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Monument Avenue

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Monument Avenue and the Lost Cause

During the video of Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, the directors talk about 2020 and how the Robert E. Lee statue still stands, but the other statues have been removed. Then, the directors reference 2020 and how the Black Lives Matter movement led to the removal of the statues. Then we learn about Jefferson Davis, who was the president of the Confederacy, and who made Richmond, Virginia, the Confederacy's capital. The first statue on Monument Boulevard didn't go up until the 1890s and was placed in an area where no one lived, and they put the statue there to attract people to the expansion of the city and created a brand new boulevard.

There was the City Beautiful movement, and due to the planning and seeing the ideas from the Colombian world exposition in Chicago. Monument Avenue, before 2020, was a complete example of the City Beautiful Movement. The avenue was built to build an entirely new city around it, and even after some of the statues were removed, you can still see it there.

The whole reason why this avenue was created was to honor those Confederate heroes, even though they lost the Civil War. One of the directors mentioned how the South was ashamed after its leaders lost the Civil War. The years after there was a rebirth for African Americans. As black men were considered to have rights, the abolition of slavery. But violence against African American people began to start as well, so those statues start to make a lot of sense.

The monument showcases the resurgent power of southern whites. John Mitchell, who was the editor of the Richmond Planet, wrote a lot about what was happening during that time as Confederate flags started to fly. The North turned a blind eye to the white confederacy that was happening in Richmond, Virginia. The Lost Cause was an attempt to cover up what happened after the war because slavery was the issue that caused the war. The Confederates also tried to rewrite what happened as a simple attempt to defend the southern homeland.

The Lost Cause was still on display as recently as the 1990s, and they added one new sculpture, which was Arthur Ash, a civil rights activist, and a cool detail is that he is looking north, and the others are looking south. People didn't want him on this boulevard on both sides, as some believed this was only for whites, while others didn't want him there because he grew up oppressed in Richmond. With most of the statues being removed, this showcases the final crumbling of the Lost Cause narrative.

I feel like the director did this video to educate people on these monuments, and I have definitely driven by these monuments before and didn't know what they were about. This, I feel, was meant to call out Richmond's confederate past and make viewers research other confederate statues around them. I believe that it is a start in the right direction. Richmond is a beautiful city that has a lot of art, a black history museum, and is Virginia's capital. To have those statues in place, like the Capitol that represents freedom, justice, and seeing local lawmakers walking around, can have people look at this Capitol sideways. So the removal of these statues showcases a new era of healing and shows black people how much their voices matter.

A confederate statue that still celebrates slavery is still up in Atlanta, Georgia. The Stone Mountain Confederate Memorial. It's also coincidentally tied into the Lost Cause politics mentioned earlier. The memorial features Confederate leaders like Jefferson Davis, Robert E.

Lee, and Stonewall Jackson. This memorial is three acres long and is recessed 42 feet into the mountain. It is also notably bigger than Mount Rushmore. This memorial is also tied directly to the Ku Klux Klan, as the group would hold its cross burning there, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy commissioned the carving. There was also a Confederate Memorial Day service there.

I would place one person on this memorial and try to change it for the better, because local residents love Stone Mountain and believe it should not belong to the kkk or white supremacists. I would place Martin Luther King Jr. on the memorial as he did a lot of work in Atlanta as a civil rights leader, and even mentions in his I Have a Dream speech, “Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain, Georgia.” My replacement would not only highlight a prominent civil rights leader who did work in Atlanta, but also showcase a new era at Stone Mountain as we move forward to a better future. I would call it the Stone Mountain Freedom Memorial to change it from its original name, The Stone Mountain Confederate Memorial.

Sources

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