925, the Confederate Monument Association of Los Angeles, in conjunction with the UDC, erected a six-foot granite structure in Hollywood Cemetery. It was a tribute to the wartime services of several dozen Confederate veterans who settled in the region after the war and took their final rest under Southern California soil.²⁶ In anticipation of the monument's unveiling, California chapters of the UDC hosted several large gatherings. That spring in Pasadena, for instance, a hundred Southern women, "all bubbling with typical Southern hospitality," hosted the president of the UDC, who entertained the crowd with "a number of southern stories in the negro dialect," according to the *Los Angeles Times*.²⁷ The UDC and the Confederate Monument Association of Los Angeles would eventually purchase seventy-five plots around the monument for soldiers and their families. For years to come, the region's memorial associations decorated the graves of their fallen soldiers and hosted commemorative gatherings on the cemetery plot.²⁸



Erected in 1925, this memorial to Confederate soldiers "who have died or may die on the Pacific coast" stood in Hollywood Forever Cemetery until 2017. It was removed shortly after the white supremacist riot in Charlottesville, Virginia, that August.

Photo courtesy of Kevin Waite

Southern California's Daughters tended to the living as well as the dead. In 1929, the UDC established Dixie Manor, the first and only Confederate veterans' rest home beyond the former slave states and territories.²⁹ Located outside Los Angeles in leafy San Gabriel, Dixie Manor was a large, stately structure, leased from the former chief justice of the California Supreme Court and the secretary of the Navy under President Calvin Coolidge. By February of that year, the first veterans had moved in. In April, some five hundred guests gathered for the dedication of the home. Over the next seven years, twenty-one former rebels would pass through the home before they died, most of them bound for the Confederate section of Hollywood Cemetery.³⁰

Although not a particularly large operation, it was an expensive one, especially in the midst of a global economic meltdown. Dixie Manor ran on contributions from UDC chapters across the state, whose funds covered food, medical care, allowances for residents, salaries for workers, upkeep for the home, and the cost of frequent celebrations. Hundreds of visitors came to the home each year to pay tribute to the last rebels of the West and, in the process, to perpetuate the memory of the Lost Cause. In 1936, the five remaining veterans died and Dixie Manor was closed.³¹

JEFFERSON DAVIS IN CALIFORNIA

Jefferson Davis came to California with the automobile. The former Confederate president never set foot in the state during his lifetime, but he enjoyed a posthumous presence there in the form of a vast road system named in his honor. Like so many other Lost Cause initiatives, the Jefferson Davis Memorial Highway was the brainchild of the UDC. Beginning in 1913, UDC members began lobbying to put their old president on the American map. They conceived of the Davis road as a rival to the recently announced Lincoln Highway from New York to San Francisco, which had been bankrolled by Yankee capitalists. Rather than building new roads, members of the UDC instead threw their collective energy into renaming already-existing auto trails. By designating enough individual highways in Davis's honor, they hoped to stitch together a continental thoroughfare of Confederate memory. Over the coming decades, the UDC lobbied state governments, erected markers, and mapped out a road system to run the length of the country.³²

Although Davis would not live to see the age of the automobile, the motorway was a fitting tribute for a man who had championed major transportation projects during his lifetime. As secretary of war and a U.S. senator in the 1850s, Davis spearheaded a decade-long campaign for the nation's first transcontinental railway. The railroad of his fantasies was to run from the slave states all the way to the Pacific Coast, thereby bringing the South and West into a political and commercial embrace—and perhaps extending the institution of slavery across the American continent. Davis took a particular interest in California, the proposed terminus of his railroad, which he hoped to tether to the slave South with a bond of iron.³³

Debates over the proposed railway's route became deeply entangled in the controversy over slavery and the American West. Critics of Davis's preferred route recognized its ominous potential and dubbed it the "great slavery road."³⁴ In the rancorous political atmosphere

of the 1850s, Northern politicians closed rank against virtually all proposed southern routes, while Southern leaders struck down numerous bills for northern lines. The result was political quagmire. Only with the secession of eleven slaveholding states in 1861 could plans for a Pacific railroad begin again in earnest. Congress swiftly capitalized on the Southern rebellion and the decisive Republican majority that it produced by passing the Pacific Railroad Act for a line between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Sacramento. Abraham Lincoln signed the act into law in July 1862.³⁵ Davis never got his great slavery road.

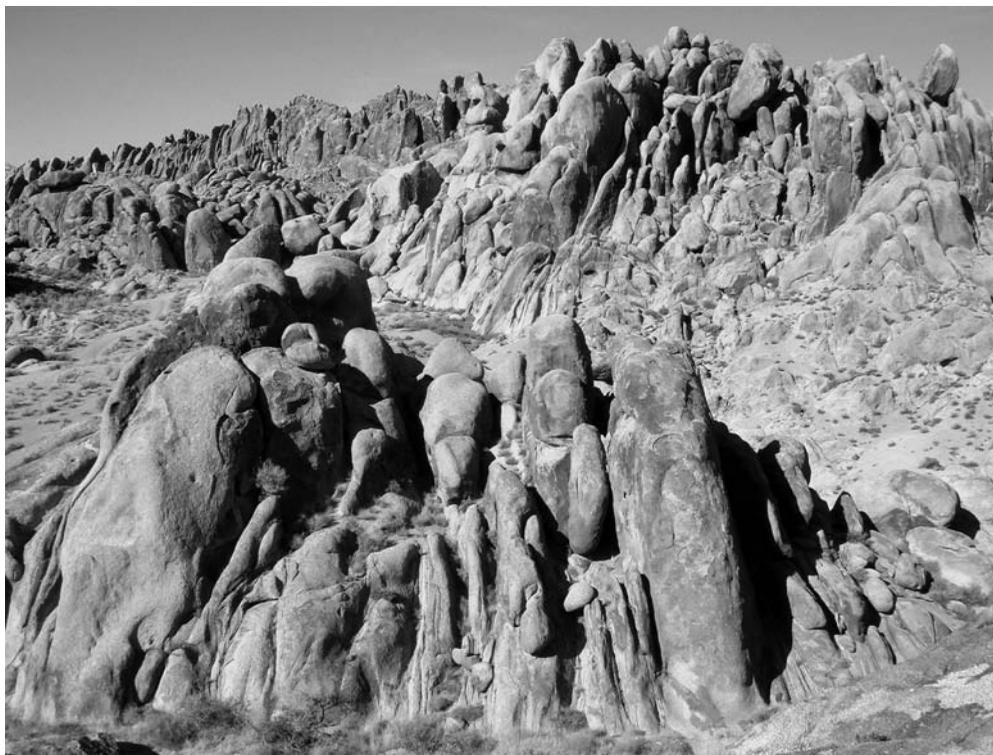
Yet Davis's nineteenth-century vision received a twentieth-century reboot in the extensive road system that bears his name. The end result, while not the continuous highway its architects initially envisioned, was a monumental achievement nonetheless. To this day, stretches of the Davis Highway run for hundreds of miles through the South, while dozens of markers to the old rebel can be found across the West, including California. Taken together, the Jefferson Davis Highway is the largest Confederate monument in the country, and it will likely remain the most indelible homage to the Lost Cause.³⁶

The UDC erected the first California marker to the Davis Highway in San Diego in 1926. The Daughters thumbed their collective noses at the Union by placing a large stone obelisk dedicated to Davis in Horton Plaza, directly across from the U.S. Grant Hotel, which had been built by the war hero's son. W. Jefferson Davis, a local attorney and distant relative of the Confederate president, helped to underwrite the cost of the monument. Almost immediately, Union veterans began protesting the presence of this rebel tribute in one of San Diego's premier locations, and they succeeded in having it carted off later that year. But three decades later, the Confederate South rose again in San Diego, when local members of the UDC reinstalled a Davis Highway marker in Horton Plaza. The new plaque celebrated San Diego as the "Pacific terminus" of the Davis Highway.³⁷ The marker doubled as a thinly veiled critique of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the landmark school desegregation case recently decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.³⁸

Four other Davis Highway markers remain, scattered across the state. One of them, now located in a Bakersfield museum, pays tribute to Davis's antebellum efforts on behalf of infrastructural development, albeit with a touch of hyperbole. Erected in 1942 by the Mildred Lee Chapter of the UDC, the monument salutes Davis as "The Father of National Highways." That honorific is a reference to his work, as secretary of war under President Franklin Pierce, in overseeing four major transcontinental railroad surveys in 1853–1854. Unsurprisingly, the marker fails to mention that Davis exploited his position in an attempt to extend slavery westward. In his official report, Davis formally endorsed the southernmost of these routes, despite numerous obstacles, while dismissing all routes across free soil as untenable.³⁹ This Davis monument originally stood in the Central Valley north of Los Angeles, along U.S. 99, until the highway was modernized in the 1960s, at which point the marker was moved to the Kern County Museum in Bakersfield. Another marker to the Davis Highway was erected nearby in 1956 but has since been removed to Fort Tejon State Park. Two other Davis Highway markers currently sit in Hornbrook and Winterhaven, at opposite ends of the state.⁴⁰

No building materials were necessary for some of the grandest California tributes to Davis and his rebel associates. Confederate veterans and members of the UDC simply used the

state's majestic natural landscape to celebrate their old cause. Spanning roughly thirty thousand acres, a scenic range of rock formations known as the Alabama Hills honors one of the Confederacy's greatest warships. The area, near Lone Pine, was named for the *CSS Alabama* by Southern sympathizers in the 1860s. The mountains of California also carry the names of rebel commanders. When a number of Confederate veterans settled in Alpine County after the war, they named a nearby peak after their former president. Another mountaintop in the same range commemorates General George E. Pickett, who ordered the bloody, failed charge at Gettysburg in July 1863.⁴¹



The Alabama Hills, at the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada near Lone Pine, were named for the Confederate warship *CSS Alabama*.

Photo courtesy of Bobak Ha'Eri

Of all the Confederate markers in California, trees named for Robert E. Lee are perhaps the best known and most frequently visited. There are four in total, including the fifth-largest tree in the world (the twelfth-largest excluding reiterations and branches), located in Kings Canyon National Park. It was named by a former Confederate officer in 1875. Other sequoias bearing Lee's name can be found in Yosemite National Park, Giant Sequoia National Monument, and Sequoia National Park. The UDC formally dedicated the "General Lee" Sequoia with a commemorative gathering in 1937. A handful of California redwoods are named for Union commanders, including Lincoln, Grant, and William Tecumseh Sherman.⁴²



The Robert E. Lee tree in Kings Canyon National Park is one of four California redwoods named for the rebel general.

Photo courtesy of Wikipedia Commons

Education has long been a centerpiece of the Lost Cause tradition, so it is not entirely surprising that several schools in California should be named for rebels. When a Long Beach school took Robert E. Lee's name in 1935, it elicited some grumbling from local residents. But others, including a commentator as far off as Warren, Pennsylvania, applauded the school. "Northerners have been able to see more and more clearly that the character and knightly manhood of Lee constitute one of the country's most precious possessions," read a glowing column in the *Warren Times-Mirror*.⁴³ Roughly twenty-five years later, another elementary school named for the Confederate general opened in San Diego, amid a national backlash over school desegregation. In attendance at the school's dedication were officers of the Stonewall Jackson Chapter of the UDC, who presented a portrait of Lee for the occasion.⁴⁴ In East Los Angeles, a middle school bears the name of filmmaker D. W. Griffith. Although Griffith was not a Confederate veteran himself, his 1915 film epic *The Birth of a Nation* did more to romanticize the Lost Cause than anything before it, not to mention reinvigorating the Ku Klux Klan, which had been more or less dormant since the 1870s.

THE VANISHING CONFEDERATE IN TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY CALIFORNIA

Like their counterparts in the South, most of California's Confederate markers were products either of the Jim Crow era or of pushback against civil rights activism in the mid-twentieth century. And as in the South, the Confederate culture of California has recently

come under attack for its deep-rooted associations with white supremacy. Nevertheless, the Lost Cause in California lives on, even if diminished in stature. Memorial associations continue to gather, to dispense scholarships to descendants of rebel veterans, and to mobilize politically for the preservation of their monuments. The tide of public opinion may be against them now, but pockets of California have nurtured their Confederate connections into the twenty-first century.

One of the most audacious Confederate monuments in the West was erected as recently as May 2004. It was a curious one: a nine-foot granite pillar in an Orange County cemetery bearing the names of numerous rebels, including some, like Stonewall Jackson, who had never set foot in the state. Inscribed on the monument's pedestal was characteristic Lost Cause rhetoric, with a Western twist: "to honor the sacred memory of the pioneers who built Orange County after their valiant effort to defend the Cause of Southern Independence." Some of these Confederate veterans were buried in the Santa Ana cemetery where the monument stood. In this regard, the Orange County marker was not unlike the Hollywood memorial, erected nearly a century earlier. Also like the Hollywood marker, it drew little criticism when a local Confederate memorial association unveiled it. The dedication ceremony, organized by the Sons of Confederate Veterans, was a celebratory affair, with patrons and supporters posing proudly for the occasion in period costume, including Confederate gray.⁴⁵



The Sons of Confederate Veterans erected this nine-foot granite monument to the rebel veterans of Orange County in 2004. It stood in Santa Ana Cemetery until its removal in August 2019.

Photo courtesy of Gustavo Arellano

At the turn of the twenty-first century, rebel memorial associations were still thriving across California, despite their geographic and temporal distance from the Civil War. While the Sons of Confederate Veterans scored perhaps the greatest contemporary coup for the Old South in the Far West with their Santa Ana monument, the UDC maintained a robust presence in California as well. A 1999 national register of the UDC lists eighteen chapters within California alone. For comparison, the next closest free states in terms of UDC activity, Ohio and New York, each had only three chapters. California was also home to more UDC chapters than several former slave states, including Missouri, Kentucky, and Arkansas.⁴⁶ UDC membership in California has dipped slightly in recent years, but as of this writing there are still fourteen active chapters within the state, according to the California Division's official website.⁴⁷

While still numerous, California's Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy have become more circumspect in recent years. Once a sunny haven for rebel veterans and their offspring, California is now largely hostile to open displays of Confederate heritage. In 2014, the legislature passed a law that prohibits the state from displaying or selling the Confederate battle flag or related imagery, unless for educational purposes. That law, however, drew a First Amendment challenge a year later, after organizers of the Big Fresno Fair, an annual event on state property, barred a Civil War-themed painting showing the Confederate flag. The artist successfully sued, claiming that his depiction of the 1864 Battle of Atlanta, featuring Confederate troops and their flag, had been unlawfully rejected. In the settlement, the state agreed that the ban does not apply to individual citizens, who are free to display and even sell the flag, either on private or public property.⁴⁸

A new Confederate monument on the scale of the Santa Ana pillar would be nearly impossible to erect in present-day California. In the fifteen years since that monument's dedication, Confederate iconography, and the slave regime it represents, has come under a sustained national attack. Violent neo-Confederates are themselves to blame for the turn in opinion. The anti-Confederate backlash began in 2015 in response to the murder of nine black worshippers, including the senior minister, at one of the nation's oldest African American churches. The murderer, Dylann Roof, had proudly displayed the Confederate flag in his racist online manifesto before the attack in Charleston. In response, the South Carolina legislature agreed to take down the Confederate battle flag that had flown over their state house for a decade and a half.⁴⁹ This was followed by the fiercely contested removal of several monuments to Confederate leaders within New Orleans in spring 2017. Later that summer, the connection between racial hatred and the Confederate flag was again made explicit by an angry crowd of white supremacists who rallied around an equestrian statue to Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia. In the ensuing clash between white supremacists and counterprotesters, a Nazi sympathizer drove his car through the crowd, killing a young woman. Numerous Confederate monuments, including several in California, came down in the wake of her death.⁵⁰

Due to its long history and size, the Hollywood memorial received more media coverage than any other Confederate monument removal in California. The story made national headlines and generated several features on National Public Radio and extensive local print and television coverage.⁵¹ While the monument had stood uncontested for nearly a century, its removal came surprisingly swiftly, just days after the violence in Charlottesville.⁵² Both the

proprietor of the cemetery and the Long Beach Chapter of the UDC, the owner of the monument, yielded to a growing wave of outrage. Activists flooded the Hollywood Forever administration with calls and emails, while an online petition quickly generated more than 1,900 signatures demanding the monument's removal.⁵³ A day before it was carted out of the cemetery, the memorial was vandalized with the word "NO" scrawled in black marker across its bronze plaque. When workers packed the Hollywood memorial onto a truck and drove it to an undisclosed location, they purged Los Angeles of its last Confederate link.

Activists have recently challenged Jefferson Davis's presence in California as well. On the same day that the Los Angeles memorial was hauled out of Hollywood Forever Cemetery, the mayor of San Diego ordered the removal of the Davis Highway marker in Horton Plaza. While the four other Davis Highway markers within the state have not been targeted for removal, none are in their original locations. Other Davis markers in the Far West have been more imaginatively targeted. In August 2017, activists with a particular flare for historical shaming rituals tarred and feathered a Davis Highway monument east of Phoenix, Arizona.⁵⁴ The Jeff Davis Peak near Lake Tahoe, California, has retained its name for well over a century, but that too may soon change. The Hung-A-Lel-Ti Woodfords Washoe tribe has proposed a Native name, Da-ek Dow Go-et (or "saddle between two points"), in place of the Confederate president's. The proposal is pending with the U.S. Board of Geographical Names.⁵⁵

Like his rebel commander-in-chief, Robert E. Lee is no longer as prominent in California as he once was. The Confederate general's name still graces four redwoods within the state, but his schools in Long Beach and San Diego have since been rechristened. After fifty-seven years, Robert E. Lee Elementary in San Diego is now, rather innocuously, Pacific View Leadership Elementary. The renaming occurred in May 2016, largely in response to the events in Charleston. Also in 2016, Lee's name was stripped from the Long Beach school. It was renamed for Nieto Herrera, a local Mexican American activist and longtime ally of César Chávez in the fight for migrant farmworkers' rights. Proponents of the name changes argued that within such diverse communities it was incongruous, if not offensive, to continue honoring a man who fought to maintain white supremacy and race-based slavery.⁵⁶ There have also been recent calls, including an online petition, to rename D. W. Griffith Middle School in East Los Angeles.⁵⁷ To date, however, the school retains its associations with the *Birth of a Nation* filmmaker.

The Santa Ana cemetery monument may be the shortest-lived Confederate marker in California history. Erected in 2004, the monument was gone by August 2019. As with the memorial in Hollywood Forever Cemetery, the Orange County pillar became a casualty of rising local activism as well as vandalism. Just days before its removal, someone defaced the monument with red paint, spraying the word "racists" in large letters down the face of the granite pillar. According to cemetery officials, the monument had become "an unsightly public nuisance" (not to mention a political liability). A one-hundred-foot crane was required to remove the granite structure, which weighs several tons, at an estimated cost of \$15,000. For the Sons of Confederate Veterans who erected the monument, the action was tantamount to "Santa Ana spit[ting] on its own history." For others, though, the removal was more akin to a cleansing, purifying the California landscape of its long association with a slaveholders' rebellion.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

Within the space of a few years, monuments tended by memorial associations for decades have been dismantled or renamed. The oldest and the largest man-made Confederate monuments—those in Hollywood and Santa Ana, respectively—are now gone. So too is the first California marker to the Jefferson Davis Highway, as well as the name of Robert E. Lee from all schools in the state. California, of course, still contains some relics of its Confederate past, including four markers to the Davis Highway, although no California motorists refer to any of their roads by the Confederate president's name. And while the natural monuments to the Confederacy—Lee's trees, Davis's peak, and the Alabama Hills—retain their old names, those too may change.

Perhaps, though, the most surprising aspect of this history is not how quickly these monuments have come down, but how long they survived. For nearly a century, a six-foot granite structure paid tribute to the Confederacy and its soldiers in the heart of Los Angeles. In the teeth of the Great Depression, patrons kept open the doors of Dixie Manor and provided food, housing, and medical care to over twenty ailing veterans. Directly in front of the U. S. Grant Hotel, members of the UDC erected a large obelisk to the Confederate president. And after Union veterans had it hauled away in protest in 1926, the Daughters persisted until it was reinstalled in the mid-1950s. To this day, far more Confederate memorial chapters can be found in California than in any other free state. Physical monuments to the rebellion may be vanishing from California, but these Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy continue to celebrate their peculiar version of the Civil War. Through them, a small part of the slave South lives on in the Far West.

NOTES

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1. The perpetrator, James Fields Jr., was convicted of first-degree murder in December 2018; Jonathan M. Katz and Farah Stockman, "James Fields Guilty of First-Degree Murder in Death of Heather Heyer," *New York Times*, December 7, 2018.
2. See the statistics on Confederate markers across the country compiled by the Southern Poverty Law Center: <https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>. Oklahoma contains about as many Confederate monuments and place-names as California, but because the major Native nations of Indian Territory (roughly the present state of Oklahoma) had legalized slavery and officially sided with the Confederacy during the Civil War, I have included Oklahoma in my designation of the "slave South." The detailed national map of Confederate markers and place-names, compiled by the SPLC, actually misses several in California, including the memorial in Hollywood and another in Orange County.
3. For a succinct catalog of these monuments and their histories, see Mike Moffitt, "Are All the Monuments to White Supremacy in California Gone Yet?," *SFGate*, April 7, 2019; and Kevin Waite, "California's Forgotten Confederate History," *New Republic*, August 19, 2019.
4. California would not ratify the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments until 1959 and 1962, respectively. For the state's long proslavery history, see Stacey Smith, *Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Leonard Richards, *The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 2007); Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977); Kevin Waite, "The Slave

- South in the Far West: California, the Pacific, and Proslavery Visions of Empire,” PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2016.
5. By 1870, there were roughly twenty-one thousand migrants from the former Confederate states in California, far more than could be found in any other Far Western state or territory at the time. For figures, see Francis A. Walker, *A Compendium of the Ninth Census (June 1, 1870), Compiled Pursuant to a Concurrent Resolution of Congress, and Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 378–388; Eugene H. Berwanger, *The West and Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 19–20; Doris Marion Wright, “The Making of Cosmopolitan California: An Analysis of Immigration, 1848–1870,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 19 (December 1940), 339.
 6. Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (New York: E.B. Treat, 1866).
 7. For useful introductions to the history and evolution of the Lost Cause, see Gary W. Gallagher, “Introduction,” and Alan T. Nolan, “The Anatomy of the Myth,” both in Gallagher and Nolan (eds.), *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
 8. The literature on the Lost Cause and Civil War memory is vast. For some of the most important works on the subject, see Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980); Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2001); Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Caroline Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies’ Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara L. Bellows, *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, new ed., 2018). On the recent debates over Confederate iconography in particular, see Catherine Clinton (ed.), *Confederate Statues and Memorialization* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019). For important recent studies that address Civil War memory in other parts of the West, see Matthew Christopher Hulbert, *The Ghosts of Guerrilla Memory: How Civil War Bushwhackers Became Gunslingers in the American West* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016); and Matthew E. Stanley, *The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).
 9. See Smith, *Freedom’s Frontier*; Richards, *California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War*; Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*; Kevin Waite, *West of Slavery: The Continental Crisis of the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming); Joshua Paddison, *American Heathens: Religion, Race, and Reconstruction in California* (Berkeley and San Marino: University of California Press and the Huntington Library, 2012); D. Michael Bottoms, *An Aristocracy of Color: Race and Reconstruction in California and the West, 1850–1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).
 10. Kevin Waite, “The West and Reconstruction after the Civil War,” in Andrew L. Slap (ed.), *Oxford Handbook on Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Waite, “Slave South in the Far West,” ch. 6.
 11. *San Francisco Examiner*, July 24, 1865; June 12, 1865.
 12. *San Francisco Examiner*, January 11, 1869.
 13. *San Francisco Elevator*, July 28, 1865.
 14. *San Francisco Examiner*, July 8, 1868; November 23, 1868.
 15. *San Francisco Examiner*, April 21, 1869.
 16. *San Francisco Examiner*, July 23, 1867. For more tributes to the South and Southerners, see *San Francisco Examiner*, July 8, 1868; January 16, 1869.
 17. *General Lee’s Farewell Address to the Army of Northern Virginia, April 10, 1865* (Petersburg, 1865), Library of Congress.
 18. Quoted in W. Stuart Towns, *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 31; see also Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*.
 19. This early history is briefly recounted in UDC, *United Daughters of the Confederacy Patriot Ancestor Album* (Paducah, KY: Turner, 1999), 23–24. The United Confederate Veterans also organized a Pacific Division at the turn of the century. It was headquartered in Los Angeles; see “Organization of Camps in the United Confederate Veterans Association, Prepared Expressly for Use of Delegates to the Thirteenth Reunion and Meeting of the Association” (New Orleans, 1903).
 20. Smaller collections related to the California UDC can be found at the Seaver Center for Western History Research and the Huntington Library.
 21. Joseph Lancaster Brent, *Memoirs of the War between the States* (New Orleans: Fontana Printing, 1940), 22–23. See also Daniel Lynch, “Southern California Chivalry: Southerners, Californios, and the Forging of an Unlikely

- Alliance.” *California History* 91 (Fall 2014); Waite, “Slave South in the Far West,” ch. 3; John Mack Faragher, *Eternity Street: Violence and Justice in Frontier Los Angeles* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), 376.
22. Daniel Brendan Lynch, “Southern California Chivalry: The Convergence of Southerners and Californios in the Far Southwest, 1846–1866,” PhD diss., UCLA, 2015.
 23. Faragher, *Eternity Street*, 385–386.
 24. Horace Bell, *On the Old West Coast: Being Further Reminiscences of a Ranger*, ed. Lanier Bartlett (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1930), 72.
 25. On the secessionist presence in Civil War California, see *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* (hereafter “OR”), series I, vol. L, part 1, pp. 563–566; Sumner to Colonel E. D. Townsend, Assistant Adjutant-General, Department of the Pacific, April 28, 1861, OR, series I, vol. L, part 1, p. 472; [San Francisco businessmen] to Simon Cameron, August 28, 1861, OR, series I, vol. L, part 1, 589–591; *San Francisco Bulletin*, September 13, 1862; *Los Angeles Southern News*, March 1, 1861. See also John W. Robinson, *Los Angeles in Civil War Days, 1860–1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977, 2013); Glenn Matthews, *The Golden State in the Civil War: Thomas Starr King, the Republican Party, and the Birth of Modern California* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Helen B. Walters, “Confederates in Southern California,” *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly* 35 (March 1953); Ronald C. Woolsey, “The Politics of a Lost Cause: ‘Seceshers’ and Democrats in Southern California during the Civil War,” *California History* 69 (Winter 1990/1991); Woolsey, “Disunion or Dissent? A New Look at an Old Problem in Southern California: Attitudes toward the Civil War,” *Southern California Quarterly* 66 (Fall 1984); Albert Lucian Lewis, “Los Angeles in the Civil War Decades, 1850–1868,” PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1970.
 26. Staff correspondent, “U.D.C.,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 3, 1925.
 27. Staff correspondent, “Fete Chief of United Daughters,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1925.
 28. Connie Walton Moretti, *Dixie Manor Days: The Confederate Veterans Who Lived There and the UDC Members Who Made It Possible* (Redondo Beach, CA: Mulberry Bush, 2004), 5.
 29. In addition to numerous homes within the former slave states, there was also one in Ardmore, Oklahoma, part of Confederate-held Indian Territory for much of the war. For more on these Confederate soldiers’ homes, see Rusty Williams, *My Old Confederate Home: A Respectable Place for Civil War Veterans* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010); and R. B. Rosenburg, *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers’ Homes in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).
 30. *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1936.
 31. *Ibid.*; Moretti, *Dixie Manor Days*, 9–44.
 32. Euan Hague and Edward H. Sebesta, “The Jefferson Davis Highway: Contesting the Confederacy in the Pacific Northwest,” *Journal of American Studies* 45 (May 2011), 281–301.
 33. Kevin Waite, “Jefferson Davis and Proslavery Visions of Empire in the Far West,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 6 (December 2016), 536–565. See also Jefferson Davis, “Report of the Secretary of War, December 3, 1855,” in Dunbar Rowland (ed.), *Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist: His Letters, Papers and Speeches* (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1923), vol. 2, 567–570; James Gadsden to Jefferson Davis, May 23, 1853, Jefferson Davis Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky.
 34. See the speech of Thomas Jefferson Green near Marshall, Texas, excerpted in the *Texas State Gazette*, July 29, 1854.
 35. *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 2nd session (May 5, 1862), p. 1948; and 37th Congress, 2nd session (May 6, 1862), p. 1950. See also Robert R. Russel, *Improvement of Communication with the Pacific Coast as an Issue in American Politics, 1783–1864* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Torch Press, 1948), 294–307.
 36. This argument first appeared in Kevin Waite, “The Largest Confederate Monument in American Can’t Be Taken Down,” *Washington Post*, August 22, 2017, which was later anthologized in Clinton, *Confederate Statues and Memorialization*, 132–136.
 37. Roughly a century earlier, slaveholding railroad developers also eyed San Diego as the most desirable terminus for their proposed transcontinental railroad. See Waite, “Slave South in the Far West,” ch. 2.
 38. *San Diego Union-Tribune*, August 16, 2017.
 39. Jefferson Davis, *Report of the Secretary of War on the Several Pacific Railroad Expeditions* (Washington, DC: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1855), 8–34, 37–39; and Waite, “Jefferson Davis and Proslavery Visions of Empire,” 542–544.
 40. Bakersfield.com, August 23, 2017, https://www.bakersfield.com/news/artifact-of-confederate-figure-rests-mostly-unnoticed-at-kern-county/article_2525c98a-8859-11e7-82dc-d34e857dbee0.html.
 41. Matt Johnson, “Roust the Rebels from Our Mountains,” *Sierra Splendor*, April 10, 2016, <http://sierrasplendor.com/2016/04/10/roust-the-rebels-from-our-mountains/>.
 42. Detailed information on the Lee trees can be found at http://famousredwoods.com/robert_e_lee/.
 43. “A Fine Example,” *Warren Times Mirror*, December 17, 1935.
 44. Maureen Magee, “Robert E. Lee School Name Changed,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, May 23, 2016.
 45. Gustavo Arellano, “California’s Last Confederate Monument Is at Santa Ana Cemetery—and It Was Erected in 2004,” *OC Weekly*, August 17, 2017.
 46. UDC, *United Daughters of the Confederacy Patriot Ancestor Album*, 5–10.

47. For a list of active chapters and further information on the UDC's activities within the state, see the website of the California Division: <http://californiaudc.com/>.
48. "California Confederate Flag Ban Excludes Individuals, State Says," Associated Press, May 2, 2017; see also "Editorial: Taking a Ban on Confederate Flag Displays to an Absurd Extreme," *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 2016.
49. Sarah McCammon, "2 Years after S.C.'s Flag Came Down, Cities Grapple with Confederate Symbols," National Public Radio, July 10, 2017.
50. Leanna Garfield and Ellen Cranley, "More Than a Year after Charlottesville, These Cities across the US Have Torn Down Controversial Confederate Monuments," *Business Insider*, January 15, 2019.
51. For a sampling of that news coverage, across the political spectrum, see Alene Tchekmedyian, Irfan Khan, and Veronica Rocha, "Hollywood Forever Cemetery Removes Confederate Monument after Calls from Activists and Threats of Vandalism," *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 2017; "Does Los Angeles Have a Confederate Monument problem?" KCRW radio, August 16, 2017; "Hollywood Forever Cemetery Removes Confederate Monument," KPCC radio, August 16, 2017; Ian Lovett, "Landmark Cemetery in Los Angeles Removes Confederate Monument," *Wall Street Journal*, August 16, 2017; Joel B. Pollak, "Threats Force Hollywood Cemetery to Remove Confederate Memorial," *Breitbart*, August 16, 2017.
52. The monument first came to public attention roughly a week before the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, when the *Los Angeles Times* published my op-ed, "The Struggle over Slavery Was Not Confined to the South, L.A. Has a Confederate Memorial Problem Too," *Los Angeles Times*, August 4, 2017.
53. "Remove the Confederate Monument from Hollywood Forever," Change.org petition, <https://www.change.org/p/remove-the-confederate-monument-from-hollywood-forever>.
54. William Hughes, "Somebody Tarred and Feathered a Memorial to Jefferson Davis," *AV Club*, August 18, 2017.
55. Mike Moffitt, "Confederate Landmarks Near Tahoe Could Get Native American Name," *SFGate*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Confederate-landmark-Tahoe-Jeff-Davis-peak-12917085.php>. In June 2019, another Jeff Davis peak, this one located in Great Basin National Park in eastern Nevada, was renamed "Doso Doyabi," what the local Shoshone people have long called it; Dailykos.com, June 14, 2019, <https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/6/14/1856404/-You-have-a-new-mountain-America-USGS-changes-name-of-Nevada-s-Jeff-Davis-Peak-to-Doso-Doyabi>.
56. Maureen Magee, "Robert E. Lee school name changed," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, May 23, 2016; Soren Sum, "Robert E. Lee Elementary Renamed after Long Beach Activist with Ties to Cesar Chavez," *Long Beach Post*, November 3, 2016.
57. Change.org petition: "Change the name of D.W. Griffith Middle School in East Los Angeles," Change.org petition, <https://www.change.org/p/los-angeles-unified-school-district-change-the-name-of-d-w-griffith-middle-school-in-east-los-angeles-there-is-no-room-for-racism-in-our-schools>.
58. Alicia Robinson, "Confederate Monument Defaced Last Month Has Been Removed from Santa Ana Cemetery," *Orange County Register*, August 1, 2019; "Confederate Monument Removed from Santa Ana Cemetery after Being Vandalized," KTLA 5, August 2, 2019, <https://ktla.com/2019/08/02/confederate-monument-removed-from-california-cemetery/>.