ABSTRACT

Philip Terrie, Advisor

Locating public memory as a central site in the contested imagination of communal belonging, this study examines the post-World War II history of Richmond, Virginia’s Monument Avenue as a key symbolic location in the cultural politics and political culture of the Civil Rights and post-Civil Rights eras. A New South-era network of memorials to leaders of the Confederacy, Monument Avenue has long stood as the spatial and artistic manifestation of the cultural values espoused through the ideology of the Lost Cause. This ideology enabled the continued cultural and political dominance of a patrician, white elite who ruled Virginia through a politics of paternalism. This paternalism assured white rule and rigid racial segregation but was effected without the overt violence and abuses commonly associated with the post-Reconstruction South.

After tracing the history of Monument Avenue from 1890 through 1948—especially in relation to racial segregation and public memory in Virginia—this study provides a detailed analysis of the ways the Civil Rights Movement and anti-integration movements in Richmond used Monument Avenue as a symbol of the larger struggle in which they were engaged. In the post-Civil Rights era, under ideologies of neoliberalism and multiculturalism, the existing Confederate memorials were joined, in 1996, by a new statue of African American tennis champion, writer, and activist Arthur Ashe. This memorial was unveiled only after two years of intense public debate.
The second half of this study examines the transformation of Richmond and Virginia’s cultural politics and political culture under neoliberalism and multiculturalism, especially the political career of the conservative Democrat, L. Douglas Wilder who, in 1989, was the first African American to be elected governor of Virginia or any other U.S. State. This history is presented alongside a study of Arthur Ashe’s life as described in his four memoirs, his newspaper columns, and his public appearances. Using the central texts, I foreground the Ashe memorial and its debates by demonstrating that as barriers to racial inclusion were lowered, neoliberalism enabled the reentrenchment of the values associated with white paternalism and the reaffirmation of class hierarchies.
For Karin and Pearl;
and in memory of Peggy Brew.
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As a child, my father, Roger Barbee, and my mother, Katherine Barbee,
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I began this project in my first semester at Bowling Green; at roughly the same time I met Karin Wraley. A year and a half later, as I began writing my dissertation proposal, Karin and I married. Tomorrow is our second anniversary and, as I write these acknowledgements and finish my dissertation, Karin is in the other room holding our newborn child, Clara Pearl. As this chapter of my life comes to a close, I find myself with a wife whose endless loves fills me with awe and a beautiful child whose smile fills me with wonder. I am a lucky man.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Periodicals and Library Collections

New York Times: NYT
Washington Post: WP
Washington Times: WT
Richmond Afro-American: RAA
Richmond Free Press: FP
Richmond Times-Dispatch: RTD
Richmond News-Leader: RNL
Virginia Historical Society: VHS
Papers of James C. Wheat: JWC

Political, Civic and Community Organizations

Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities: APVA
Lee Monument Association: LMA
Matthew Fontaine Maury Association: MFMA
United Confederate Veterans: UCV
Sons of Confederate Veterans: SCV
United Daughters of the Confederacy: UDC
Richmond Civic Council: RCC
Richmond Citizen’s Association: RCA
Richmond Crusade for Voters: RCV
Richmond Forward: RF
Monument Avenue Preservation Society: MAPS
Voters Voice: VV
People’s Political and Civil League: PPCL
City Planning Commission: CPC
Citizen’s for Excellence in Public Art: CEPA
Chapter One

Introduction: Memory and the Imagined Community

Once a crossroads of railways, rivers, and canals, modern Richmond is a meeting point of faster, more prosaic modes of travel. Two major interstate highways, 64 and 95, intersect in Richmond; a third, 85, joins 95 just to the South, in Petersburg. As we move through and within Central Virginia we speed by signs calling us into the city, asking us to stay, linger, and consider the State Capitol, the Confederate White House, the Poe Museum, or Saint John’s Episcopal Church, site of Patrick Henry’s celebrate call for liberty or death. The signs are plentiful and the curious traveler can exit the highway, drive a few blocks through the center city, and take in these core museums and memorial spaces. And she can, just as quickly, get back into her car, return to the road, and travel on to Washington or Louisville, Raleigh or Atlanta. If earlier networks made Richmond a center of commerce and trade, the interstate highway system has made it a place we pass through but rarely view with a slow, steady gaze.

Few travelers will move far beyond the highways that funnel traffic around and through the city. But if a traveler takes the opportunity to exit the interstate and cross the city on its small streets and wide boulevards, she will have the chance to see an urban landscape that grew out of a different era. She will drive through neighborhoods of wooden row houses and brick Victorian mansions. She might pass old, overgrown cemeteries and earth works, reminders of conflicts from over a century ago. She may pass the remains of warehouses and factories or shuttered, decaying neighborhoods, all standing as testaments to more recent change.

That traveler may find herself on Franklin Street moving westward from the State Capitol, crossing the antebellum core of city and the remains of Confederate capitol. Though a
short road, Franklin Street takes commuters and drivers through an area rich in local, regional, and national history. As it leads traffic out of the modern downtown, past the convention center, Franklin Street skirts the edge of what remains of Jackson Ward, once the most affluent African American neighborhood in the South. It then reaches its terminus at Harrison Street in the neighborhoods surrounding Virginia Commonwealth University.¹

Although it is hard to notice today, this area was once the western boundary of Richmond and was the site of Civil War era defensive structures. In the post-reconstruction decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the farm fields that lay beyond were incorporated into the city as Richmond expanded its economic, demographic, and imaginary reach. As it extended across Harrison Street, Franklin Street was given a new name, Monument Avenue, and became a central corridor of and defining metaphor for post-Reconstruction Richmond.

Begun in 1890, Monument Avenue originally traversed undeveloped land outside the city limits and culminated in a massive, equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee. By 1929, Monument Avenue had grown along with Richmond and was the most fashionable and grand of Richmond’s addresses; a broad boulevard, its central median was punctuated by grand, martial statues of figures that had joined Lee in a Confederate Hall of Fame; these sculptures have earned the avenue the nickname the “Champs-Elysées of the South.”

On Monument Avenue the modern traveler will enter an older neighborhood, one full of stately mansions and impressive trees. Traveling West she will soon come upon a statue depicting General J.E.B. Stuart in a moment of intense action, his trademark plumed hat in his hand as he turns and looks behind him, his horse rearing up. A few blocks later she will drive past the Lee Monument, a towering pedestal topped by the aristocratic general sitting calmly on

¹ Copyright considerations make it difficult to include a map of Richmond and Monument Avenue in this dissertation. Readers can easily access maps of the city and Monument Avenue by using any variety of online resources, such as Google Maps.
the back of his favorite horse, Traveler. Past the Lee monument Jefferson Davis is depicted seated before a mighty, sixty foot column that is topped with an angel of victory. He is joined a few blocks later, by a tranquil Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson and a thoughtful statue of the scientist Matthew Fontaine Maury.

The monuments form a central narrative amidst the impressive homes and trees that line the central boulevard. Though Monument Avenue is certainly less awe inspiring when viewed through the windows of a passing car, it still retains some of the grandeur that early twentieth century visitors would have noticed as they moved slowly by on foot or carriage. As our traveler leaves the interstate and cross Richmond from East to West, the lingering past becomes ever more present through this grand space of local and regional memory.

Should, however, our traveler arrive from the west and enter Richmond through its suburbs, she may well drive along a very different Monument Avenue. Exiting I-64 at the Philip Morris corporate headquarters, she’ll find herself in an area that is indistinguishable from other suburbs across the United States. Turning Southeast onto a divided thoroughfare, she will soon enter Richmond and cross over a freeway. As the landscape becomes more urban, houses give way to apartment blocks. Two blocks after entering the urban landscape she will come to the intersection of Monument Avenue and Roseneath Road a small traffic circle, a modest pedestal that is topped with a figural group reaching upwards to the sky. A group of cheering, reaching children, surrounds the likeness of the African American tennis player, writer, social activist, and Richmond native Arthur Ashe Jr. He faces the visitor, but his gaze is directed down, at the children that surround him. In his hands he holds books and a tennis racket, symbolic reminders of the two arenas in which he struggled and, it seems, gifts offered to the youth of Richmond.
As our traveler moves into the city and apartment blocks make way for turn of the century mansions, she will slow down as she negotiates the periodic traffic circles. Her eyes will certainly be drawn to the stately Maury monument, and, she might be distracted by the serene statue of Stonewall Jackson. Three blocks later she will certainly be taken with the immense Davis memorial. As she moves into the city, she may understandably forget the monument that initially greeted her. It is easily missed, it is quite small, at only twenty-four feet high, and the action it describes is somewhat hard to make out. It sits, modest and slightly removed from the bulk of the city and the core of monuments that grandly define the inner stretch of Monument Avenue. And its subtle depiction of an intelligent, caring, determined man loses its power when the viewer then witnesses the might and power of the Confederate memorials.

Still there it is, on the edge of Richmond, the Ashe Monument, a lone sentinel welcoming some visitors into the city and shifting the meanings of Monument Avenue. It is a peaceful, quiet spot, removed from the busy traffic of the city’s main highways and thoroughfares. This current peace, however, belies the fact that for eighteen months in the mid 1990’s the Ashe Monument was at the heart of community wrenching debates over race, economics, public memory, and civic identity. These debates were set off in December, 1994 when former Virginia governor L. Douglas Wilder began a public campaign to place a statue of the recently deceased Ashe on Monument Avenue. Wilder’s proposal was met with resistance as well as support. The disagreements continued through July Seventeenth, 1995, when the City Council held an open public hearing on the subject. 140 residents signed up to give two minute statements on the proposed monument. Late that night, after a seven hour meeting, the city council approved the
monument\textsuperscript{2}. Their decision did not end the debates. Over the next year Richmond would continue to struggle with the monument, its meaning, and the meanings of its longstanding historical identity. The celebration that marked the July, 1996 unveiling of the monument was the product of eighteen months of tension, anger, and ferocious debate. This brief period of intense contestation led to the paradoxically peaceful juxtaposition of Arthur Ashe with Lee, Jackson, and Davis. How, our observant visitor might ask, did this happen? What impulses and forces facilitated the relatively quick development and unveiling of statue? And why was it placed along an axis previously reserved for leaders of the Confederacy?

Memory, Race, and Communal Belonging

In his landmark study of nationalism, Benedict Anderson demonstrates that in order to understand the forces that compel group behavior we must understand the ways belonging is constructed, communicated, and felt. Anderson’s title phrase, \textit{Imagined Communities}, concisely expresses his definition of the nation as a society bound together by a sense of kinship and connection that, though inherently limited and “false,” is nonetheless able to incite deep emotions through the ideological apparatuses of imagination. Following Anderson, scholarly approaches towards nationalisms need to be grounded in the recognition that “communities are to be distinguished, not by the falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”\textsuperscript{3}

Anderson’s later revision of \textit{Imagined Communities} to include three tools of colonial power, the census, the map, and the museum, provides important insights into the ways

\textsuperscript{2} For a full description see Peter Baker, “Richmond to Honor Ashe Alongside Rebel Heroes; City was Split Over Memorial to Tennis Great,” \textit{Washington Post} (18 July 1995): A1; and, Tony Horwitz, \textit{Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War} (Vintage Departures, 1998), 249-52.

communal identity informs and is informed by governmental and civic institutions in which belonging is examined, organized, and arrayed in visible patterns of belonging and not-belonging. As a collective unit, these terms draw together scholarship on citizenship (Census), space and place (Map), and the cultural past (Museum). Anderson’s addition of these tools in 1991 came on the cusp of a period in which the various disciplines and interdisciplines that examine the nexus of culture, society, power, and identity, English, History, Anthropology, Geography, and, most important, Cultural Studies, Performance Studies, American Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women’s/Gender Studies and Sexuality Studies, have turned towards examining memory as the crucial site in which ideology and emotional affect are deployed through the display and performance of a vision of a communal past.

Because racial identities and hierarchies are politically and socially mandated systems dependent upon inherited ideologies, memory is a crucial site where race is defined and legitimated. By investigating the construction of memory as it pertains to race, we can begin to dismantle those ideologies. Within American Studies, a major concern for the study of nationalism has been the legacies and contemporary realities of racial hierarchies of communal belonging. Within that arena, a major area of study has been the commemoration of the Civil War in the decades during and after Reconstruction. While this area of study has many practitioners, the major arguments and approaches can easily be ascertained by looking at a group of important and influential texts. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, white elites reasserted political and economic control over the bodies of formerly enslaved African Americans. The rise of Jim Crow segregation was legitimized through narratives of Civil War that emphasized, to use David Blight’s terms, reunion over race.4 This narrative came to inform racial politics and American national identity and Southern regional identity

throughout the twentieth century. As Blight’s magisterial work demonstrates, cultural rituals of
remembrance and mourning in the fifty years after Appomattox helped popularize and normalize
a narrative in which the Civil War is seen as the dissolve and reunification of white nationhood.
Blight’s thesis is supported and augmented by the work of gender historians such as Tara
McPherson and Karen Cox who demonstrate the roles of civic organizations such as the United
Daughters of the Confederacy in reaffirming white privilege through gender politics.\(^5\) Similarly,
Franny Nudelman, in *John Brown’s Body*, examines the treatment of bodies in life and death as a
key site of racial politics during and after the Civil War.\(^6\) Through the study of visual rhetoric
and the body, Nudelman expands our understanding of the media in which the nineteenth century
made sense of the Civil War. The emphasis on the role of ritual and community associations is
further extended in art historian Kirk Savage’s excellent study of sculptural representations of
slavery and the Civil War, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*.\(^7\) Savage examines the role of
sculpture and monument building in the cultural and social history traced by Blight and
demonstrates the central role the arts play in the development of communal identity.
Importantly, Savage helps us see the way that works of public art, such as monuments, seem to
come from community consensus but are often subject to contestation. Savage demonstrates the
struggle to define and celebrate and iconography of slavery that served conservative, white
supremacist regimes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.. Last, and most
important for the thinking that went into this dissertation, is Paul Shackel’s *Memory in Black and

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Examining disputed sites of memory, Shackel demonstrates that African American communities resisted these dominant memories and worked towards a countermemory in which race, not reunion, was the central feature of the Civil War.

This recent academic turn, while providing crucial insights into the various forces that structure human existence, is attuned to forces that are deeply ingrained in communities, both local and national, and have been at work for centuries. As we move forward with the study of memory, it is important to take note of the genealogies of remembrance. The above cited works crucially demonstrate the ways that memory is the structuring of the past through the political systems of the present. However, these practices have histories and, to make sense of them, we need to move towards a scholarly approach that places discrete moments within the long pasts that inform the imagination of communal pasts. In the case of post-Reconstruction memories of the Civil War, it is important to place those narratives within longstanding traditions that inform notions of sectional division and racial politics that, often, have roots in the colonization of the American continent and have come to inform later systems of communal identification.

Virginia, from its founding as a colony within the British Empire and through its history as part of the United States, has politically, culturally, and racially defined and legitimized itself through the celebration, memorialization, and performance of a vision of the past. Through claims as the legitimate heirs of classical and British aristocratic ideals, Virginia’s white elites fostered a communal identity that buttressed their rule over enslaved and disenfranchised people of African descent and working-class whites. To cite but one early, yet telling, example of the strategies by which this identity was deployed, in *Notes on the State of Virginia* Thomas Jefferson uses scientific methodology to argue for the legitimacy of white rule while bolstering...
those claims with appeals to the imagined depth of Virginia’s past. Jefferson’s many digressions and tangents from his taxonomy offer insights into this imagined past. For example, in Query VI, Jefferson moves from discussion of the mineral, vegetable, and animal products found in Virginia to a diatribe against French condescension, and argues that, in time, the animals and men of Virginia will overtake their European counterparts in size and intelligence. While a departure from the project of discussing the natural history and economy of Virginia, this discussion came from and contributed to the imagination of Virginia as a blessed, deeply traditional space and informed ideologies that perpetuated rule by a patrician white elite. As a historian, scientist, and geographer, Jefferson surveys the past and present and deploys an image of Virginia and Virginians that is exemplary and influential in the long history of local identity. Those same communal imaginings continued to be employed to justify and structure the political and economic systems of ante-bellum slavery and post-reconstruction Jim Crow segregation and came to inform the efforts of post-World War II anti-integration movements and more recent “culture war” attacks on governmental programs, such as Affirmative Action, that grew out of the Civil Rights Movement.

Building upon the close studies of the above-named scholars, we need to begin examining the histories of memory. This dissertation takes up this project and examines one of the most recent and well-known struggles over communal identity, Richmond’s Arthur Ashe memorial, within the contexts of its development and the long histories of race, memory, and local historic identity that structured those contexts. Unveiled in July, 1996, the Ashe memorial was the subject of intense public debate over the meaning of the past and the role of public art as a reflection of communal standards of citizenship, largely because of its location. The city

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9 Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Edited by David Walderstreicher, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 97-129.
government’s decision to place the Ashe memorial on Monument Avenue, a boulevard named for the Lost Cause era monuments to Confederate leaders that dot its median, was questioned and challenged by a range of groups, including social conservatives, southern heritage groups, arts patrons, and many African Americans who resisted the celebration of an African American athlete associated with the Civil Rights Movement in a space defined by its Confederate iconography. However, it also garnered support from a variety of business, civic, and community leaders who saw that the addition of Ashe could be part of the reimagination of Richmond’s historic identity.

This dissertation uses the Ashe memorial as the central text in the study of communal identity. Richmond is an ideal subject for such a study, in large part because of its rich history as a site of Confederate memory and African American political activism. And, as the capital of history-obsessed Virginia, Richmond is situated amidst one of the largest networks of historical tourism sites in the United States. This widespread memorial network exists as part of the cultural landscape of a state which is representative of larger (inter)national values of neoliberalism and multiculturalism. While a place apart from the rest of the United States and the South, Virginia is exemplary in its embrace of colorblindness as a structuring value of political discourse.

Furthermore, the Ashe Memorial is an ideal site for the study of memory because of the interesting confluence of contexts that informed the debates over its placement. While not a Civil War monument, the Ashe Memorial comes out of the history of remembrance of the Confederacy in its former capital. Furthermore, the Ashe memorial grew out of the political, cultural, and racial restructuring of Richmond during the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s. To make sense of the Ashe memorial, we need to consider the contestation of memory during the era of the Civil
Rights Movement and, importantly, the remembrance, commodification, and appropriation of that movement in the 1980s and ‘90s. And, lastly, the Ashe memorial celebrates a man who only gained widespread respect late in life. Criticized from the right and left as a young man for his political and racial ambivalence, Ashe struggled throughout his life to redefine his public image by reaching back into his lived experiences. His personal memories became the foundation for a well rehearsed biography, one which ultimately enabled his enshrinement as a national hero. It is this confluence of personal memory and public memory, this careful crafting of life out of the racial and gender norms of his childhood, that make Ashe such a fascinating subject and which make his celebration as a hero such a rich site for scholarly intervention.

As a critical investigation of the formation of knowledge through memory, this study employs tools common to textual and rhetorical analysis, especially close reading, to discern meaning in relevant archival materials. Because this dissertation is concerned with the formation of official discourses through public memory, I largely draw from political writing, journalism, and memoir. Although I benefited from generous research grants, I was limited in my research by the vast geographic distance between Richmond, Virginia, and Bowling Green, Ohio and depended heavily on materials accessible in Ohio and the archives of the Virginia Historical Society and focuses on official discourse. Unfortunately, official discourse has historically privileged White Virginia while under-representing the rich traditions and voices of Richmond’s significant African American community. When that community’s voices are heard, it is largely through outspoken, though not necessarily representative, political leaders.

In Chapter Two, “Memory Between Civil War and Civil Rights: 1890-1948,” and Chapter Three, “Civil Rights and Memory: 1948-1970” I examine the history of Monument Avenue as a site associated with local historic identity. I do so by examining the development of
the road and its monuments alongside the histories of segregation and integration within Richmond and the larger network of sites of memory in Virginia and the nation. These chapters draw from excellent studies of race, politics and planning in Richmond by urban historians and political scientists. Chief among these are John Moeser and Rutledge Dennis’s *The Politics of Annexation: Oligarchic Power in a Southern City* and Lewis Randolph and Gayle Tate’s *Rights for a Season: The Politics of Race, Class and Gender in Richmond, Virginia.* In addition to these secondary sources, these chapters include in-depth analyses of the heretofore unexamined Matthew Fontaine Maury memorial, the 1961-1965 Civil War Centennial in Richmond, and efforts in the late 1960s to place new, Confederate themed statues on Monument Avenue. These sections draw heavily on the holdings of the Virginia Historical Society. In these chapters I demonstrate the constant rearticulation of public memory in response to changing realities of racial segregation. As white supremacy was slowly dismantled, Richmond’s elite found new icons and new forms through which to articulate a vision of local memory that rebuttressed their waning regime.

Chapter Four, “The Richmond Renaissance; Neoliberalism and Multicultural Memory: 1970-1992,” continues this theme by examining the post-integration histories of race and memory in Richmond. This chapter continues to draw on the work of Moeser and Dennis and Randolph and Tate as well as sociologist Michelle Byng’s doctoral dissertation, *A New Face in the Structure of Community: the Black Political Elite of Richmond, Virginia,* which examines Richmond’s African American political leadership. This chapter also introduces key theoretical terms that structure the discussion of Ashe and the Ashe memorial. I draw from

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major theorists of the paradigm of neoliberalism, especially David Harvey, Nikolas Rose, and Lisa Duggan, in examining the ways discourse surrounding race and community shifted after the Civil Rights Movement.\footnote{David Harvey, \textit{A Brief History of Neoliberalism}, Oxford: Oxford U P, 2005; Nikolas Rose, \textit{Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought}, (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1999); Lisa Duggan, \textit{The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy}, (Boston: Beacon, 2003).} In this chapter I demonstrate the rise of an African American business class, epitomized by politician Doug Wilder, that was effected through an embrace of neoliberal economic policy and multicultural politics. This African American business class, I assert, was combined this colorblind politics with the traditional, conservative social values of Richmond and Virginia’s white elite to create a new model citizen.  

In Chapter Five, “Memories of Masculinity: Arthur Ashe in Body, Word, and Deed,” I demonstrate the ways that Arthur Ashe drew from these values and positioned himself to be this model citizen. This chapter largely draws from Ashe’s considerable written work. Ashe is an ideal subject for the study of race and gender in post-Civil Rights communal remembrance. Though widely remembered in popular memoirs and journalism, Ashe has never been the subject of a full-scale critical study; while there is not ample room in this dissertation for that type of in-depth work, in order to understand the Ashe memorial, we need to examine his life and his death. Though he was an athlete, writer, and activist, Ashe’s life was defined by his experiences in the almost wholly-white world of professional tennis. As a writer and activist, Ashe carefully drew upon his biography to influence discussions of race, politics, and sport in the United States and abroad, most significantly in South Africa. Lastly, Ashe’s early death from HIV/AIDS was preceded by the acknowledgement of his body’s demise. In Ashe, we have a unique figure, whose life and death figure intimately into his status as a national hero. That subject is taken up in Chapter Six, “Popular Culture, “HIV/AIDS, and Memories of Arthur Ashe.” In it, I examine Ashe’s place in national and local memory through a study of the memorial practices occasioned
by his death and national discursive practices surrounding the depiction of race and masculinity in popular culture. This discussion is deeply influenced by the theoretical work of a number of scholars of African American masculinity and popular culture, most especially Patricia Hill Collins, Bakari Kitwana, Mark Anthony Neal, Robin D. G. Kelley, and Phillip Brian Harper. This chapter also considers the recent history of the commemoration of the Civil Rights Movement. I write at an exciting time in which the various social movements of the 1950s, ‘60s, and ‘70s have become important subjects of commemoration, appropriation, and academic study. Although only an aspect of this dissertation, the legacies or Civil Rights Movement and their treatment in public discourse, conservative and left/liberal activism, and history and cultural studies are central to my discussion of the Ashe memorial. This dissertation makes a small contribution to the ongoing discussion of which activists and movements we should celebrate, how we should celebrate them, and the ways we should interpret the meaning of the paradigm shifts of the Civil Rights era.

Chapter Seven, “Memory and Public Discourse: 1992-1996,” finally considers the Ashe memorial as a text within these long histories and discursive systems. Drawing from primary documents, such as the minutes of city council hearings, newspaper articles and editorials and the small body of work written on the Ashe memorial, this chapter provides a thorough analysis of this period in Richmond history and concludes the long discussion of memory as a tool in the formation of local identity within a U.S. city. Through this analysis, we gain a better understanding of the genealogy of memory and the ways Richmond’s community ties are

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imagined. Throughout this study, and especially in this last chapter, I demonstrate that community belonging, as expressed through public memory, is subject to the legacies of the past and that, in the case of Richmond, Virginia, that past has recycled old ideals in response to political and cultural shifts. Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates that as the barriers to racial inclusion have fallen, a more nuanced definition of belonging, one which depends upon ideals of masculinity and gentility, has persisted and, in many ways, become more fully ingrained in civic and political institutions. And while these imaginings are, as Anderson’s phrase reminds us, inherently false, they are capable of mustering great emotional and psychological responses. Though Arthur Ashe is celebrated as a local and national hero, it is in the rending of his spirit and the wide-ranging struggles that consumed Richmond that we see the continuing realities of racism and the influential power of conservative values which compel human behavior.
Chapter Two

Memory Between Civil War and Civil Rights: 1890-1948

Virginia stands apart from much of the former Confederacy in that white supremacist rule has historically been enforced not through violence and intimidation but through the seductive power of an ideal of the Old Dominion as the domain of a patrician elite. This oligarchy traced its legitimacy to antebellum ideals of white paternalism and a cultural mythology of Virginia’s primacy within regional and national histories. By reaching back into the past and distancing itself from the Deep South, especially the states of the Gulf Coast, Virginians were able to enforce racial segregation and prop up white rule through cultural and political means without employing widespread violence. Evidence of this “benign” form of segregation is in the minor presence of terrorist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the relatively low number of lynchings in Virginia. With the exception of Maryland and West Virginia, North Carolina Virginia had fewer lynchings than any other former slave state.\(^1\) The absence of overt racial violence should not be mistaken for the absence of racial segregation or severe oppression. Through culture and politics, Virginia’s white elite attempted to control the lives and actions of African Americans and placed severe limits on the movement, actions, and education of a whole people.

As J. Douglas Smith has recently shown, these cultural and political systems were not static, but changed in tandem with the increasing demands of African American Virginians.\(^2\) From the 1902 state constitution which effectively disenfranchised African American voters, through the 1940s, Virginia’s white elite maintained paternalistic control over the state’s political

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\(^1\) Virginia had 100; North Carolina had 101. See the table at http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/shipp/lynchingsstate.html

and economic institutions but allowed for a small African American middle class to gain make small, token gains. Throughout this era, Richmond experienced a degree of privilege within the state and the region. As a center of political and economic power and by virtue of its centrality within narratives of regional identity that emphasized the Civil War as the defining feature of the South, Richmond remained a first among equals within Virginia and the South.

In the mid-twentieth century this power dynamic faced significant challenges, and Richmond’s political and cultural institutions were forced to adapt. The economic and social programs of the New Deal and the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement loosened the grip of Virginia’s oligarchy of white elites and enabled the expansion of the African American franchise. Contributing to this loosening was a shift in the demographics of Richmond’s electorate due to white-flight suburbanization, resulting in the growth of African American political power within Richmond. Furthermore, Richmond’s influence within the state diminished as the populations of Northern Virginia and the Tidewater region grew. The growth of the Federal government that started during Franklin Roosevelt’s presidential administration led to the population explosion of the Washington, D.C., suburbs of Northern Virginia. At the same time, the development of Norfolk, Virginia, as a major naval base led to the growth of the Tidewater as the state’s major industrial center. Richmond’s traditional elite fought fiercely against these changes and attempted to perpetuate their dominant position. This was done through the alteration of local governmental institutions and procedures and the inclusion of a few African American leaders among the traditional white economic elite. By 1989 the color of Richmond’s political leadership had changed. But the shift in racial dynamics among the political leadership belied the perpetuation of racial segregation and economic divisions within the city. While some African American leaders, such as Doug Wilder, gained political
advantage, their economic privilege and their involvement with the city’s traditional economic elite contributed directly to the perpetuation of historically dominant groups.

This political change existed interdependently with the city’s role in state and regional historical identities. Richmond’s traditional attachment to the Civil War and the Confederacy was discordant with the institutions and locations, such as Colonial Williamsburg, that celebrated and were associated with the rest of Virginia’s long history. Virginia’s historical identity highlights the colonial and Civil Rights eras along with or in place of the Civil War. This attachment to diverse historical identities fosters a whiggish image of the modern South as racially liberal and economically progressive. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Richmond developed a temporally specific association with the Civil War. Richmond’s position within Southern Memory depends upon the high concentration of Civil War and Confederate memory within its landscapes, most especially Monument Avenue. But, as Virginia’s identity moved towards emphasizing the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Richmond’s historical identity lost salience within the standard image of the state. The cultural and political histories of this transformation are manifest in the development of Monument Avenue. From the unveiling of the Robert E. Lee monument in 1890 to the first stirrings of public sentiment that led to the Ashe memorial, Richmond’s political and cultural institutions underwent significant alteration. What remained constant in the face of these waves of change were ideals of morality, civility, and self-rule that formed the core of Richmond’s local identity. These ideals formed the basis of Richmond’s and Virginia’s Jim Crow segregation and the anti-integration politics of the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s. While race is a crucial component of the histories of these ideals, so too are class and memory. In this chapter I trace the manifestations and uses of these ideals throughout the first half century of Monument Avenue. I examine the initial development of
Monument Avenue in the era of overt oligarchic rule; this era was defined by Jim Crow segregation and a Democratic machine.

The social, political, and economic upheaval of the Civil War and reconstruction enabled the temporary cessation of rule by white elites. After the Civil War, Richmond’s significant African American population gained a degree of political influence by taking advantage of franchise and the social networks developed by freed blacks and slaves employed in the city’s industrial sector prior to the Civil War.³ By the turn of the century, the relatively inclusive era of post-reconstruction African American franchise was terminated through practices of gerrymandering and election fraud. This termination was entrenched in the new state constitution in 1902 which effectively disenfranchised African Americans. The disenfranchisement of African Americans occurred alongside the disenfranchisement of working class white Virginians and the renewed power of the white elite oligarchy. Writing in the 1940s, V.O. Key noted that “of all American states, Virginia can lay claim to the most thorough control by an oligarchy.”⁴ Virginia’s and Richmond’s white elites have historically maintained political and economic control by means of a politics of paternalism. By maintaining white privilege, the oligarchy controlled working class whites; by enabling conditions that were relatively better than in other Southern cities and states and by working with a select African American middle class, the oligarchy created a buffer zone protecting white privilege from widespread African American political mobilization.⁵

³ Randolph and Tate, 73-110.
⁵ Moeser and Dennis.
Maintaining Patrician Rule in Politics, Economics, and Memory: the Development of Monument Avenue

After the Civil War, Richmond’s African American community exerted a degree of influence over local and state politics. Twenty-five African Americans were elected to the constitutional convention of 1867 and played a crucial role in a coalition with radical and moderate Republicans. And, despite wavering commitment from the Republican Party, thirty-three African Americans held positions on Richmond’s Board of Aldermen and Common Council between 1871 and 1898. These representatives were primarily elected from the African American enclave of Jackson Ward; at times during this era Jackson Ward’s delegation of eight was entirely African American. Gerrymandering had left African Americans with no political opportunities in the city’s other districts but had left this one district with an African American majority. Within the city government, this delegation formed a minority group, never more than eight in a forty-eight member body. Furthermore, they predominantly served on the lowest-ranking committees on the city council, overseeing street maintenance, local police, markets, and elections. Despite their lack of prestige, these positions did enable African American politicians to examine the day-to-day governance of the city and help buffer the direct impact of racist policies on the city’s African Americans. However, their absence from higher-ranking, agenda-setting committees meant that they had little influence over the long term future of Richmond and its African American community. Jackson Ward’s minor influence waned as voting restrictions and fraudulent elections eliminated African American political influence. By 1898,

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6 Randolph and Tate, 86
the last African American representative to the city government lost reelection. The next African American representative to the city government would not be elected for fifty years.

By 1901, Virginia had slowly shifted from potentially inclusive institutions and practices to perpetual racial exclusion ensured by gerrymandering, voting restrictions, and election fraud. This exclusion was more deeply entrenched through the provisions of a new state constitution. The 1901-02 state constitutional convention deliberated various measures that would eliminate the African American vote. The convention passed over proposals to include stringent property qualifications in favor of an “understanding” clause; voters were required to demonstrate in writing or orally that they “understood” the new state constitution. Common across the former Confederacy, “understanding” clauses were “designed expressly to be administered in a discriminatory fashion, permitting whites to vote while barring blacks. … Discrimination was … built into literacy tests, with their ‘understanding’ clauses: officials administering the test could, and did, judge whether a prospective voter’s ‘understanding’ was adequate.” Well documented by historian Michael Perman, the 1901-02 constitutional convention arrived at the “understanding” clause after difficult deliberations that were fought along factional lines among Virginia elites who were concerned with the relative effect the “understanding” clause would have on illiterate whites. Because Virginia had a more diverse economy than states further to the South, its population was understood to be more geographically diverse than the rest of the former Confederacy. These demographic variations made it difficult for representatives to agree upon provisions that would satisfy the breadth of the state’s white populations.

7 Byng, 103-6
The “understanding” clause was also a source of frustration for white elites who had a possessive investment in paternalism’s supposed benefits for African Americans. Proponents of severe limits to franchise defined the threat posed by African American political participation by discussing the relatively superior conditions and prospects for African Americans in Virginia. Citing data that African Americans in Virginia were far more literate than those in other states and that Virginia spent twice as much as most Southern states on education, delegate Alfred P. Thom remarked that “the negro with us is a different man; … he is nearer to our civilization.”

This view was echoed by Caperton A. Braxton, who noted that “our negroes more intelligent, more money, more exposed to northern inspiration” [sic] and thus “the chances of being attacked [by an African American] would be greater than in Miss or S.C.” The editors of the *Richmond Dispatch* echoed these concerns, noting that African Americans were making great strides in education and property owning.

The long history of Richmond’s independent African American civil society, with organized church and civic associations, was also problematic because it enabled African American political organization. While Virginia’s white elite took pride in the benevolence of their racial caste system, they worried that it would enable political action. The source of Virginia pride had ingrained within it the potential for its own undoing.

This precarious balancing continued well past the 1901 constitutional convention and became the hallmark of Virginia’s political development throughout the twentieth century. Starting in the 1920s, Virginia developed an economic infrastructure and political culture that was at odds with the lower South. While the textile industry developed across the piedmont of the Carolinas and Georgia, Virginia experienced a more diverse industrial output that

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10 Quoted in Perman, 211.
11 Perman Ibid.
12 Perman Ibid.
13 Perman, 211-12.
emphasized tobacco and mechanics.\textsuperscript{14} Virginia’s diverse industrial output was matched by the strong growth of its banking sector.\textsuperscript{15} As this occurred, Virginia’s political culture developed some of the contrary tendencies that define it today. While significant factions among the white elite remained, they were brought together under the wide reach of the state Democratic Machine, which gained extensive power through the leadership of Harry Byrd, who came to power in the 1920s. First as governor and later as U.S. Senator, Byrd dominated Virginia’s politics from the 1920s until the era of the Great Society. While he did not exercise as large a sway over national politics as other machine politicians, Byrd’s control of “the selection of candidates for office, support of significant legislation, and imposition of economic and social doctrines” allowed him to leave a permanent mark on the state.\textsuperscript{16}

Byrd is best remembered for his “advocacy of balanced budgets and his criticism of big government” and as a “leader of efforts to prevent desegregation of the South.”\textsuperscript{17} A staunch segregationist and social conservative, Byrd opposed women’s suffrage on the grounds that it would extend the franchise to African American women. He thwarted African American political empowerment and publicly worked against Federal Civil Rights legislation, such as President Harry Truman’s Fair Employment Practices Commission, which would have made lynching illegal nationwide. But, in a contrary move indicative of Byrd’s Virginia roots, Byrd was considered a progressive among Southern Democrats. His tax and land use policies helped develop Virginia’s rural areas. And, more important here, he sponsored strict anti-lynching legislation that made all members of a lynch mob subject to murder charges. Moreover, he and

\textsuperscript{14} For information on communities associated with the textile industry see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Ju Ann Jones and Christopher B. Daly, eds., \textit{Like a Family: the Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World}, (New York: Norton, 1987)


\textsuperscript{17} Heinemann 1996, Ibid.
his Democratic machine did not engage in the vicious race baiting tactics that were openly practiced in other regions of the South. Byrd’s motivations were not altruistic. Randolph and Tate argue that his contrary stance on lynching was grounded in his steadfast support of state’s rights. I would add that Byrd’s contrariness in regards to race is grounded in the traditions that dominated Virginia’s political and social history. As we have seen earlier, Virginia has historically been dominated by a white elite. This elite governed through exclusion and fear, practices which were justified through the aristocratic ideals of Virginia traditionalism. Byrd’s relatively more benign racism and his slow reform of Jim Crow enabled Virginia’s white elite to distance themselves from the cruder racists of the deep South and the abuses of Northern capitalism. Virginia elites understood themselves to be better than other whites because of the gentle hand they used in ruling. This gentle hand helped better the fortunes of lower castes. However, their betterment made them more of a threat. Thus, Virginia’s elite continually needed to secure the permanence of their oligarchy.

While exclusionary, the structures of Byrd era Richmond did, in fact, enable some African American political involvement. Richmond’s African American community, disenfranchised, denied full social citizenship, and spatially confined within the city, drew from its rich history and its considerable resources to develop strong community, financial, and educational institutions. These social networks enabled the rise of an African American middle class who continued the measured influence of late-nineteenth century political participants. Maggie Walker, a leader in this era, was the first African American woman to lead a bank. By developing an African American owned and controlled financial institution, Walker worked to

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18 Randolph and Tate, 111-19.
further African American economic empowerment.\textsuperscript{19} Walker, and others, such as John T Mitchell, founder and editor of the \textit{Richmond Planet}, trod a precarious path, one which ameliorated the concerns and fostered the aristocratic identity of Richmond’s white elite. While there were moments of radical political action against the Democratic machine, Richmond’s African American community, through this ascendant middle class, worked to influence the political system. Randolph and Tate argue that this middle class took a path of collaboration and accommodation that would slowly alter practices of segregation.\textsuperscript{20} They did so, in part, because more militant and radical action would cause white elites to re-entrench their positions through drastic changes. Richmond’s African American middle class, however, was tied to the larger African American community. Fully segregated, Richmond’s Jim Crow-era African American population was forced to work together and develop strong social, political, and economic institutions. Walker and Mitchell understood this and worked to develop the separate spheres of African American communities. It is also important to note that this unity made precarious any endeavor by an African American conservative to work with the Byrd machine or outside the dominant African American political group. Well organized through churches and community groups, Richmond’s African Americans were quick to remove support for those conservatives who moved too far away from the dominant goals of the community.

While the Byrd Machine dominated state politics, it was not impervious to hotly contested elections and the electoral success of Republicans and Northern Democrats in national elections. While Herbert Hoover carried the state in 1928, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry Truman went on to carry the state from 1932 to 1948, despite Byrd’s resistance to the social

\textsuperscript{20} Randolph and Tate, Ibid.
programs and large government priorities of the New Deal.\footnote{Heinemann 1983, 3; Heinemann 1996.} Since 1948, however, the only Democrat to carry Virginia has been Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1964. While Virginia has historically remained in step with the greater South throughout the twentieth century, the competitiveness of national elections and the viability of a second party continue to distinguish it.

This competitiveness comes, in part, from the diversity of Virginia’s economy and the localized growth associated with the rise of the Federal government during and after the New Deal. Predominantly rural prior to the New Deal and World War II, the Northern Virginia suburbs experienced rapid growth as Washington, D.C., developed into a major metropolitan region. This growth brought in waves of first generation Virginians who were not personally attached to the State’s history. Alongside the growth of Northern Virginia, the Norfolk/Newport News area grew into a major industrial center, including the major U.S. Navy shipyard. The greater Washington and Norfolk regions did not experience the dire economic upheavals of the depression; these regions helped carry the rest of the state as the textile and tobacco economies of the central and southern regions waned.\footnote{Heinemann 1983, 8.}

The values at the core of oligarchic political control were manifest in the cultural politics of popular memory and commemoration. The decades around the turn of the century were a high water mark for monument and memorial building in the U.S., especially in the South. In this era the nation recovered from the Civil War, celebrated its centennial, finalized the conquest of the Western states, turned outward in imperial adventures in the Caribbean and Asia and, finally, cemented its position as a global power in World War I. Across the nation, monuments, memorials, and vast City Beautiful projects were undertaken, transforming the American
landscape into one that was representative of American might. In Virginia these projects emphasized the State’s unique role in national history. Much of the statewide project occurred under the aegis of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA). Founded in 1889, the APVA worked to identify, preserve, and celebrate the historical artifacts and figures associated with Virginia’s antebellum past. This project was designed to protect the glory of the Old South in the face of a New England-centric national historic identity and the bustle and steam of the Atlanta-centered New South. APVA worked to honor John Smith and Jamestown as the true origins of American culture and attempted to enshrine as models of liberty and independence revolutionaries such Nathaniel Bacon and Patrick Henry. This project, well documented by historian James Lindgren, emphasized the antebellum roots of Virginia culture; in fact, its bylaws stipulated 1861 as the cutoff date for its historical concerns.23

There was, of course, widespread commemoration of the Civil War. But, while the breadth of the eastern United States engaged in remembering of the Civil War, in the South this project carried a far more urgent physical and cultural agenda. Many Southerners and Southern spaces carried physical wounds from the War, and reconstruction and rebuilding were imbued with the spirit of remembering and addressing the wounds of the South’s fall and the loss of the war and the Confederacy. Richmond was at the very heart of that myth; its fall to Grant’s army was the end of the Lost Cause. As it was physically reconstructed it began to carry the imprint of that memory, an imprint that is still visible. Elocquently described by contemporary journalist and travel writer Tony Horwitz as a “vast cenotaph of secession,” Richmond is filled with physical remnants of the war and reminders of the South’s loss, including museums, “rebel graves, countless monuments, and the remains of confederate bulwarks, armories, prisons [and]

This celebration of the antebellum worked in collusion with the celebration of the Lost Cause. While “more than one Lost Cause contended for space on the landscape of Civil War memory” what is usually referred to as the Lost Cause was a potent cultural myth that developed among white Southerners after the Civil War. Within Virginia, the Lost Cause celebrated a regional heritage that enshrined notions of paternalistic white civilization that could be traced back through Civil War heroes like Robert E. Lee to their origins in colonial ideals of revolution and self-rule, typified in iconic figures such as Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Francis Bacon, and John Smith. An apologia for the Confederacy, the Lost Cause identified the Confederacy as an attempt to preserve the traditions and customs of the Old South. While the APVA developed a mythology of those traditions and customs, the Lost Cause served as a potent reminder of their near-destruction at the hands of the North.

This widespread network of monuments and memorials developed during the era of the New South when the myth of the Lost Cause was taken up by a generation of planters and merchants who worked to position the South as in step with national ideals while maintaining a local identity associated with Southern resistance and values. The boosterism of the New South and economic investment by Northern financiers encouraged the economic and industrial development of the South, leading to a landscape rife with contradictory reminders of the pasts and presents of race and class stratification. By ostensibly emphasizing values of liberty and independence, the memorial imagination of the Lost Cause and the New South obscured the racial and class divisions that enabled the celebration and embodiment of those values by a white elite. Within Richmond and Virginia, these values informed a localized identity of white privilege and noblesse oblige. They worked to mediate the personal memories of those who

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25 Blight, 95.
lived through the war and the burgeoning cultural memories of the New South. At the physical and imaginary center of this project was the development of Monument Avenue, the Lost Cause’s grandest articulation, the *Champs-Élysées* of the South.

Monument Avenue began as a concept, a space in which to honor the recently deceased military leader, Robert E. Lee. In 1890, after twenty years of infighting among rival heritage groups, a statue of Lee was erected in a plot of empty farmland on the outskirts of Richmond. The Lee monument was not the first memorial in Richmond; by 1890 the grounds of the State Capitol were covered with memorials to Virginians of the early Federal era, numerous cemeteries were dedicated to the remains of confederate soldiers, and the earthworks of the Confederate army still stood around the city. But the Lee Monument is significant as a central piece of both the imaginary and material development of Richmond after reconstruction. The Lee Monument solidified the deceased general’s role as the main figure in the myth of the Lost Cause and was the centerpiece of a vigorous plan for urban and suburban development that positioned the Lost Cause as the dominant idiom of the New South while mainstreaming the old Confederacy with the national values.  

After Lee’s death in 1870, two rival groups, an organization of former Confederate officers called the Army of Northern Virginia and a group of women from elite Virginia families, the Ladies’ Lee Monument Association, were founded with the expressed purposes of remembering and honoring Lee. Pitted against each other, these gendered attempts to erect a monument to Lee in Richmond made little headway until 1886 when an act of the Virginia General Assembly merged them into a single, state run body, the Lee Monument Association (LMA). Headed by Governor Fitzhugh Lee, who was both a former Confederate general and a

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26 For a broad history of Monument Avenue see Sarah Shields Driggs, Richard Guy Wilson, and Robert P. Winthrop, *Richmond’s Monument Avenue*, (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina P. 2001); for an in depth discussion of the Lee Monument and the origins of Monument Avenue see Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*. 
nephew of Robert E. Lee, the LMA oversaw the completion of a monumental statue of Lee that would serve as a new and powerful imaginary and material center for the city.\textsuperscript{27}

The decision to place the Lee Monument in a field on the outskirts of the city was a bold move by the LMA that integrated the memorial practices of the late nineteenth century South with the economic and class realignments of the “New South.” Well described by Savage, the decision broke from previous plans to locate the monument in an unchanging park-like setting on the grounds of the State Capitol and positioned the monument at the heart of local economic and real estate developments. The monument became the terminus of a new boulevard named Monument Avenue, which extended from the heart of the city into the western suburbs. Monument Avenue’s eastern terminus connected it with Franklin Street. Franklin Street begins at the State Capitol, extends westward through affluent neighborhoods and a park and, after one mile, connects with Monument Avenue. A spatial link from the old, central city and newer growth, Franklin Street and Monument Avenue were at the heart of the development of Richmond as the capital of the New South; Savage nicely summarizes this project:

After a couple of decades in which the city formally annexed the property and actively promoted its development, Monument Avenue filled in and became the most fashionable address in town. The avenue became home to the city’s elite—the New South elite of merchants, lawyers, and other professionals who had subsumed and displaced the old planter class. At the same time the avenue also became home to a whole series of monuments to Confederate leaders, which were placed on the axis with the original monument to Lee.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{27} See Appendix 1, “Lee Monument” and Appendix 2, “Lee Circle” for image of the Lee Monument and its contemporary environs.  
\textsuperscript{28} Savage, 148.
These monuments included memorials to General J.E.B. Stuart and President Jefferson Davis, which were completed in 1907, and General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, which was completed in 1919.\textsuperscript{29}

Though rich with Confederate icons, the avenue employed and established an iconography of memory which distanced slavery and racial politics in the articulation of a new identity for Richmond as a regional capital in line with the national imagination. Again, Savage articulates this well:

The once unpromising location of the Lee Monument turned out to have great symbolic value. It further cemented the depoliticization of Lee by moving him away from the old precinct of the Confederate Capitol and quite literally into the city of the future—a residential neighborhood not yet even built. Once the boulevard began to fill in around the monument, it effectively asserted the continuity between the old and new regimes, between the Confederate past and a modern South now oriented to the mainstream national values of business and progress.\textsuperscript{30}

The work of the LMA not only helped create this iconography of a New South Richmond in tune with the nation, it managed to heal divisions that had opened during the monument campaign. According to Savage, Richmond’s elite had experienced some embarrassment over the twenty year’s of infighting that had necessitated the formation of the LMA. But the visual and economic power of Monument Avenue pushed forward a subtle narrative of normalized whiteness. By uniting white sections in the creation of an imaginary and material development of a depoliticized memory of Lee that linked the Confederate past and the New South present,

\textsuperscript{29} See appendices 3 to 10 for images of these monuments.
\textsuperscript{30} Savage, 149-50.
the LMA created a monument that “in its final incarnation … clothed white power in an image of civilization, a civilization that presupposed whiteness as a kind of moral prerequisite.”

While Monument Avenue was a grand success among white Richmonders, there was considerable, and understandable, dissent from Richmond’s African American communities. Anthropologist Paul Shackel, in Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration and the Post-Bellum Landscape makes the important observation that the current trend in studying the consensus history of national reconciliation through memories of the Civil War obscures the considerable resistance that was mounted by African Americans. In his book he traces counter memories that often exist outside the frames we employ in the study of memory. A strong example of these counter memories exist in African American Richmond’s responses to the Lee Monument. Savage provides a strong summary of that history, pointing out that the city’s African American newspaper, the Richmond Planet took up the cause of resisting the development of the Lee Monument and ridiculed those who worked for it. The Planet’s editor, John T. Mitchell, was, at the time, one of the few remaining African American city council members, and used this position to vote against the economic and structural policies needed to build the Lee Monument. Throughout the process, Mitchell and others were not subtle in their resistance. Mitchell questioned Richmond’s economic elite’s use of military iconography, pointing out that while they celebrated the Confederacy, most of them had spent the war at home, far from the field of battle. Moreover, Mitchell argued that though white, segregationist Democrats controlled Richmond and Virginia, the city’s African American minority were destined to supplant their former masters through their involvement in the nationally dominant Republican party. Mitchell’s proud, confrontational attacks, however, were foiled by the

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31 Savage, 150.
32 Shackel, Memory in Black and White
incredible cultural power of Monument Avenue and its attendant political corollary, disenfranchisement. African American resistance would, as we have already seen, quickly lose its institutional influence and be remanded to the relatively opaque cultural and social networks of community power relationships.

The enshrinement of whiteness in Monument Avenue created a grand spectacle that brought together white elites and disenfranchised whites, both women and non-elite whites, into a cohesive majority that ruled because of the putative virtues endemic to their race. The Lee Monument and later additions to Monument Avenue were key sites in the normalization of whiteness and the Lost Cause in New South Richmond. The rule of white elites was predicated on the putative justness and rightness of their rule. By linking themselves to enshrined ideals of civilization, morality, and liberty, they were able to control of a political process which excluded women and non-elites. This exclusion was justified through cultural logics built around racial instability, and regional victimhood. As we have seen in the discussion of political discourses, African Americans in Virginia were understood as relatively superior to those in other areas of the nation. The ostensible tenderness assumed in Virginia’s racial segregation not only bolstered the benevolence of Virginia’s aristocratic claims, it established African Americans as a more educated, more proximate, more tangible threat to white supremacy. White elites, by perpetuating the gender, race, and class hierarchies of traditional Virginia, were able to mediate and profit from those systemic tensions. As the protectors of poor whites and white womanhood, they ensured their control of political discourse; furthermore, the supposed benevolence of Virginia’s segregation ameliorated any concerns regarding justness of white supremacy.

This rule was further justified through a politics of fear that depended upon a notion of regional/state victimhood. While the Lost Cause and the Virginia traditionalism of the APVA
afforded Virginia a privileged position within the nation, these traditions drew from and exacerbated the fear of Northern aggression. In a striking survey of national identity and responses to military loss, *Cultures of Defeat: on National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*, Wolfgang Schivelbusch demonstrates that prior to the War the South saw itself as the threatened, feminized half of the nation. This identity was embraced after the war and was expanded exponentially through the mythology of the Lost Cause. Personal and generational memories of wartime hardships, the war’s horrifying and staggering injuries and deaths, the severity of Grant and Sherman’s destruction of the South’s infrastructure, and the supposed harshness of the regimes enforced during Reconstruction certainly effected Southern psyche and perpetuated the antebellum South’s identity that was grounded in notions of defeat and victimhood. The Lost Cause, then, drew from these deep seated senses of regional/state victimhood. While the South saw itself as just, its defeat had come at the hands of an unjust, aggressive partner in the nation. Monument Avenue was thus indicative of the New South’s economic potential and a reassertion of the South’s position as the victim of Northern aggression. White elites secured their rule by fighting for state’s rights and working against the aggressive nation. Monument Avenue helped Richmond reach back into the near past, celebrating heroes who were models for the post-Reconstruction white elite, justifying their rule by enforcing a tenuous structure of values and identities that girded the continuation of an antiquated social order.

A New Hero for the Lost Cause: Matthew Fontaine Maury

For three decades, from 1890 to 1919, the City of Richmond put considerable energy into creating a monumental and residential complex that employed a memorial iconography that bridged the Confederate past and the New South present with a ritual of whiteness; this development also worked to establish Richmond as a regional capital that was aligned with national values. And, as regional and national values and identities changed over the course of the twentieth century, so too did Monument Avenue. Douglas Smith has offered the convincing argument that in the decades between the World Wars, Virginia’s white elite struggled to maintain supremacy. These shifting rationales for white paternalism are mirrored in the further development of Monument Avenue as a site of national and international memory. This following section considers the last Confederate memorial placed on Monument Avenue as evidence of the ways memory has been manipulated to meet the stiff challenge of maintaining Jim Crow segregation; this section also serves as an important moment in the genealogy of memory in Richmond that predicates many of the concerns that arise in the 1960s and 1990s with the Ashe Memorial.

Unveiled in 1929, the Matthew Fontaine Maury Monument marked a visual and symbolic change for Monument Avenue and Richmond. Maury is unique among the Confederate figures enshrined on Monument Avenue, not only because he is the most obscure figure, but also because what historical prominence he did attain came from peace time work and contributions to the global scientific community and not, necessarily, his work for the Confederacy. Born in Virginia, Maury was an officer in the U.S. Navy who, in 1842, was appointed the first head of the U.S. Naval Observatory. In that post, he took on the task of mapping seabeds and charting

34 Smith, Ibid.
sea lanes and studied weather patterns and land forms. He is considered the father of modern oceanography, and his work for the Naval Observatory laid the foundation for the U.S. Weather Bureau. His connection with the Confederacy came during the Civil War when he served in the Confederate Navy and went abroad as a representative of the Confederate government.35

The mainstreamed narratives of Maury’s life often indicate that as war broke out he was invited to come work for the governments of France, Russia, and other European states that desired his oceanographic expertise. These narratives emphasize that Maury passed on those offers in order to serve Virginia. However, what is often forgotten, both by early twentieth century Lost Cause heritage groups and modern historians of that period, is that Maury was reluctant to return to the United States after the end of the war. When the war ended he crossed the Atlantic and entered the service of the Mexican Emperor, who appointed him Imperial Commissar of Colonization.36 When that project failed, Maury returned to England and only later did he return to the United States and Virginia. This selective emphasis on aspects of Maury’s career is indicative of both the creation of Lost Cause icons as well as the values that Maury came stand for. Maury would come to be celebrated for the global reach enabled by his scientific achievements and the celebrity those achievements ensured. What was forgotten were the few instances when Maury sought to capitalize on that celebrity and, in essence, turned away from Virginia and the United States.

Efforts to enshrine Maury on Monument Avenue began in 1906 when Gaston Liechtenstein, a Richmonder, visited Germany and noted that Maury was treated with reverence in a Hamburg naval museum. Upset that Maury was all but unknown in his native country and his home state, Liechtenstein, in 1912, began a public campaign for the monument. In just a few

35 Driggs et al, 79-87.
36 Papers of the Matthew Fontaine Maury Association (MFMA), Letter to United Daughters of the Confederacy and Sons of Confederate Veterans, No Date, Virginia Historical Society (VHS).
years, Liechtenstein had raised sufficient interest and the Matthew Fontaine Maury Association (MFMA) was formed in Richmond. The MFMA was headed by E.E. Moffitt and its initial membership was dominated by elite Richmonders and Virginians, Woodrow Wilson among them. We have unique access to this group through the collected papers and material held in the archives of the Virginia Historical Society. The organization began with three set goals: to have Maury enlisted in the National Hall of Fame in New York City; to have January Fourteenth, Maury’s birthday, to be designated a holiday in Virginia schools; and to erect “a bronze statue in the city of Richmond to which it is desirable that every citizen of Virginia contribute in a general appreciation the many inestimable benefits which Maury conferred upon mankind, voicing for Americans that gratitude which thus far has found no adequate expression.”

The goal was not simply the erection of a monument and the effect of symbolic permanence in the landscape of the city; the MFMA sought to shape a legacy that would inform all residents of Virginia and would be aligned with national ideals in New York. The goal was nothing less than the maintenance of a public memory that was to be ingrained within the discourse and consciousness of all Virginians and upon which the state could define its existence. Maury would reinforce the saturated image of the Lost Cause while augmenting the very localized and regional appeals of Lee, Jackson, Davis, and Stuart.

Maury’s appeal outside the confines of Virginia and Richmond became very clear in December 1916 when the both houses of the United States Congress passed bills calling for $30,000 dollars to be set aside for the erection of a monument to Maury in Washington, D.C.

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37 To gauge the lifespan of Maury’s place in Virginia memory, it is worthwhile to note that his birthday comes only a few days before those of Lee (January nineteenth) and Jackson (January twenty-first). When Virginia adopted Martin Luther King Day as a holiday it initially attached Lee and Jackson’s birthdays to King’s and celebrated Lee-Jackson-King day. However, although his birthday was just one day before King’s, Maury had slipped so far from public consciousness that his birthday was not recalled as a potential counter to the celebration of King’s legacy.

38 MFMA, Meeting Notes, 5-11-15
The House version of the bill clearly stated that the monument design and location would be overseen by the Secretary of the Navy. This delegation was echoed in the language and rationale used in the bill. Maury was to be remembered for the “period of his service as an officer of the United States Navy, connected with the Naval Observatory at Washington” and the monument would “perpetuate his fame as a geographer, a meteorologist, and discoverer of the laws governing the winds, currents, and routes of the ocean.” In this era, Washington, like Richmond, was in the midst of a period of great monument building. However, although a national memorial to Maury was approved, it was never completed, in large part because the Federal government was resistant to celebrating those who had willingly left the Union for the Confederacy. Thus, the Monument Avenue memorial took on greater importance. The MFMA worked towards their goals through a variety of fundraising activities and through public relations campaigns that stressed these same scientific gains. However, while their project depended upon Maury’s work for the United States government, their narrative stressed Maury’s assumed dedication to Virginia. And, in keeping with their goal of ingraining Maury within the larger memory of Virginia, the MFMA spent considerable time and energy retelling variations of his biography to a range of audiences.

The MFMA certainly included members of the major Confederate heritage groups. However, a close look at the papers of the MFMA makes clear that they existed somewhat interdependently of those organizations. One of the major audiences for MFMA fundraising activities were the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV). At various points, Moffitt, the president of the MFMA, made speeches and sent form letters to the members of the UCV and the SCV. More important, the MFMA developed a working relationship with the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). This relationship

39 MFMA, US House Bill S. 611, 12-16-16
was formalized in March, 1922 when Mrs. Frank Wolke of Norfolk approached the MFMA with a plan for collaboration. The plan had five stipulations: when completed, the monument would be placed in Richmond; the MFMA would continue to have complete control over the site and design and would choose the sculptor of their choice; the MFMA and the UDC would jointly lay the cornerstone of the monument during the Confederate Reunion which would occur in June, 1922 and that during that event the MFMA would pay for the stone while the UDC would pay for and plan the event; the MFMA would cease soliciting fund for the monument; and, finally, the UDC would contribute the remaining funds.  

This relationship would prove financial beneficial. As Karen Cox and Tara MacPherson have deftly noted, the UDC played a key role in the development of Confederate Memorials and in the spread of the Lost Cause. The MFMA certainly benefited from their financial support and the greater awareness brought by their participation. However, despite the terms of the agreement, the MFMA continued fundraising through 1925. This last push, however, was connected to one of their initial goals, the declaration of Maury day as a school holiday; the MFMA and the UDC also asked schools to consider using geography textbooks that included sections on Maury. However, while the MFMA was unable to secure an annual holiday on January fourteenth, they did convince Virginia public schools to designate December eleventh, 1925 as Maury Monument Day. On that date schools were to feature lessons on Maury and, most important, coordinate the collection of voluntary, but strongly encouraged, donations from schoolchildren. Harris Hart, the state superintendent of public instruction supported the measure

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40 MFMA, Meeting Notes, 3-9-22
41 Cox, Dixie’s Daughters; and McPherson, Reconstructing Dixie
and in a letter dated October, seventeenth, 1925 reminded school principles across the state to encourage the highest possible donations.\footnote{MFMA, Ibid, VHS; MFMA, Letter to Public Schools, 1924?; MFMA, Letter to Private Schools, October, 1925, VHS; MFMA, Letter from Harris Hart, 10-17-25}

The Richmond Superintendent of Public Schools took a similar position and sent a letter that was accompanied by an open letter from Moffitt that was to be read to students on Maury Day. Titled “Maury Monument Day in Richmond Schools December 11, 1925, The Story of One of Virginia’s Greatest Men,” this letter echoed the larger sentiments attached to Maury while introducing an audience-specific theme. Moffitt made sure to point out the students that “when War Between the State broke out, Maury, like General Lee and others, sorrowfully left Washington and offered his services to Virginia.” By associating Maury with Lee, Moffitt would draw upon the students knowledge of Lee and his sizable mythology. The letter continues by pointing out that “Foreign Kings and Emperors invited Maury to come to their countries but he said, ‘No, Virginia is my state and I shall do what I can to help her in a time of war.’” Again, there is the reminder of Maury’s global celebrity, a point which both increases his legacy and serves as a call for Virginia to celebrate its internationally known son. In Moffitt’s letter to the schoolchildren of Richmond features unique details of Maury’s life that are often left out of other narratives. She writes to the students that Maury grew fascinated with the oceans and weather as a young boy who served as an apprentice on sailing ships. This small detail creates an image of Maury as a curious, and adventurous, little boy. This image is mirrored by a description of Maury’s faithfulness as a father: “Maury went to England for the Confederate Government and carried his youngest boy with him. His older sons were soldiers in General Lee’s Army. He was very lonely in England but his boy was a great comfort to him.” The MFMA appealed to narratives of maturation as well as domestic ideals. Maury was marketed to school children
through a narrative that drew upon their notions of the Lost Cause, and which spoke in familiar terms of adventure, growth, and familial stability.⁴³

Fundraising among Richmond and Virginia school children was deployed in such a manner that Maury was both attached to and bolstered the image of Lee that was disseminated through schools and textbooks. As James McPherson has argued, schools and school curricula were crucial spaces in the perpetuation of the Lost Cause.⁴⁴ In the early twentieth century, as the actual veterans of the battles and homefronts of the Civil War passed away, their memories were forged into physical monuments and memorial spaces; it was more effectively translated through the creation of “Living Monuments” to Southern heroes. As McPherson demonstrates the UDC and SCV were heritage groups that sought to mold personal identities that transmitted values and memories of the Civil War.⁴⁵ The members of both groups claimed identity through their relationship to the Lost Cause. And the UDC saw a primary goal of their work as the education of children in these values. The MFMA took up a similar tactic through fundraising efforts in schools.

When we remember that the social network that was incorporated into the MFMA was dominated by women of elite Richmond families and that the MFMA worked to raise funds and create knowledge through outreach in schools, we can start to understand the gendered nature of memory within the idealized vision of the Maury Monument. Outreach programs in schools, which emphasized Maury’s role as a son and father, resonated with the gender identities of the MFMA and the UDC as mothers and daughters who worked on the homefront and within the private spheres of the domestic world to perpetuate the ideals Maury stood for. The Maury

⁴³ MFMA, Letter to Public Schools, VHS; MFMA, Letter to Private Schools
⁴⁵ Tara McPherson, Reconstructing Dixie.
monument, then, was the physical presence of a larger cultural project, one which reached through the social networks of elite Richmond and was reiterated and normalized through school outreach programs. While it is easy to recognize the contestable historical vision that the MFMA employed in honoring Maury, it is harder and more important to note this process of normalization.

The monument remains an interesting piece of public art. In their agreement with the UDC the MFMA maintained control over the selection of an artist and a design for the monument. This agreement may have allowed the monument to take on the form it did and not be a repetition of the elegiac and martial designs that dominated Civil War monuments, both Northern and Southern, in the early twentieth century. The MFMA selected William Sievers, a well-known sculptor who had designed the Jackson Monument on Monument Avenue and the Virginia Monument at Gettysburg. In a document titled “Explanation of Proposed Maury Monument” that is held with the papers of the MFMA, Sievers sets forth a rationale for the iconography employed in the monument and demonstrates that while his previous work had fallen within the dominant strains of Civil War Memorials, he had taken to heart the image of Maury the MFMA had promoted.46

Sievers wrote that he had “avoided as far as possible borrowing from the ancient classic,” a mode which had dominated not just memorials monuments but architecture across the South and the nation. Instead, Sievers wanted to give prominence to Maury’s great achievements, “the charting of the sea and air currents, and in particular the foundation of the science of meteorology, and geography.”47 Recognizing that “the conception at first glance may seem a bit revolutionary” Sievers assured the MFMA that it was not and that it was not his intention “to

46 William Sievers, “Explanation of Proposed Maury Monument,” MFMA.
attempt anything vague or vulgar.”

Rather, it was his “direct intention to depart from the stereotyped use of allegorical figures borrowed from a defunct religion to symbolize the greatness of an individual of a widely different era.” Sievers goes on to describe the model and the use of natural imagery and scientific designs within. The monument, which places Maury in a chair “listening to the voice of the winds and the voice of the waves … in profound thought” holding a sea chart and bible, is dominated by a massive globe that stands behind and above Maury. The globe features iconography to suggest the earth, air, water and fire and, as such, communicates the understood reach of Maury’s work. It is supported by a figural group of sailors and farmers who are being pushed and torn by the wind and rain. The “figures of both the marine and agricultural scenes are hopefully looking forward for some unseen and unknown help – that help is Maury.”

In Sievers conception and design the image Maury as an idealized tamer of the seas and the weather had come to fruition. Here he was celebrated as the protector of sailors and farmers in a statue that is remarkably modern when compared to the then existing statuary on Monument Avenue and other Civil War sites. Sievers’s design not only emphasized the global importance of Maury’s penetrating knowledge, it marked an important break from the visual rhetorics of the Lost Cause. The standard within Civil War monuments was the evocation of the classical. Even the greatest northern monument, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., overtly mimicked classical architecture, placing Lincoln in the position of a Greco-Roman deity or hero. While classicalism had been a popular strain of historical identification across the United States, it was especially pronounced in the South and in Virginia, where architecture and education had depended heavily on classical models. This identification often resonated with patrician

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48 Ibid
49 Ibid
50 Ibid
apologetics for Slavery and Southern economic and racial orders. By breaking with the classical tradition of Southern design Sievers echoed both the (inter)national legacy Maury was understood to possess and an important moment in Richmond’s historic identity. While the Civil War was still the defining event, that war no longer need claims of classical legitimacy to bolster its claims to national importance. Rather, as Maury had created new knowledges, knowledges that surpassed “the old religion” of the classical era, he afforded the creation of a new, modern iconography. This iconography was employed in the creation of a visual rhetoric that, while not revolutionary, was distinctly different and more modern than any with Richmond or Virginia.51

The initial presentation of the monument also broke from a tradition of unveiling monuments on Confederate holidays; rather, the Maury Monument was unveiled in 1929 on the new national holiday of Armistice Day, November 11. The choice of this date points to an important shift in the psyche of Richmond and Monument Avenue. Maury’s inclusion on Monument Avenue was part of a new national ritual of memorialization of World War I. It placed the Civil War within the longer, heroic traditions of national military history, rather than social histories of race and racism. The unveiling and the iconography of the monument signaled an end to the motifs of Southern military power that had dominated Monument Avenue. The South’s Lost Cause was brought into the larger narrative of American progress and growth. These shifts resonate with the choice of Maury as representative of Virginia. His life and the way in which he was memorialized are dependent upon his work with global and timeless ideals of science. It is this engagement with the world at large that brings fame and glory back to his home state. The Maury Monument is indicative of shifts within the imagination of Richmond as a regional, national, and international city. Aware and celebratory of its Confederate past, Richmond is at the heart of regional narratives of memory, identity, and progress. But by

51 See appendices 11 through 15 for images of the Maury Monument.
integrating these practices with the capitalism of the New South celebrations of national
impressions such as Armistice Day and the global and timeless ideals of science, Richmond was
able to articulate an imagination and self-identification that was aligned with national and
international values.

However, as the development of Monument Avenue slowed, this mainstreaming of
Richmond’s Civil War identity within regional and nation historical narratives weakened. As
economic and political power shifted away from the Byrd machine’s base in Richmond and
small towns, Virginia’s historical imagination experienced a new, nationalized articulation that
was at odds with the transhistorical reach of the New South mythology of the Lost Cause and the
APVA. The temporal and geographic emphases of Virginia’s past shifted and Northern and
Eastern Virginia were transformed into tourist destinations that drew upon Virginia’s colonial
past. The development of these tourist destinations depended upon the dislocation of local social
networks, the transformation of local memory, and their marketing to and consumption by
residents of the Mid-Atlantic and New England. The richest and most important example of this
development remains the development of Colonial Williamsburg by the local minister W. A. R.
Goodwin and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Motivated by the economic potential in developing a
national shrine built around the remnants in America’s last colonial village, Goodwin sought out
the patronage of the super wealthy in the late 1920s. Spurned by Henry Ford, who had created
his own site-museum, Greenfield Village, Goodwin turned to the younger Rockefeller.
Rockefeller invested heavily in the project in order to bolster his family’s reputation by

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52 For a full history of Colonial Williamsburg see Philip Kopper, *Colonial Williamsburg*, (New York: Harry
Abrams, 1986).
connecting their enormous wealth with the patriotism of the American Revolution. The restoration of Colonial Williamsburg depended upon the reconstruction of the village as it appeared prior to the American Revolution; the do this, the planners needed to remove any buildings built post 1776 and replace them with facsimiles of the originals. The materiality of this Potemkin village obscured the imaginary power of local memory. One of Goodwin and Rockefeller’s major challenges was convincing the local populace that the project had merit and that Williamsburg’s glory lay in the distant colonial past, not the relatively recent Confederate past. Williamsburg, as is well documented, went on to become a major tourist destination. It provided the blueprint for later site museums and fostered the vast popularity of colonial revival design. As a museum and a manufacturing of colonial heritage, Williamsburg has reached for a national audience but has experienced its greatest popularity and economic success with the residents of the mid-Atlantic and New England cities of the Eastern Seaboard.

Local memory was also changing in other regions of the state as they latched onto the popularity of the colonial revival and Virginia’s proximity to the Eastern Seaboard. As Scott Suter has documented, the folkways of Virginia’s Shenandoah Mountains were obscured and repackaged as the Shenandoah and Blue Ridge Mountains, and the Shenandoah Valley, was transformed into an automobile friendly tourist destination. In the 1930s, the National Park Service took possession of the Shenandoah Mountains, a small eastern range that is separated from the rest of the Appalachians by the Shenandoah Valley. Residents of the mountains, descendents of German immigrants who came to Virginia via Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, were forcibly relocated to the valley. The mountains were then converted into

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54 Handler and Gable, 33
55 Handler and Gable, 19-21.
Shenandoah National Park. A new scenic highway, Skyline Drive, was plotted along the axis of the park and the mountains and allowed visitors from Washington, Philadelphia, and New York to visit the park by automobile. The residents, whose German heritage and deep roots in the mountains placed them outside the dominant populations of Virginia, found themselves in a new landscape and new labor environment. Removed from their small family farms, they were forced to enter the workforce. Many found work in the developing tourist industries of the Shenandoah Valley. The Shenandoah Valley was one of the last areas of Virginia to be settled by white immigrants. While it lacks a rich colonial history, it does boast a range of historical sites associated with the Civil War.

The transplanted mountain residents were a key part of the transformation of this landscape. They traditional expertise in the folkways of basket weaving and furniture making were harnessed by groups seeking to make the valley a “modern garden of Eden” and a popular tourist destination. Lying astride U. S. Route 11, the valley soon boasted thriving furniture making and woodworking businesses. As Suter argues, these businesses relied upon the colonial revival. Shenandoah folkways were pushed aside and local craftspeople were taught how to make pieces based on designs popularized by Williamsburg. These crafts were then carefully marketed to the residents of the mid-Atlantic and New England. Through careful marketing, the Shenandoah Valley was rebranded, its significance as a theater of the Civil War distanced behind a veneer of Colonial charm.

With both Williamsburg and the Shenandoah Valley, we have striking examples of the shifts in the uses and emphases of memory in Virginia in the early twentieth century. While

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56 Modern Skyline Drive is the northernmost segment of the much longer Blue Ridge Parkway which connects Shenandoah National Park with Southwestern Virginia, and Western North Carolina.
these tourist sites normalized the antebellum, colonial emphases of the APVA, they did so at the expense of local memories of the Confederacy and the Civil War. The APVA had existed interdependently from the Lost Cause in bolstering the New South. In New Deal Virginia, with the oligarchy of white elites in firm control of local politics, and the Civil War receding from personal memory into cultural memory, this balance was lost. The colonial, due to the marketability of the material and imaginary simplicity of the stories told at Colonial Williamsburg, among other sites, was heavily and successfully marketed to the nation. The Lost Cause had brought national ideals of commerce and regional ideals of the New South into the cultural logics of the Old Dominion; the Colonial Revival sold the Old Dominion back to the nation. No longer were Richmond and the Confederacy at the heart of Virginia’s political and imaginary power. They were supplanted by the ascendant, nationalized spaces at the borders of the state and along new national networks of transit and commerce. As World War II ended, Richmond began demographic and political shifts which echo across the second half of the twentieth century.
In 1948, white dominance of electoral politics was briefly interrupted by the election of lawyer Oliver Hill to Richmond City Council. Hill would lose reelection in 1950, but his brief success was the first step in the slow dismantling of disenfranchisement. In the ensuring years of active work for full Civil Rights, African American political action groups and civic associations worked tirelessly to expand voter registration. As schools were desegregated and as suburbanization altered the demographics of Richmond’s electorate, these political changes looked to become more permanent and the patient efforts of the early century middle class would pay off. However, fear of the loss of political control spurred Richmond’s traditional white elite to action. Through a combination of legal and illegal anti-integration efforts, the white elite worked to perpetuate their control. Their fears were manifest in the resurgence of Confederate heritage and a new found competition with Northern Virginia and Norfolk for dominance within the state. And, just as the anti-integration movement worked to slow the tide of political change, throughout the 1950s and ‘60s Richmond’s Civil Rights Movement used a range of tactics to counter these legal and illegal actions and take advantage of demographic change and the larger national tide of political change. In the 1970s, largely through the efforts of an individual working-class African American man, Curtis Holt, the illegal actions of the anti-integration movement were brought before the U.S. Supreme Court and Richmond was prevented from holding municipal elections for seven years. This moratorium on local elections ended, and, at last, Richmond’s African American community gained a majority on the city council 1978. The 1980s saw continued influence of this community, culminating in the election of African
American Richmonder L. Douglas Wilder as state governor in 1989. By this time, the energies that had been dedicated to shifting Richmond’s political culture were invested in revising the memorial landscapes of Richmond and Monument Avenue. While the resurgence of Confederate heritage had been a key cultural symbol for the anti-integration movements, the reimagination of Richmond and Virginia’s historical identity became a crucial site of negotiation as the echoes of the Civil Rights Movement continued and the region took note of the waves of globalization that were eroding the surface of traditional Southern identity.

Memory and Electoral Politics in the Civil Rights and Anti-Integration Movements

This period, 1948-1970, was marked by expanded political franchise and social citizenship that followed the paths opened by the social, cultural, and economic upheaval of World War II. Alexander Keysarr argues in his important political history of the franchise, *The Right to Vote: the Contested History of Democracy in the United States*, “nearly all the major expansions of the franchise that have occurred in American history took place during or in the wake of wars.”

It is nearly impossible to recruit and motivate legions of soldiers, many of whom come from disenfranchised, subaltern groups, if those same groups are denied full citizenship. World War II, like the Civil War before it, was a key event in the social and political histories leading up to African American franchise. In Virginia, African Americans had been almost uniformly disenfranchised under Jim Crow. In 1940, of 364,224 African American Virginians over the age of twenty-one, only 30,967 were registered to vote.

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1 Keysarr, xxi.
Democratic coalition. According to Buni, African American Virginians distrust of the Byrd machine did not prevent their overwhelming support for Roosevelt.

This shift had a larger resonance in the imagination of the white elite than did at the polls. Even if all 30,967 registered African American Virginians voted for F.D.R., they formed only an small portion of his resounding victory over Wilkie in Virginia in the 1940 election, 235,961 to 109,363. However, as World War II progressed, African American civic associations worked to register voters. From 1941 to 1944 the number African American Virginians who were registered to vote grew from 30,748 to 32,889. And, as the war ended, and servicemen returned home, those figures grew to 38,020. The enrollment of African American voters would continue after the war as civic associations mobilized community support. Between 1945 and 1948 African American Richmonders had more than doubled their presence in the electorate, with the number of registered voters expanding from 6,374 to 11,127.

As described by Randolph & Tate and Moeser & Dennis, the late 1940s was an era in which African American Richmonders made political strides through community mobilization and advancing a moderate agenda supported by the dominant white elite. In 1946, the Richmond Civic Council (RCC), an association of over eighty church, civic, fraternal, labor, business, and educational groups, started a massive voter registration drive. RCC also supported efforts in 1947 for city charter reform spearheaded by the Richmond Citizens Association (RCA), the political body of the local white elite. The RCC reasoned that if they supported the RCA’s charter reform they would ensure both the possible support of the white elite and would be able to encourage measures within the new charter that would allow for African American representation.

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3 Ibid
4 Ibid
5 Buni 157.
This was a crucial moment for African Americans in Richmond and it was seized by the man who would, for the better part of the twentieth century, prove to be the major thinker and leader of that movement. Oliver Hill graduated from Howard University Law School, where he was second in the class of 1933 behind Thurgood Marshall. Hill practiced law in Richmond before serving in World War II. After the war, he began in earnest his activism for African American civil rights and in 1947 ran for City Council. He lost, but his showing and the passage of the new city charter were encouraging for the RCC, who foresaw great potential for collaboration with the RCA. In 1948, Hill was elected, primarily due to the success of voter registration drives.

Throughout this era, the Byrd Machine continued its domination of Virginia and Richmond politics while allowing the slow expansion of African American franchise. The paternalistic strategy of the Byrd machine enabled basic participation by African Americans. While committed to segregation, Byrd was opposed to overt displays of violence and opposed voter intimidation and other tactics that, historically and in other parts of the South, were used to discourage African American voters.\(^6\) While they faced procedural challenges, Hill and the RCC were not threatened with the large scale violence brought upon activists in other areas of the South. The RCC harnessed this limited participation, endorsing no other candidates in the at-large city elections. By putting their entire electoral strength behind a single candidate, rather than a full slate, the RCC hoped to ensure Hill’s endorsement by the RCA.\(^7\) They hoped that this tactic, combined with Hill’s moderate political stances and his support by some whites, would win the RCA’s endorsement. However, the RCA failed to include Hill on their slate of candidates, a move which angered the leadership of the RCC and made clear the complexities of

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\(^6\) Buni 156-6
\(^7\) Randolph and Tate, 127
developing biracial political coalitions. While RCA did include Hill on their 1950 slate, he failed to win reelection. These failures made clear that while RCA may have been invested in allowing moderate, conservative African Americans to form a minority within the city government, they did so on their own terms. Moreover, Hill’s failure to win reelection pointed to internal fractures with the RCC that would eventually lead to its premature demise, enabling the rise of the more aggressive Richmond Crusade for Voters (RCV), a political action group with closer ties to the burgeoning Civil Rights movement. In the past African Americans had lacked the foothold to mount political campaigns that were openly opposed to the local elite. However, the voter campaign drives of the 1940s and ‘50s had established a large enough electorate and provided the motivation necessary for the germination and perpetuation of African American political action groups that did not answer to the interests of white elites.

Through the 1950s, no other African American gained political office in Richmond. However, the political mobilization of voters and communities combined with Richmond’s shifting demographics, urban development, and economic prospects to keep the possibility of African American political involvement and control at the center of political and cultural discourse. As was common across the nation, post-war Richmond experienced widespread suburbanization that was facilitated by federal economic, housing, and transportation policies and the mobilization of our national “possessive investment in whiteness.” Suburbanization drew white voters out of the city and into surrounding Henrico and Chesterfield counties. Faced with a declining population, Richmond’s elites attempted to revivify the city through urban renewal plans; repeatedly, Norfolk was held up as a model of those plans, in part because its

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8 Ibid
9 Ibid
relative rise within the state. Urban development and transportation projects led to decline of Jackson Ward, the historic center of Richmond’s African American community.\textsuperscript{11}

In the 1950s, Hill worked closely with the NAACP and Thurgood Marshall and legally challenged those social structures and institutions that exacerbated the political disenfranchisement of African Americans. As the NAACP lawyer for Virginia, Hill and his staff filed more civil rights suits for equal education than were filed by any other Southern state in this period.\textsuperscript{12} In one of these cases, Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Hill represented a well organized group of Moton High School students who had walked out of the tar-paper shack that served as their school. That case wound its way through the courts and became one of the five cases that Marshall and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund team brought before the U.S. Supreme Court and which would, in time, be known as Brown v. Board of Education. Hill’s role in this landmark case is indicative of his life’s work, challenging racism through the courts, and although his time in the city council was very short lived, he remained committed to augmenting legal action with political and social action. It was in this era that he recruited a young Howard Law graduate, Henry Marsh, into his firm. Marsh would go on to further the goals of the movement in a long career in City Council and State General Assembly that has lasted from 1978 until the present day. Hill’s commitment to political and social change was also evident in a speech he gave to the very people he had represented in Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County. Hill called for his listeners to lessen their dependence on legal decisions and to augment those gains by getting out and voting. More important, Hill urged his audience to get over old patterns and habits of social behavior that enabled racism. He


criticized the old habit of “playing dumb,” which Hill described as “a hangover from the slavery days when you could always fool a white man by playing dumb … now you must show that you want to be a first-class citizen.”

While Hill placed his legal expertise in the service of the NAACP and the greater cause of Civil Rights, he urged the greater community to take personal action through voting and changing patterns of behavior. Civil Rights would only come through personal responsibility and respectability.

As these demographic shifts occurred, Brown vs. Board of Education exacerbated the growing spatial segregation of the city by encouraging suburbanization and engendering racial fear. Byrd, through his influence as a long-tenured Senator, issued calls for Southern governments to use policy, legal, and constitutional measures to fight the forced segregation of schools. As a leader of Massive Resistance, Byrd worked with George Wallace, Strom Thurmond, and other segregationist politicians. While he continued to embrace more benign practices than his colleagues, his steadfastness and his efforts to use legal measures resonated deeply across Richmond’s Civil Rights Movement. As the fight against segregation became more heated, it morphed into a dual-front struggle that was fought through the courts and legislative bodies and in street protests. The RCC, while somewhat successful in making slow gains in the 1940s, was unable to carry on this campaign and was replaced by the RCV, which through ties to NAACP, was able to wage court battles and successful protests, boycotts, and strikes. The RCV used a structure similar to that of a political machine; thorough top-down organization kept the all members on message and coordinated towards the same goals. This strategy proved effective and the Massive Resistance campaign lost its traction in Richmond during the 1960s.

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13 Quoted in Levi.
14 Randolph and Tate, 131-54.
Throughout the 1960s, Richmond’s white elite clung to power but remained well aware that their grasp was loosening, in large part because of the efforts by the RCV and continued white-flight suburbanization. By 1960, Richmond’s African American population accounted for 42 percent of the population; the number of African American voters had risen from 12,486 in 1957 to 16,396 in 1961.\(^{15}\) Census data indicated that by 1968 Richmond’s population would have a majority African American population. Suburbanization also led to an imbalance of city and suburban services and infrastructures without suburban tax outlays. Richmond needed a larger tax base and land for development if it was going to expand and continue the services its metropolitan region needed.\(^{16}\) In order to secure a larger tax base and prevent the dominance of local government by African Americans, Richmond’s political leadership began proceedings to merge with Henrico County; when these attempts failed in 1965, Richmond’s elite turned to Chesterfield county and, through closed door proceedings, were able to secure a portion of that county’s land and population in 1970. The area of land annexed was almost wholly white and dramatically shifted the population of Richmond from the feared African American majority back to a white majority.

Annexation in Virginia involves a long process of legal proceedings and ballot measures. There is not space here to discuss the entirety of this history, but is important to point out that though the proceedings on the surface were issues of development and tax bases, they were driven by and furthered the racial segregation practices of Byrd’s Massive Resistance campaign. As stated by John Moeser and Rutledge Dennis, whose study *The Politics of Annexation: Oligarchic Power in a Southern City* provides an insightful survey of these events, “the racial nexus became the unspoken theme and the hidden agenda and white leaders, while refraining

\(^{15}\) Moeser and Dennis, 26.
\(^{16}\) Byng 30-5
from introducing race as a topic for public discussion, understood the important of consolidation for its economic as well as its racial advantages to the white political and business sectors.”

The subtext of racial segregation resonated in 1968 election of two conservative African American candidates, B.A. Cephas and Winifred Mundle, to City Council. Both Cephas and Mundle were supported both by the RCV and a new group, Richmond Forward (RF) which had replaced RCC.

RF was formed in 1963 by a group of business and community leaders. Initially chaired by, the aptly named, General Edwin Conquest (ret) RF began as a social network of likeminded white men who worked together to develop a sustainable political network and organization. We have insight into this social network and its transformation into a local political action group through the papers of James C. Wheat. A nephew of General Conquest, Wheat was a founding member of RF. An architect, he served on the Richmond City Planning Commission (CPC) throughout most of the 1960s. His papers are held at the Virginia Historical Society. Through them we can trace the origins and innerworkings of RF as well as look at the actions of one of its representatives as he worked within the city government.

RF began casually through a series meetings among concerned and like-minded Richmonders. Many of these founding members were local business leaders such as Samuel Bemiss, Harry Schwarzchild, and William Thalhimer and future Virginia Senator Willis Robertson. Clandestinely calling themselves “The Group,” in August 1963 they established a statement of purpose. Noting that while Richmond had grown over its 200 year history, it has always moved forward in services such as “protection from lawlessness and calamity, of public improvements and facilities, and of education and welfare. This forward movement was possible

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17 37
18 Schwarzchild and Thalhimer play an important role in the lives of Arthur Ashe and his father, and will be mentioned in Chapter Four.
only because there were always leaders willing to give more of themselves for the cause of good
government than they expected of others.” Adopting the name Richmond Forward, the Group
agreed to pledge their “time, talent and resources” to encourage the most capable men and
women to run for office, support those candidates, and to advise them on matters and help the
City Council “discharge its duties in an efficient businesslike manner.” That Fall “The Group”
began recruiting members. General Conquest asked members to search out prospective members
among “individuals in second and third echelon positions in your own and other organizations”
since, he felt, RF would already have identified and recruited company presidents.

In November of that year RF held a dinner meeting followed by a recruitment
presentation. The dinner was a success, and RF was able to recruit enough members and donors
to launch an aggressive political movement in 1964. RF’s initial strengths lay in Richmond’s
West End. The West End was a predominantly white, affluent area of families that had moved
out of the central city towards the suburbs. This area of Richmond abuts Henrico County, which,
at the time, was in negotiations for a merger with the City of Richmond. Had the merger gone
through, Richmond’s West End would have been linked with suburban areas with which it was
demographically and economically similar; the West End would have become the new center of
political power. RF reached out to that potential power center and recruited members among
residents of the greater Richmond area including Henrico and Chesterfield Counties. In a
newsletter sent out in 1964, the RF leadership stated that while RF did not anticipate merger or
annexation with Chesterfield and Henrico counties, those counties and their residents “have an
obvious stake in Richmond’s progress. Many hold jobs in Richmond, shop in the downtown

19 Papers of James C. Wheat (JCW), Private Correspondence, 8-26-63, Virginia Historical Society (VHS).
20 Ibid
21 JCW, Private Correspondence, 10-22-63
area, use library facilities and entertainment facilities, and receive city services. … A progressive, well-run Richmond is as important to these people as it is to Richmond citizens.”

While RF claimed that they did not anticipate merger or annexation, they did everything within their power to make it so. While David Mays and others worked behind closed doors to negotiate the merger, the platform RF developed in 1964 was heavily pro-merger. On April Seventh, 1964, the RF platform reached its fourth draft and included a plank calling for the expansion of city boundaries. On the grounds that community interests transcended the city’s legal boundaries, RF called for the expansion of boundaries “in order to incorporate those areas which should be a part of the City for the future betterment of a greater Richmond.” Pledging themselves to giving “true representation” to those residents of areas that would be incorporated, RF argued strongly for local control of the greater Richmond area.

RF’s platform also included planks calling for the betterment of schools and the development of stronger technical training and improved housing and industrial development through the development of a more business friendly city government. While the RF platform made no claims regarding race, a close analysis of it and other internal documents from 1964 points to the social and political values that were deeply embedded and depend upon ideals of paternalistic white privilege.

In January, 1964, RF prepared a document to help its city council candidates prepare for public debates. A series of expected questions are followed with suggested answers. While the answers are evidence of the image RF wanted to present to the electorate, the questions can help us gauge the challenges RF felt it faced in developing a politically viable image. In this document, RF attempted to prepare its candidates for hard questions regarding their political and

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22 JCW, Richmond Forward Newsletter, No Date
23 JCW, RF Platform, 4-7-64
personal feelings on African American Civil Rights. For example, RF prepared its candidates to
deal with questions that asked how they felt “about better jobs in the city government for
Negroes?” The recommended response to that question diverts attention away from the subject
of race and emphasizes an ideal of a color blind, merit-based polity: “I feel now and have always
felt that every citizen should have an equal opportunity for employment and that jobs should be
awarded on the basis of qualifications and not race, creed or color.”24 RF also prepared its
candidates to deal with questions as to whether or not they employ African Americans in their
businesses. The suggested responses do not include any in the affirmative; rather, candidates
were given the option of simply stating “At the present time my company does not employ any
Negro personnel” or amending that statement by adding that “my company has no policy
restricting the employment of Negroes. When job vacancies occur within our organization, those
jobs are filled on the basis of qualification and merit, and not because of a man’s religion or his
race.”25

It is important to remember that in much of the South in 1964 segregation was still a
violently enforced social order based upon myths of color. However, working to maintain a
centuries old hold on local government, Richmond’s predominantly white, business elite
carefully avoided the stark racial hierarchies espoused by political leaders in other Southern
states and deployed a rhetoric that displaced race as a salient term in the debate and in its stead
employed merit and qualification as the basis for full citizenship and entry into business and
polity.

This rhetoric drew from the centuries old practice of maintaining white privilege by
investing political power within state and local governments. For example, while the anti-

24 JCW, 1-29-63
25 Ibid
integration movement had worked tirelessly to preserve racial segregation and white privilege, it had done so through claims to a conservative interpretation of federalism. By claiming states’ rights, anti-integrationists could resist federally enforced integration without vocally espousing segregation. This strategy was evident in RF’s campaign documents. In April, in an internal memo circulated among members, RF’s leadership argued strongly against Federal Urban Renewal plans. These plans and the Federal Civil Rights Act were attacked not for their content but because they were attempts to undermine local control and centralize power in Washington, D.C. These rhetorics were manifest in the previously discussed notes on approaching debates, RF indicated that a likely question would ask how candidates felt “about the recent [city council] proposal on Urban Redevelopment and Renewal?” RF candidates were encouraged to respond that while they had not yet studied the proposal in great detail, they could say that

I favor a vigorous attack on our slum problem in Richmond. Almost every municipality has to look to their state and Federal government for help in these projects. However, I believe that we may be able to interest local private capital in underwriting some slum clearance projects once they have confidence in our city council. The present city council certainly doesn’t inspire much confidence in anyone.26

When asked to speak about current plans for urban development, RF encouraged its candidates take the opportunity to attack the credibility of the current council and the role of the state and federal government in local growth. The speaker positions himself as concerned with a “slum” problem, thereby distancing himself from and evoking images of decay and violence associated with poor, African American neighborhoods. He uses this position to indicate that he, and other RF candidates, will be able to foster the confident environment in which local, private capital can

26 Ibid.
be used for local development. Nowhere is race mentioned; rather, the images implicit in the word “slum” remind potential listeners of the fears associated with Blackness. Moreover, by dismissing the current city council and its assumed embrace of Federal oversight, the RF candidate painted his opposition as ineptly enabling those fears. Thus, without mentioning race, the RF candidate positions himself as the confident, inspiring protector of Richmond from the encroachment of those fears embodied in African Americans.

In positioning themselves against the RCV, RF necessarily created an image of the RCV and its policies. RCV’s take on similar issues can be garnered from responses to a questionnaire the League of Women Voters distributed to 1964 council candidates. Howard Carwile, a major political activist associated with RCV in the 1960s, gave strongly worded answers that are remarkable not only for their insight into the ramifications of urban renewal programs but also for the degree to which it stands apart from the policies endorsed by other candidates. Joining Carwile on the ballot was Ronald Charity, who was endorsed by Voters’ Voice, an organization of middle-class and business professional African American activists led by future governor L. Douglas Wilder. Charity’s positions were similar to, if less forcefully presented than, Carwile’s. In most questions regarding the development or expansion of city services and amenities—for example, an expanded civic center and the creation of more public pools—RF candidates argued that better services would attract more business for the city. In response to questions regarding Urban Renewal, those candidates argued, as above, for increased private investment. Charity and Carwile, however, stated that while attractive, increased services would undermine funding for schools and educational programs. In fact, both embraced policies

27 JCW, League of Women Voters Questionnaire, 1964
28 While a student at Virginia Union University, Charity met an elementary school aged Arthur Ashe and introduced him to Tennis. Charity would play a crucial role in first sparking Ashe’s interest in the sport, teaching him the fundamentals of the game and, eventually, finding him the coaches that would drastically improve Ashe’s game.
diverting city moneys to education and the development of the Richmond Professional Institute\textsuperscript{29} into the premier educational center in the South.

More important, Carwile and Charity campaigned against all urban renewal programs. When asked about urban renewal projects, RF candidates stated that the city should strictly enforce housing codes and, when codes were violated, allow private enterprise to take over. Carwile and Charity, recognizing that such policies would make home ownership impossible for African Americans, argued that the city should encourage the development and improvement of private homes by owners. Carwile was direct in this, stating that the city need “absolutely not resort to any aspect or facet of cooperation with such groups, but encouragement for neighborhood improvement groups and cooperation with such groups in securing liberal credit for home and business repair.”\textsuperscript{30} Later in the same questionnaire, candidates were asked to comment on the major issue facing Richmond in 1964. RF candidates invariably said that the city needed to annex parts of Henrico or Chesterfield counties. Carwile and Charity, however, argued that the city needed better vocational training schools and needed to redirect its urban renewal policies. Carwile strongly stated that

Richmond should abandon every phase of urban renewal. Urban renewal is the key issue in this campaign. It is not a slum-clearance program. It is a slum-producing program. It is not progressive, but shockingly retrogressive. It relegates every democratic and humanitarian concept to a status of blight and decay in order to make way for the god of mammon.\textsuperscript{31}

Carwile and Charity clearly understand that the loss of Richmond’s home-owning, African American middle class and the loss of a strong African American working class with marketable

\textsuperscript{29} A trade and vocational school, RPI eventually became the comprehensive Virginia Commonwealth University.

\textsuperscript{30} JWC, LWV Questionnaire, 1964.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
skills would drastically undermine the future of Richmond’s historically cohesive African American community. The fiscally conservative policies they called for would have helped perpetuate the tradition of African American enterprise that had long existed in the city and would have stemmed the tide of the dilution of African American franchise posed by the destruction of African American neighborhoods and the annexation of white suburbs. The threat, for Carwile and RF, is posed by the business elite against the city’s poor and African American communities.

Though both RF and RCV were, essentially, fiscally conservative groups—nobody was proposing anything approaching socialization of housing or jobs—both groups put forward policies that would have lasting impacts on Richmond’s electorate. RF’s policies would perpetuate a business friendly environment in which white voters would hold a majority. RCV would have expanded the city’s African American electorate while reestablishing the threatened stability of that electorate’s community and community organizations. Moreover, both groups expressed their policies in language that avoided direct mention of race while defining their opponents as a threat to the city. Recall that RF presented themselves as protecting the city from poverty and slums while RCV employed militaristic language in discussing present urban renewal plans.

RF’s position on the threat posed by RCV was not simply a campaign tactic; it seems, from internal documents, to have been a belief RF held of African American political leaders that was well calculated for use in campaigns. After a 1964 meeting with the leadership of the RCV, the RF leadership noted that their African American candidate, B.A. Cephas, had proven popular among the RCV and that Henry Marsh was a figure who deserved respect. Overall, though, the memo paints a grim picture, indicating that “the opposition is against everything” and would
impede any growth within the city. This practice of using fear and spreading rumors of negativity has proven an effective campaign tool and cultural logic in the advancement of privatization. While its slippery nature obscures the reentrenchment of racial difference, the creation of rhetorical and metaphoric separation based upon associations with race was clearly becoming manifest in Richmond. A key site of this transformation was in the resurgence and reinvigoration of modes of historic remembrance.

Race, Economics and the Civil War Centennial

The marriage of urban policy with rhetorical claims of progress and metaphorical reminders of racial hierarchy was well underway in Richmond politics in the 1960s. And, as was increasingly common across the South, this marriage was facilitated and expressed through the resurgent presence of Confederate emblems, such as the Confederate Flag, which become popular symbols of anti-integration movements. These emblems often gained greater visibility through the nationally organized celebrations of the Civil War Centennial from 1961 through 1965.  

The Civil War Centennial was a nationally organized program that sought to remind all Americans of the national sacrifices and strife that lay one hundred years in the past. According to the Civil War Centennial Handbook, a guide written by William Price and published by the national Civil War Centennial Committee, state centennial programs were encouraged to work together to create spectacles and recreations that would emphasize both the strife of the war and

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the long intranational cold war that followed.\textsuperscript{33} That national committee worked to coordinate programs among the various state and local chapters and keep those programs within a narrative of American national exceptionalism in which two distinct parts were torn apart and, after one hundred years, brought back together.

As Jon Wiener has noted, this narrative of national reunion takes on special significance when we remember that the centennial was celebrated at the height of the Cold War and against the backdrop of Civil Rights struggles.\textsuperscript{34} This narrative of reunion was a crucial public spectacle that was designed to remind all Americans of their place within a nation that was, now, at odds against a dangerous foe. And, while the national committee did stress the massive losses incurred by the Confederate states during the war, it sought to downplay any lasting regional loyalties and sectional identities in its celebrations.

This project was most successful within Virginia, in large part because the state had seen deeply concentrated military action during the war and was littered with the spaces associated with its memory. The Virginia Civil War Centennial Commission was led by an executive committee of members of the Virginia General Assembly and Virginia historians. Its executive director, James J. Geary, had served for some time as the Associated Press correspondent in Richmond and was familiar with the inner workings of Virginia’s governmental and business institutions. In a July 2001 article for \textit{Virginia Cavalcade}, Geary reflected on the opening of the centennial in April, 1961:

it felt like a dream. Here was Virginia, the defeated standard-bearer of the Confederacy, beginning an observance already planned to be long and inclusive.

\textsuperscript{33} Archives of the Virginia Civil War Centennial Commission (VCWCC)
And the agency I headed had done the planning. It would turn out to be far and away the largest and most elaborate Civil War centennial observance of any state, North or South. Our commission studiously would avoid and discourage any refighting of that fateful conflict.\(^{35}\)

Geary’s commission achieved the elaborate centennial by undertaking a ”grassroots program” that was designed for a broad audience, not simply Civil War buffs. By fostering the work of local chapters and encouraging statewide participation in the centennial, the state commission worked to build a broad base for the centennial. In the same article, Geary notes that the state faced a number of challenges in awakening interest in the Civil War. Chief among these was a deep ambivalence and “opposition engendered by the strong feelings about civil rights and the public’s submersion in the battles over school desegregation. Richmond was a hotbed of these sentiments. … The strong currents gave many people pause about having a centennial. … They expressed fears of further divisiveness, of the rise of hate groups, of waving the bloody flag.”\(^{36}\)

This ambivalence colluded with a general waning of local interest in the Civil War. As Geary notes, interest in the Civil War had been generationally defined. Veterans of the conflict and their children had placed the war and the Lost Cause firmly in the center of Richmond and Virginia’s public memory. But, as those populations passed on and as other moments gained greater currency with historical identities, the Civil War had drifted and been pushed to the background. Geary notes that “people got tired of hearing the old veterans talk endlessly about the war. … They don’t want to hear any more about it.” But, “now the old veterans were gone; their voices had been stilled; the reunions were no more. The old soldiers, tugging on sleeves to

\(^{35}\) James J Geary, “‘When Dedication was Fierce and from the Heart’: Planning Virginia’s Civil War Centennial,” *Virginia Cavalcade*, Spring 2001, 77-87. 77.

\(^{36}\) Ibid, 80.
The centennial, then, had to reawaken local investment in the Civil War and acknowledge deep ambivalences awoken by the climate of the 1950s and ‘60s. To do so, Geary and the Virginia commission worked closely within the nationalist structures set forth by the U.S. commission to bring the public back to the Civil War. The result was the “big, public oriented, but tasteful Virginia centennial program.”

Virginia’s program stands out as the largest and most successful of the state programs. Size and success, however, are not the only facets that separated Virginia from other Southern states. When discussing the Civil War Centennial in Virginia (or, for that matter, Virginia in general) South Carolina is a useful counterpoint. While both states claimed, rightfully, perhaps, a position of primacy within the former Confederacy, South Carolina remained and remains much more committed to a politics of states rights and anti-integration. As Prince points out, South Carolina politicians used the Centennial to rally support for the continued segregation of public schools. And, just as Virginia would rhetorically distance itself from the deep South, South Carolinians would point to Virginia as a failed Southern state. For example, when Virginia first integrated some public schools in 1959, State Senator John Long commented from the senate floor that “Virginia needed another Stonewall. … South Carolina has segregation in the public schools and South Carolina intends to keep it.”

The South Carolina commission, as Prince points out, was willing to admit that the war was a civil war and not, as regional parlance had it, a war of rebellion or secession; however, South Carolina’s Centennial Commission included in its official publications reminders that, for that state, the war was one of state’s rights and came out of the failures of the U.S.

37 Ibid
38 Ibid
39 Quoted in Prince, 37.
Prince deftly traces the ways that the Civil War Centennial became a major period of resurgence for Confederate emblems—it was in this period that the Confederate battle flag returned to the State House, a place it would occupy into the twenty first century—and those emblems were taken up by modern states rights and anti-integration politicians, such as Strom Thurmond.

While South Carolina’s centennial commission belligerently resisted the approach embraced by the national commission, Virginia welcomingly embraced it. While South Carolina placed multiple Confederate Flags throughout the state house, and kept them there, Virginia’s General Assembly allowed the battle flag to be flown over the state house, but only during the years of the centennial and only when the assembly was not in session. Virginia embraced the symbolic power of Confederate emblems, but was careful to keep those emblems located within nationally acceptable frames. While the centennial and the emblems associated with it did resonate with Virginia and Richmond’s racial politics, the connections, though oftentimes personal, were rather obtuse and shrouded through the careful footwork of creating a nationally marketable image.

Market value would be the crucial and central concern that runs throughout the records of the Virginia and Richmond centennial commissions. While the programs would resurrect a stagnant moment in local historical identity and public memory, their ultimate value was increased tourist revenue that would come through the careful marketing and branding of Virginia with national identities and memories of the Civil War. For the state commission orchestrated grassroots efforts and local celebrations through a number of pamphlets and booklets that encouraged and gave guidelines for the creation of county, city, and town centennial programs. The most comprehensive of these, The Civil War Centennial: an

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40 Prince 33–49.
Opportunity for all Virginians, bore a frontispiece that called the centennial an opportunity “TO HONOR OUR HEROES/TO PROMOTE/Virginia as the place to come to during the Civil War Centennial/TO TELL/the true story of Virginia’s People—Peacemakers, Warriors, Restorers and rebuilders/TO DRAMATIZE/The great ideas that are the basis of our freedom and tradition—individual responsibility, faith in God and service to country.” Throughout these materials, folded into evocative phrases describing a memory of the Civil War as a time of great heroes during which Virginians took the national lead, is a primary call for increased tourism.

Within Virginia, this marketable image would largely be coordinated by local chapters and facilitated by the state commission. Virginia hosted a few major events over the course of the centennial, including reenactments of the battle of First Manassas/First Bull Run, Jefferson Davis’ inauguration as president of the Confederate government, and Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, and the publication of a number of scholarly books. Much of this work was done along with the national commission. The only major disagreement the Virginia commission had with the national program was in scheduling the opening of the centennial. While the national committee wanted centennials programs to start in April, 1961 with recreations of the attack on Fort Sumter other pivotal events, the Virginia Commission pushed hard to have the official opening be a National Day of Prayer on the one hundredth anniversary of the ill-fated Peace Convention. In February, 1861, a contingent of Virginia politicians led by former president John Tyler, organized a meeting to discuss ways to prevent secession and regional hostility, Willard Hotel, in Washington, D.C. The national committee did agree to call for a national day of prayer on February 5, 1961, to co-host services at Washington National Cathedral, and to place a plaque at the Willard Hotel. However, it did not agree to open the Centennial on that date, which would

41 VCWCC
have further positioned Virginia as the true preserver of the Union that was, unfortunately, stuck between an aggressive North and the reactionary Deep South. 42

The Virginia commission used these projects as the center points of a range of programs that were undertaken by local commissions which were encouraged to establish wide reaching public relations and educational campaigns. Suggested programs included developing outreach in schools, the creation of discussion and reading groups and facilitation of reenactment of local battles. The highlight of local programs, however, was to be the rededication of any local Confederate memorials in a tasteful ceremony that promoted national unity. State guidelines suggested that these ceremonies include the playing of both “The Star Spangled Banner” and “Dixie” and that all members of the community be invited “as the observance is intended to bring all the people together” to “encourage a greater appreciation of courage and a firmer dedication to high ideals, to remind ourselves of the mutual sacrifices made all over the nation and to bring a deeper understanding of the causes of division and war.” 43

Alongside coordination and facilitation of local events, the state commission’s primary project was the construction of The Virginia Civil War Centennial Center. Opened in October, 1961, the center was a domed hall with two stories that served as both museum and tourist center. Tourists would enter the hall and be able to sit through a series of orienting films highlighting Virginia’s role during the Civil War. Afterwards, they would be directed to rotating museum exhibits as well as information booths where they could gather maps with suggested tours of the state and informational pamphlets. Located in the heart of downtown Richmond, the center was adjacent to the Richmond-Petersburg turnpike, a roadway that became Interstate 95. Because traffic moving along the East Coast had to take the turnpike when crossing Virginia, the

42 VCWCC, Newsletter, 1959
center was ideally situated to draw in a wide swath of potential tourists who might be resistant to traveling deep into Richmond. This location proved hospitable and, by all accounts, the Centennial Center drew in huge numbers of visitors who, oftentimes, went on to visit other centennial sites and programs across Richmond and Virginia. Moreover, the center was not an unwieldy financial undertaking for the state because after the war ownership of the site would transfer to the Medical College of Virginia, which would use the building for its purposes.

Many areas of Virginia benefited from the centennial. The Shenandoah Valley saw a huge upswing in its tourist revenues and the creation of permanent museums. And, Alexandria, Virginia was able to complete important preservation and museum-building projects that increased its overall tourist development. But, of all the local chapters, Richmond gained the most from the centennial. The Centennial Center built off of Richmond’s central location as a regional crossroads and drew visitors partway into the city. The Richmond Centennial Commission began their work well aware of this central location and the lucrative tourist dollars that could well come into Richmond via the centennial. Their work also resonated with the political activities that contemporaneously were arising in response to Richmond’s burgeoning African American electorate and would continue on after the centennial concluded in a number of symbolically potent acts of public memory.

Including local Richmond banker Robert Throckmorton, a national leader of the UDC, the Richmond Centennial committee also included historians James J. Geary, J. Ambler Johnston, and Hobson Goddin.44 While the majority of the committee was invested in traditional political structures of elite white rule through paternalism and a Lost Cause dominated historical identity, the secretary of the committee, Robert Waitt, came from outside elite social circles.45

44 VCWCC
The grandson of union officers and union sympathizers, Waitt was a major figure in Virginia’s Republican Party at a time when the Democratic Party was still very dominant. A former head of the Virginia Young Republicans and Virginia secretary for Richard Nixon’s 1960 Presidential campaign, Waitt had entered politics in 1952 when he ran for Lieutenant Governor. Although he lost that election, the number of votes he received, 75,000, was a rather startling result in deeply Democratic Virginia. The success of his campaign came, in part, from the fact that he campaigned on issues that spoke directly to the growing African American electorate. His platform was defined by calls for the repeal of the poll tax, the standardization of voting registration and voting machines across the state, and the repeal of all Jim Crow laws. As secretary of the committee, Waitt was responsible the day-to-day operations and the programs that Richmond produced during the centennial. The committee published over twenty pamphlets and books that highlighted Richmond’s history during the Civil War. Many of these were written by Goddin, Johnston, and Geary and stressed the national importance of Richmond before, during, and after the war. In addition, Richmond hosted a number of commemorative events, placed plaques and markers around the city, and hosted recreations, many in conjunction with the UDC. While Waitt’s politics were not congruent with those of the majority of the body, he was generally praised for his work and received praise from within Richmond and from the National Centennial commission, which gave him three awards for his work. The only contingent that openly resisted his leadership was the UDC, “who urged him to resign and denounced him, his grandfathers, and Union sympathizers in general.”

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46 Surprisingly, his platform also included calls for the repeal of all blue laws and the legalization of abortion.
47 Robertson.
unheeded as Richmond’s political parties found common cause in commemorating the Civil War and developing the local tourist industry. 48

This common cause extended past the 1965 closing of the centennial. Business and political leaders recognized that the centennial had both branded Richmond as a tourist destination and provided the impetus for building projects and institutional changes that would enable the reinvigoration of Richmond’s tourist industry. Business and political leaders both sought to continue some of the more effective marketing schemes and tourist attractions that originated during the centennial. For example, the Richmond Tour, an organized tour of the city’s major historical sites had arisen during the centennial as a guided tour but after 1965 was replaced with signs and maps that would guide visitors who moved through the city by car or on foot.

As the centennial ended, Geary, the chair of the state commission, made overtures to the state and Richmond governments encouraging both bodies to maintain the centennial center and turn it into a “State History and Travel Center.” In a presentation made to the Virginia General Assembly that he sent to Wheat, who at the time was the chair of the Richmond CPC, Geary indicated that visitors to the centennial center wanted information on all historic sites in Richmond. Geary envisioned refurnishing the centennial center as a center that provided tourists with just this information. At the crossroads of interstates 95 and 64, “those two great arterial highways of tomorrow,” the center, as Geary envisioned it, would draw from and relate to Richmond’s location as a crossroads of the Upper South and its proximity to Washington, D.C., and Williamsburg. Speaking to the General Assembly, Geary encouraged the state legislature to

48 However, in 1964 Waitt resigned his post after being indicted on charges of statutory rape. He was convicted and served twenty one months in jail. After release he went to work for the Richmond Afro-American newspaper.
picture a family motoring through Virginia at 65 miles an hour on an interstate highway. They are bound somewhere south. But they have heard of this HISTORY AND TRAVEL CENTER through their friends who have told them that it is something they must see; or they have heard of it through the State’s national advertising and publicity program. A sign on the interstate highway has refreshed their memory and moreover the ‘center’ is only five minutes out of their way at one of the interchanges.

They enter the travel center and are immediately dazzled by the display before them. Now I don’t suggest what form this building should take, but let’s imagine something along this line. In front of our visitors is a large information station and behind the counter are attractive, educated, well-informed young ladies ready and willing to answer all their questions about travel in Virginia. … And when the family has finished their tour of the ‘center’ they would be saying to themselves, “Why, I didn’t know Virginia had all of this—this variety of vacation opportunities, summer, winter, spring and fall. Where else can the children have so much fun and at the same time learn so much about American history?”

While Geary’s image of a happy family motoring along the East Coast and stopping in Richmond to take in all that Virginia had to offer is rather excessive, it points to the perceived markets for and the preferred methods for delivering Richmond and Virginia’s historical tourist industries. The key markets were families that lived and traveled along the East Coast. The historic sites were marketed as tourist sites through well organized, informed materials and employees who could highlight what areas in Virginia were of most educational value for children.

49 JCW, 1-5-65
As the center of a proposed network of state- and time-spanning historical sites, Richmond would have been forced to partially move away from its Civil War focused historical identity. This would have proved a hard cultural shift to make. The legacies of the Lost Cause as well as the tensions inherent in the rest of Virginia’s embrace of the Colonial era solidified Richmond’s attachment to the Civil War as its defining moment. One case makes clear the attachment elites Richmonders had to the architecture of the Civil War era. In 1964 the CPC began hearings on proposals to tear down Broad Street Methodist Church. In a letter to Wheat, Anne Ryland a resident of Richmond, argues for its preservation as a significant structure and urges the city government to resist moves to overly modernize Richmond’s buildings. She urged the Planning Commission “to make sure that our city doesn’t become just an area of plate glass and stainless steel and streets like canyons. We need to bring about a compromise with the urgency of commercialism in order to preserve the pleasantness and graciousness here by keeping a continuity with the past.”

Ryland would continue to agitate for the preservation of the Church and other structures. In 1968, after the church had been torn down, she and Wheat engaged in a somewhat testy exchange that centered on the modernization of the city at the expense of its nineteenth century buildings. Responding to Wheat, Ryland argued that “it is high time that Richmond recognizes and takes pride in the fact that it is a good 19th century city. And monuments such as Broad Street Methodist Church are, in many ways, more characteristic of the essential nature of the city than some of its older buildings.” This theme was echoed in an earlier letter in which she compares visitors reactions to Richmond with their reactions to Fredericksburg and Williamsburg: “their reaction to Richmond is one of dismay and that only the bravest strangers stay for more than a quick look. Perhaps we have an inferiority complex.

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50 JCW, 9-11-64.
51 JCW, 8-1-68, emphasis original
because we are a 19th century city and not an 18th century city. But there is nothing wrong with the 19th century, and when we realize what we are missing just in terms of tourist dollars, perhaps we will take better care of our old buildings and neighborhoods.”

Again, we see an expressed connection to the nineteenth century and the Civil War in Richmond as opposed to a larger, Virginia-wide attachment to the Colonial era. In this exchange, Ryland argues for better preservation of nineteenth-century sites and a deeper commitment to the memories of the Civil War as a crucial aspect of local identity and tourist revenue.

While the memories and historical identities promoted by Ryland and by the planners of the Richmond Tour did gesture to Geary’s desire to locate Richmond at the center of a historical diverse tourist industry, Richmond remained invested in the Civil War. While we can expect that this narrative maintained the practice of memorializing Virginia’s role in the Civil War as a preserver of the nation and avoiding the difficulties of race, the continued attachment to a Civil War historical identity had the advantage of resonating with discourse on race in regards to political change and the ongoing attempts to annex portions of Henrico and Chesterfield Counties. As numerous urban historians and sociologists have noted, throughout the annexation debates, fears of an African American majority were expressed by the common concern that when they gained political control of the City African Americans would tear down the statues on Monument Avenue. While the prospect of that actually happening was unlikely, there was the palpable feeling of a threat posed to Richmond’s dominant historical identity by an African American community assumed to be hostile to those memories and, as we recall from RF’s documents on the RCV, “against everything.” The common cause business and political leaders

52 JCW, 7-30-68
53 Moeser and Dennis, 77; Randolph and Tate, 120 Byng, 64. This important detail is, understandably, treated as a minor footnote by these authors. As of yet, I have yet to trace their sources and ascertain the extent of these fears. While thus not fully dependable as a historical fact, this detail occurs regularly enough relevant literature for us to assume it is accurate.
had in developing a Civil War historical identity, performed cultural and discursive work that underlay anti-integration projects.

Monument Avenue in the 1960s: Salvador Dali Comes to the Old Dominion

The fears invested in the protection of Monument Avenue would become a major concern throughout the late 1960s and would carry meanings that cut across the symbolic and material landscape of Richmond. The connection among Richmond’s historical identity, urban planning projects, political annexation, and racial fears is evident not only in a survey of the distinct histories of these aspects of city life but also in the individuals who worked across these areas. Prominent figures in Richmond’s local government and RF had close personal ties to those figures who worked on reviving Monument Avenue and continuing the celebration of the Civil War. Through the Wheat Papers we can trace some of these relationships and the development of these projects. Wheat had personal relationships with a number of concerned figures, and, as a chair of the CPC, was involved in the governmental decisions on preservation and tourism.

Monument Avenue remained a central feature of these projects, not simply because of its racially resonant features but because it was a “an uncommon landmark” that set Richmond apart from other cities and which furnished “a pleasant physical environment for the learning process” and was “often used for relaxation and escape from the asphalt jungle.”54 In 1965, the Richmond CPC examined plans to modernize Monument Avenue and centralize the city’s Confederate iconography. These plans were laid out in the December, 1965 pamphlet “Design

54 JCW, Letter from Wheat, 5-17-65.
for Monument Avenue.” Describing Monument Avenue as a “bridge from past to present,” the CPC reasoned that it was “incumbent upon the community today to be aware of this heritage and the artifacts which preserve it, so that our activities reinforce rather than obscure those elements of our heritage which we value.” This duty to preserve was understood to extend not only to the protection of the existing statues but the extension of the network of monuments. The CPC “recommended that the theme of featuring prominent Confederate figures on Monument Avenue adopted earlier in this century be continued” because “the impression will be more vivid in the minds of the public than a random assortment of figures, and the impact will have greater appeal to tourists.” We can see in this proposal the explicit expression of Monument Avenue as a key site of public identity, recreation, and tourism. And, while the official language of the CPC did not endorse the racialized fears the assumed the assured destruction of Monument Avenue by an African American majority, the description of the boulevard as a “pleasant physical environment” that offers relief from the “asphalt jungle” speaks to the racialization of space within Richmond’s built and memorial landscapes.

Recognizing the major changes in transportation that occurred between 1920 and 1965, the CPC presented a plan to make Monument Avenue safer for and more visible from automobiles. A major aspect of this plan was the proposal to pave over the brick surface of the boulevard with asphalt. An asphalt surface might have made the avenue into a more traffic-friendly corridor, and, possibly, contributed to urban renewal projects. However, among some Richmonders, the brick surface was a historically resonant feature that defined Monument Avenue’s location at the center of Richmond’s historical identity. Out of these fears grew the Monument Avenue Preservation Society (MAPS). Still a functioning civic association, MAPS convinced the Richmond CPC to forgo efforts to pave Monument Avenue and encouraged it to

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55 Richmond City Planning Commission, “Design for Monument Avenue,” JCW
go ahead with the development and expansion of the boulevard’s historical focus. The planning commission approved plans to move and turn the Stuart and Davis monuments in order to make them more visible from passing cars. Specifically, the Stuart statue would have been moved from its location on a traffic circle at the intersection of Lombardy and Monument to a site on the Northwest corner of that intersection. The Davis Statue would also be moved its location abutting the roadway and be moved back to a location on Monument Avenue’s central media that was further from the stream of traffic. The plans also called for the erection of seven new statues of Confederate leaders and figures. The statues were to be placed at intersections between Lombardy and Belmont streets. The short distance between Monument Avenue’s Eastern terminus and Lombardy streets was filled with statues and the new plan would have filled in the more sparsely monumented Western section of the street.56

These ideas, supported by the Richmond News-Leader but opposed by the Richmond Times-Dispatch, never gained significant public support and were never completed. The first of these new statues was actually an already existing statue that simply would have been relocated within Richmond. The CPC, noting that its location posed traffic patterns, urged the city to move a statue of General A. P. Hill from its location at the intersections of Laburnum Road and Heritage Road on the city’s far North side. Because the statue posed a visual and physical impediment to the flow of traffic and because the construction I-95 and I-64 cut Richmond’s Northside off from the Fan District, the A.P. Hill Monument was both a threat to motorists and was spatially at a far remove from Monument Avenue. The CPC proposed moving the statue to a location at the intersection of Monument and Allison Street. All these plans ran into the formidable UDC and the Richmond Civil War Roundtable, a group of amateur and professional scholars, who resisted efforts to alter the location of any Confederate Memorials. While the CPC

had attempted to streamline and extend the marketable imagery of the Confederacy on Monument Avenue, the UDC and the Roundtable was able to prevent this modernization and keep the statues where they had originally been sited.

Of the other proposed statues, only one was the subject of extensive planning. Although unfruitful, this project bears our notice, in that it provides an insight into the logics and discourses the surrounded and supported the nexus of race, politics, memory, and historical identity in 1960s Richmond. In 1966 prominent Richmonders funded plans to erect a statue to Sally Tompkins, a Confederate nurse who had been given the rank of Captain of the Cavalry by Jefferson Davis. As a Captain in the Cavalry, Tompkins drew a significant pay and had freedom to organize Richmond’s hospitals. She was selected for inclusion on Monument Avenue as a representative of all women of the Confederacy. Headed by Roland Reynolds, an executive of the Eskimo Pie Corporation, a subsidiary of Reynolds Metal Company, the committee included Lieutenant Governor Fred Pollard, Senator Byrd, and General Edwin Conquest, who was Wheat’s uncle and a leader of RF. They were joined by Confederate historian Clifford Dowdey, the curator of the Museum of the Confederacy. The committee made overtures to the United Daughters of the Confederacy, who eventually offered financial support and were represented by Alice Whitely Jones and India Thomas, and the Virginia Federation of Women’s clubs, which was represented by E. Parker Brown and Alvah Riggins. Along with these politically and culturally influential men and women, the committee included Virginia Goddin Freeman, the wife of Douglas Southall Freeman, and Margaret Freeman Cabell, the wife of James Branch
Cabell. Although she was invited to participate, first lady of the United States Lady Bird Johnson did not join the committee.\(^\text{57}\)

Freeman and Cabell are of note, in part because of their own biographies and those of their husbands. Although she had little in the way of a public life, Virginia Freeman’s husband, Douglas Southall Freeman, who passed away in the 1950s, was the longtime editor of the *Richmond News-Leader*, a position which, as J. Douglas Smith shows, he used to further white supremacy through the careful endorsements of cultural and political causes.\(^\text{58}\) However, he is best known for his work as a leader of the Southern Historical Association and his Pulitzer Prize winning work *Lee’s Lieutenants*. That book and his multivolume *R.E. Lee: A Biography* were, as Gary Gallagher notes, crucial the resurrection and preservation of the Lost Cause and, especially, the heroic status bestowed upon Lee.\(^\text{59}\) In this way, Freeman cast a long shadow over writers and historians working within and about Richmond.

Margaret Cabell’s husband, James Branch Cabell, had been the other most famous writer from Richmond in the first half of the twentieth century.\(^\text{60}\) A member of an elite Richmond family, Cabell was a modernist prose writer associated with Dreiser, O’Neill, Fitzgerald and other better remembered writers. His most successful book, *Jurgen*, was, like Fitzgerald’s early work, a self-consciously decadent novel about privilege. His wife was also a member of elite Richmond social circles. A graduate of the prestigious St. Catherine’s School, she was a member of the UDC and the Colonial Dames and worked to preserve the Confederate Chapel at


\(^{58}\) Smith Ibid


the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. However, her public life extended beyond the ordinary circles of Richmond provincialism and, like her husband, she traveled in larger circles. After studying interior design in France, she opened and ran a clothing and design shop in New York City. During World War II she managed the Stage Door Canteen in Washington, D.C. And, in the 1920s, she was an editor of the *Reviewer*, an acclaimed Richmond literary journal with which her husband and H.L Mencken were associated. While Margaret Cabell, like Virginia Freeman, was on the committee because of her husband’s reputation as an important literary figure within Richmond, she had personal ties to the worlds of art and celebrity that the other members of the committee lacked.

The committee got to work rather quickly after the CPC announced their plans to develop Monument Avenue. Reynolds originally suggested the Tompkins memorial in January of 1966, when he appeared before the planning commission to offer 1,000 pounds of Reynolds aluminum castings to be used for the statue.\(^{61}\) Aluminum is both easily malleable and can anodized to any color. These qualities would have given the monument a modern, space-age quality that might perpetuate Richmond’s historical identity but make a bold break from older styles of public art. This desire to continue a traditional historical identity through more modern art also influenced to committee’s decision to commission Salvador Dali to design the Tompkins Monument. By the mid-1960s Dali had moved far from the Surrealist radicalism of his youth, embracing Catholicism and Spanish nationalism and marketing himself and his artwork to the highest bidder. Immediately prior to the Tompkins Monument, Dali had been commissioned by the Italian government to create a statue of Dante and by an anonymous donor to complete a statue of John F. Kennedy that was given as a gift to the French Government. The statue of Dante is a three-faced, life sized head that shows Dante in inferno, purgatory, and paradise. The statue has

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\(^{61}\) Schultz, 3-17-66
a laurel crown made of gild spoons. The slightly-large than life-sized bust of Kennedy is completely classical, except that the hair and facial features are rendered with paper clips.\textsuperscript{62}

While Dali may have become passé among the avant-garde, he retained his celebrity and his technical mastery and was an attractive artist for governments seeking less-traditional public art projects and monument. A Dali statue would have given Monument Avenue and Richmond renown as a site of artistic experimentation. There was hope that his interest in the project would blossom into a union of the existing traditionalism of Monument Avenue and Dali’s exuberant commercial surrealism. According to Reynolds, “If Dali were willing to work within the context of what exists on Monument Avenue, then Dali would be the best person in the world to come here now.” However, the committee wanted to verify that “the existing monuments [were] compatible with his style.”\textsuperscript{63}

Unfortunately for those who would relish such a union, Dali’s proposal was too shocking for the rather conservative members of Reynolds planning committee and the Richmond press. Unable to make the presentation himself, Dali sent his assistant, Peter Moore. Moore, who traveled with Dali’s pet baby Ocelot Babou, was taken on a tour of Richmond and Monument Avenue. Calling the existing statues on Monument Avenue “fine enough for Rome or London” Moore explained that Dali envisioned the statue as a “tribute to America … a kind of Statue of Liberty, you know.” He explained that Dali envisioned Tompkins dressed as a latter-day St. George, fiercely battling a germ/microbe in the form of a dragon; this duel would be placed atop a pedestal composed of a Petri dish balanced on a column designed to look like Dali’s index finger.\textsuperscript{64} Specifically, Moore explained that the “facial likeness would be as near as possible to Captain Sally, but the form of the actual body would depend on whether she were in a uniform or

\textsuperscript{62} Schultz, 4-4-66
\textsuperscript{63} Editorial, \textit{Richmond Times-Dispatch}, “Works by Dali Proposed for Monument Avenue,” 4-4-66.
\textsuperscript{64} A sketch of Dali’s design, held by the Virginia Historical Society, is reproduced in Driggs et al, 240.
not. … Probably the dragon will be an enlarged microbe of some kind, not the standard dragon of medieval times.”

He explained that Dali planned to use Reynolds’ 1,000 pounds of aluminum and would have the metal anodized pink. Impressed by the traditionalism of Reynolds commission and their benefactors, Moore indicated that he would let Dali know that “this idea to honor Capt. Sally Tompkins is an obvious extension of a tradition—not just a crazy hamburger nouveau riche idea.” The planning committee asked local artist Walter Ursy to prepare a sketch of Dali’s proposal that was distributed to the press.

Despite Moore’s overtures to Richmond traditionalism, the plans “did not resonate with Richmond’s philanthropic quarters” and were very quickly challenged. The planning committee opened up the project to other artists’ proposals, announcing plans for a design competition. Ursy also produced sketches of ideas proposed by members of the committee. One showed Tompkins offering water to a wounded soldier. The two were to be placed atop thirteen vertical columns, each of which would be inscribed with the name of one of the states of the confederacy and the names of the women from that state who worked for the Confederate Army. The other showed her cradling a dying soldier atop a pedestal with thirteen pleats inscribed in a similar fashion. The committee, recognizing the need for further publicity, opened the competition up to other proposals and announced plans to organize a non-profit organization to raise funds for the memorial.

Commissioning Salvador Dali was, in part, designed to push Richmond forward and outwards into the global mainstream while simultaneously maintaining a foothold in Richmond traditionalism. However, Dali’s eccentricities proved fatal to the project. The Richmond Times-

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65 Schultz, 4-27-66.
66 Schultz, 4-4-66
67 Driggs et al, 236-40.
68 Schultz, 4-27-66.
69 Schultz, 4-27-66.
Dispatch and Richmond News-Leader closely covered the visit of Moore and fixated intently on his companion, the ocelot Babou. As Dali’s proposal was debated, the press and conservative members of the planning committee repeatedly questioned the purpose of the monument, arguing that Dali’s statue would be a monument to Dali, not Tompkins. These arguments oftentimes used the near-rhyme of the words Sally and Dali to play up the suspected tensions of what the monument would honor and whether Dali’s mode of self-presentation would mesh with Virginia traditionalism. General Conquest asked the committee if they were “erecting a monument to Sally or Dali?” He threatened the dissolution of the project, stating that “if this is what we’re going to put up, I won’t have anything to do with it.”

A Richmond Times Dispatch editorial, “Sally and Dali,” stated that if Richmond wanted “some sort of freak monument to the women of the Confederacy” they could keep Dali’s designs. The Times-Dispatch felt that “the famous Richmond thoroughfare ought to express in dignified fashion the gratitude of Virginia to her famous sons, and daughters. A statue there to the women of Confederacy, or the women of the South, would seem to be entirely appropriate—provided it harmonize in general with the monuments already on the avenue.” Dali was derided not only for the Tompkins proposal but also his Kennedy statue and a little known painting he completed after spending seven months in Virginia during World War II. Forced to flee the Spanish Civil War and the Nazi occupation of France, Dali spent much of the 1940s in the United States. In 1941 he spent seven months at the Bowling Green, Virginia, home of friends. In his autobiography and in interviews he indicated that he was deeply impressed with the size and agility of the spiders he encountered there. He even used this experience in his

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71 “Sally and Dali.” Editorial, Richmond Times-Dispatch, 4-19-66
72 Ibid.
painting “Daddy Long Legs in the Evening, Hope,” which features a large spider, a cannon vomiting out an airplane, and victory being born out of the wings of a plane.  

The Richmond press’s and Reynolds’s committee’s ridicule of Dali’s eccentricity carried with it an important detail in the future of Monument Avenue. Not only was Dali’s proposal out of step with the larger themes of the avenue, his life’s work and his relationship to Virginia was outside the deeply entrenched aristocratic traditions of Richmond and Virginia’s white elites. While Dali and Moore might have been earnest in their expressed respect for Virginia and Monument Avenue, their manner and surrealism precluded their engagement with the subtleties of Virginia’s and Richmond’s historical identities. These identities were rooted in a sense of ageless values of patrician leadership, morals, and dignity. While Moore and Dali said they recognized this tradition, they may well have been ignorant of the racial and gender politics upheld through this discourse of historical identity.

This short lived attempt to revive the projects of memorialization on Monument Avenue reveals the cultural logics of anti-integration politics. The repeated concerns that African Americans would tear down Monument Avenue make clear that Monument Avenue came to embody the fears of white victimhood that lay close to the surface of racial segregation. Although the Richmond Civil Rights movement was rather moderate, white elites had projected the imagined violence posed by their potential political success. By finally erecting a statue of a woman on Monument Avenue, white elites would have positioned the collective monuments as victims threatened by an African American majority. While the decision to remember the contributions of women might have been motivated or informed by 1960s feminisms, I find this unlikely. Rather, the Tompkins Monument would have altered the public perception of Monument Avenue; the figure of a female nurse would shift the perception that is was a

73 Ibid.
celebration of masculine, military values and, within the current discourse, have positioned the entire boulevard as feminized, caring, and compassionate. Subtly, the assumed African American threats to Monument Avenue as a whole could then be read as sexual attacks on white, Southern femininity.

The furor over Dali’s proposal, ultimately, defused the 1965 and 1966 efforts to expand Monument Avenue. While the CPC and the state General Assembly did extend protection over the avenue, ensuring the statues could not be removed by an African American majority, attempts to introduce new statues ground to a halt. Lastly, it is important to note that the mid-1960s plans to expand Monument Avenue had roots in opposition towards plans to pave over the brick roadway. Connected to white victimhood and racialized patrician traditionalism are concerns regarding the effects of urban renewal. Some Richmonders did embrace the wholesale razing of older buildings in favor of new urban complexes similar to those built in postwar Norfolk. However, those residents of Richmond who embraced a sense of traditionalism recognized that wholesale urban renewal would lead to the degradation of the City’s defining architectural elements. By marshalling support for the preservation of Monument Avenue, they were able to ensure that their neighborhoods were not obliterated in the same way that Jackson Ward had been when Interstate 95 was built in the 1950s. While fighting the dangerous and destructive tides of renewal, MAPS’ investment in designation of their spaces as historically significant is a stern reminder of the localized spatial manifestations of de jure and economic racial segregation.
Chapter Four


While often assumed to be a wholly liberal and Democratic demographic group, there exist long standing political divisions among African Americans. Those divisions often are rooted in the varied geographic, economic, and cultural locations of African American communities. While it is true that since the formation of the New Deal Coalition most African Americans have allied with the Democratic Party within that voting group there are distinct variations in motivations, goals, and strategies that are much more deeply rooted than we might commonly assume. The recent phenomenon of highly visible African American conservatives is, in fact, the result of shifting national political culture that has enabled the expression of deeply rooted African American conservatism.

During Jim Crow and the Civil Rights era, African American conservatism was essentially dormant. Though conservatives existed, they had little leeway to exercise their interests because both national parties excluded African American participation at the state and local levels. As groups such as RCV (Richmond Crusade for Voters) and the NAACP worked to expand the African American franchise, conservatives necessarily allied themselves with the Civil Rights movement. This put many African American conservatives in a difficult space; as Randolph and Tate note, the simultaneity of the Civil Rights and anti-integration movements “prevented those black conservatives who might have been inclined to oppose this kind of social movement under normal circumstances from publicly opposing the civil rights movement.” And, they continue, “black conservatives were hesitant to openly challenge the civil rights
movement because of its religious undertones and moral appeal to white America to correct the social injustices afflicted upon all southern blacks.”

The era of the Civil Rights Movement was, of course, a period of fundamental shifts in political coalitions. Beginning with Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, the Democratic Party embraced Civil Rights and began to draw African American voters away from their traditional position as part of the Republican coalition. In the 1960s this shift accelerated and, by the early 1970s, African Americans were dependably Democratic. African American conservatives found themselves forced to support Democratic candidates because it was that party that embraced Civil Rights and opposed segregation.

However, beginning in the 1980s, African American conservatives began to exert larger political influence within the Democratic and Republican parties. Since 1980, the National Republican Party has profited from the work of African American conservatives such as Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, National Security Advisors and Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condeleeza Rice, Oklahoma Representative J.C. Watts, and influential Ohio politician Kenneth Blackwell. Within the Democratic Party liberal African Americans with roots in the Civil Rights Movement, such as the Reverend Jesse Jackson, the Reverend Al Sharpton, former Atlanta Mayor and Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young, and Former Washington, D.C., Mayor Marion Barry have seen their influence wane as more conservative politicians, such as Doug Wilder have gained influence. Certainly, the decline of some of these liberal politicians, especially Barry, came about because of destructive personal behavior. And it is important to note that politicians such Representatives John Conyers of Michigan and Maxine Waters of California have not only retained but increased their influence. However, nationally

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\[\text{1} \text{ Randolph and Tate, 278}\]
\[\text{2} \text{ See Keysarr 223-315 for an overview of electoral realignments that occurred during and after the New Deal.}\]
there has been a perceptible shift in the visibility and influence of African American conservatives that has come at the expense of African American liberals with ties to the Civil Rights movement. While Jackson and Sharpton remain cultural icons, their influence on the institutions of government is negligent.

This process occurs during and through the paradigm shift from post-war Keynesian “embedded liberalism” that dominated western economies during the Cold War to the ascendant, post-1978 proliferation of neoliberal economic policy across the globe. Both a philosophical position and a system of economic, labor, and policy practices, neoliberalism’s cultural politics have deeply altered racial discourse and its relationship to political discourse.³ Built upon the work of Friedrich van Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ludvig von Mises, neoliberalism grew out of the 1940s as a response to the economic depressions and catastrophic wars of the preceding decades.⁴ Committed to liberating economic actors from corruptible states and political parties, early neoliberal thinkers recognized that their project required the reworking of cultural values of collective responsibility and would not be achieved in any less time than a generation.⁵ The end result, lowered trade restrictions, limited government oversight of industry, and the decline of organized labor, was effected, in part, through a paradigm shift that undermined early-twentieth century interracial class collectivity. By isolating citizens as economic actors, neoliberalism

³ There is a rich body of work that both argues for and critically engages in the development of neoliberal economic policy and cultural politics. Among the most thorough histories of neoliberalism are David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism, Oxford: Oxford U P, 2005). It is from Harvey that I adopt the term “embedded liberalism” and the date on 1978 as a crucial turning point, as well as the analysis that neoliberalism has enabled the solidification of political power in the hands of economic elites. For a general history and a Foucauldian analysis of power the best study is Nikolas Rose, Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought, (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1999), especially pages 137-66. In a long discussion of governmentality, Rose traces what he terms “advanced liberalism.” Equally influential to my work is Lisa Duggan, The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy, (Boston: Beacon, 2003). Duggan analyzes the interrelationship between class politics and cultural politics that enables the embrace of neoliberal logics. Lastly, I am indebted to my colleague Christina Gerken who has been generous in sharing her expertise on the history of neoliberalism and its relationship to race and political discourse. I have benefited deeply from exchanging ideas with her and from reading her dissertation, which examines discourses surrounding immigration reform in 1995 and 1996.
⁴ Harvey 20
⁵ Ibid 20-21
undermines considerations of the increasingly complex role race, gender, sexuality, and class play in the fortunes of those subjects. As Duggan notes, neoliberalism “organizes material and political life *in terms of* race, gender, and sexuality as well as economic class and national, or ethnicity and religion. But the categories through which Liberalism (and thus also neoliberalism) classifies human activity and relationships *actively obscures* the connections among those organizing terms.”⁶ This process has led to the declining political, economic, and cultural influence of identity and class politics. And, as Harvey argues, it has enabled the reconsolidation of political power among economic elites.⁷ Harvey is careful to note that neoliberalism has created a new economic elite that includes older populations of elites, the family fortunes of the Rockefellers and Bushes remain firmly intact, as well as ascendant fortunes of those technology and corporate leaders who have profited from and created the technologies and business patterns of neoliberal global economies that exist in the West and in developing economies, a category which includes the Walton family of Wal-Mart, Bill Gates of Microsoft, financial traders such as George Soros and Warren Buffet, and, also, oligarchic business leaders in developing countries such as Carlos Slim of Mexico.⁸

While there is not space nor need here to examine the full history of neoliberalism or its impact on racial politics and memory, it is useful to keep these ideas at hand as we examine the development of memory and race in Richmond. In this chapter, I will continue to trace these local histories throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In it, I will focus on one of the most successful politicians of this era, Richmonder Doug Wilder. This chapter establishes the unfortunate decline of Civil Rights era based coalitions in the face of a rising neoliberal, bipartisan elite and the development of neoliberal logics within Richmond’s political, racial and memorial systems.

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⁶ Duggan 3, emphasis original
⁷ Harvey 21
⁸ Harvey 31-36.
It lays the groundwork for Chapters Five and Six, in which I examine the life of Arthur Ashe and the ways in which he was embraced by his hometown in the context of memory as a practice of neoliberalism.

Doug Wilder and Virginia Politics

Virginia is an interesting space in which we can examine the successful embrace of neoliberal policies and practices and their relationship to racial politics. It is will be useful to lay out the groundwork of Virginia’s political systems before moving into a general discussion of race and memory. The rise of neoliberalism occurs at the same time as Wilder’s tenure as Lieutenant Governor and Governor of Virginia. Wilder’s tenure as Governor is remarkable for the racial barriers that were broken. However Wilder’s rise to statewide prominence came through divisive struggles among Richmond and Virginia’s African Americans and the complex network of political and business coalitions that make up Richmond and Virginia politics. Wilder’s entry into Richmond politics began in 1964 when he helped found the political group Voters Voice (VV). Wilder’s co-founders, Neverett Eggleston and Ronald Charity,9 ran for City Council in 1964. Acting as VV’s spokesman, Wilder worked to position the new group as non-threatening to the well-established Civil Rights group, the Richmond Crusade for Voters (RCV). Wilder told members of the RCV that VV was designed to “inject black community issues into municipal elections.”10 However, commentators at the time saw through this veneer and

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9 As described in Chapter Four, Charity was a local African American tennis champion who, as a college student, taught the adolescent Arthur Ashe tennis fundamentals and then introduced him to Dr. Robert Johnson, who would help Ashe become an amateur player of national caliber.
10 Randolph and Tate, 215
recognized VV as middle-class challenge to the more working class oriented RCV.\textsuperscript{11} As Randolph and Tate argue, VV was actually a conservative political group dominated by African American business leaders working to gain control of Richmond’s African American political landscape. In 1964 VV ran two of its own candidates, Charity and Eggleston, and, in conjunction with another conservative African American political group, the People’s Political and Civic League (PPCL), endorsed a slate of candidates independent of the RCV. While the RCV’s candidates fared better at the polls, the struggle across class divides would become a defining feature of Richmond politics during and after the Civil Rights era.

In 1970, African Americans formed for the first time a majority of Richmond’s population. In that same year, however, annexation of a forty-seven acre parcel of Chesterfield County was complete, and Richmond’s city council reflected this renewed white majority. RF had merged with the Chesterfield Civic Association to form the Team of Progress and prevented the RCV from taken advantage of their growing power.\textsuperscript{12} The next twenty years would see moments of great unity among Richmond’s African Americans under the banner of the RCV; sadly, there would be more moments of disunion and infighting among the city’s African American political leadership. As Michelle Byng notes, there is a long history of African American political elites being divided among separate camps that are, roughly, identifiable by their location along a continuum from moderate to militant. This location is dependent upon elites’ goals and tactics. These identifications are not perfect, nor are they permanent. For example, at the turn of the century, W.E.B. DuBois and the NAACP were militant when compared to their contemporaries, Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute. However, by mid-century, the NAACP was identifiably moderate when compared to Martin Luther King

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, 215  
\textsuperscript{12} Byng, 69-70
and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In turn, King and the SCLC were certainly more moderate than the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Northeastern and West Coast manifestations of the Civil Rights Movement such as the Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Party.

All political and social movements are built on coalitions of mutual investment. The Civil Rights movement and the political coalitions it led to were, in part, defined by the tenuous balancing of the concerns of moderates and militants. The Richmond Civil Rights Movement owned much of its success to the tightly coordinated efforts and well managed organization of the RCV. However, it is important to note that the RCV was not an all-encompassing or faultless body. The election of Cephas and Mundle to the 1968 city council was evidence that some moderate and conservative African Americans were able to gain individual political clout by working with the conservative white elite.

Moreover, we can see signs of dissent among the working class African Americans who formed the base of the RCV. The largest political gains of the Richmond Civil Rights movement came through the eccentric, solitary struggle of Curtis Holt, a working class African American man, who almost single handedly upended the anti-integration movement’s gains in the annexation of Chesterfield County. After the 1970 election, Holt filed two separate suits under the Voting Rights Act, alleging that the annexation had been designed to dilute African American voting power. While these trials wound their way through the courts, a moratorium was placed on Richmond’s local elections, thus enshrining the 1970 city council in permanent power. In 1977 the US Supreme Court finally heard the case, finding that Richmond’s annexation had disenfranchised African American voters, and a new city charter was drawn up. This new charter ended the practice of at-large city elections and created a set of wards, thereby

\[\text{Byng 45}\]
ensuring neighborhood-based representation and, effectively, African American political involvement. The mayor and vice-mayor would be elected from the council by the council.

In 1977, Richmond’s first majority African American city council was elected; its members elected Henry Marsh III as the first African American mayor. Working closely with his white vice-mayor Valentine Kemp, Marsh expanded the role of the mayor, making the position less symbolic and more proactive as a leader and director of the city council. While his critics alleged that Marsh’s practices would lead to more white-flight suburbanization and the transplantation of business outside the city boundaries, Marsh actively reached out to city business leadership. The success of working class hero Holt and Marsh’s broadly progressive efforts signaled a defiantly liberal turn for a traditionally conservative Southern City. By stepping forward to actively lead and work with the city’s diverse interests, Marsh was able to forge a brief period of racial and class unity in Richmond. This unity fell apart in 1978 when the city’s African American elite pushed forward efforts to have an African American serve as city manager. Accused of using his political power to further the interests of African Americans, Marsh was accused by other politicians and local pundits of being a racist and his biracial coalition fell apart.

Marsh’s loss of support among white and business elites was made clear in the 1981 city council elections. African American political leaders had worked together in the RCV and other Civil Rights groups, and Marsh’s strength came from the informal personal ties and the collective consciousness forged by that allegiance. In 1981 one of Marsh’s closest allies and one of the most important women in the Richmond Civil Rights movement, Willie Dell, lost reelection to Roy West. West, an African American man who had not worked within the Civil

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14 Moeser and Dennis
15 Byng; Moeser and Dennis, 143-88.
Rights Movement, had close ties to the Richmond business and white elites. Randolph and Tate make a convincing argument that though West was an African American, he drew his political strength from and led a coalition of conservative African Americans, business leaders, and white elites. His election, they argue, depended upon attacking Dell’s non-conventional femininity and characterizing her as too radical. She was chastised because, as the wife of a minister, she was expected to be a model of femininity. But her outspoken political action and her Afro-hairstyle were assumed to reveal her allegiance to radical elements. It is also worth noting that West’s election also depended upon Marsh’s inattention to drawing of district lines, which recast Dell’s district.  

Once the new City Council was convened, West, a neophyte politician, cast the deciding vote, electing himself over Marsh as the new mayor. West became the African American face of a coalition of business, traditional elite, and conservative African American concerns, and his regime led to the diminution of the strides made under Marsh’s tenure. While Marsh had pushed forward progressive attempts at redistribution of city resources, West’s administration hampered that legislation. Thus, through personal politics and the well-worn road of redistricting, Richmond’s white elite undermined the power of its progressive African American leadership.

Richmond had come back under the control of political conservatives. This new conservative coalition is remarkable for its relation to racial, gender, and class hierarchies. Unlike earlier regimes, such as the Byrd Democrat machine, modern Richmond’s political elite was not lily-white or wholly masculine. Rather, a biracial economic elite of men and women worked together. Their unity, as evidenced in West’s campaign against Dell, was predicated on strict social codes of behavior. While the strict, though non-violent, segregation of the Byrd

16 Randolph and Tate, 264-74
17 Randolph and Tate, 300-2
Machine and Massive Resistance was gone, Richmond’s elite were still able to muster control through appeals to deeply embedded ideal of Virginia’s patrician roots. Dell and other veterans of the RCV and the Civil Rights Movement were deemed dangerous because they threatened these values. These social codes allowed for political participation by African Americans and women while obscuring the re-entrenchment of class division and conservative economic priorities.

As Byng documents, this era was marked by fierce division among Richmond’s African American political elite. There was wide dissension over the political direction of the African American community and the Democratic Party. By the late 1980s, Virginia’s ties to the national Republican party were well established. But, within state and city elections, however, it remained possible for Democrats to win office; Richmond, along with Charlottesville and Northern Virginia, was one of the few dependably Democratic areas in the state. In statewide elections, Democrats have succeeded but only when they streamline their platforms to draw in swing regions, such as the predominantly blue collar, coal mining counties of Southwestern Virginia and the exurbs of Washington, D.C. Within Richmond the tense coalitions of the city government, while technically non-partisan, were predominantly Democratic and African American. While more progressive and militant than the state government, the city government needed to build coalitions across the political spectrum and through engaging dominate conservative and traditional discourses. Still, the distinction in political culture between the city and the surrounding is similar to other areas of country the Democratic Party and the progressive-left dominate urban centers while the Republican Party dominates rural regions. Thus, the political sphere of Richmond’s divided African American political elite remained one of the only spaces in through which the agendas of the Civil Rights movement could be affected.

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18 Byng
Throughout this period, Wilder remained a major force among middle-class and conservative African Americans. Oftentimes, he worked in alliance with white conservative groups and publicly battled prominent RCV African American politicians. In 1969 he was elected to the Virginia General Assembly with the backing of Richmond Forward (RF), the political organization of Richmond’s business community. Throughout the 1970s, he fostered these ties and positioned himself as a moderate liaison between working class African Americans and middle class and conservative voters. In the late 1970s, as Oliver Hill’s protégé Henry Marsh and other African Americans affiliated with the RCV gained a majority on the city council, Wilder found himself representing Richmond in the Virginia General Assembly.

Though the highest ranking African American in Virginia politics, he had no specific jurisdiction in Richmond itself. Nonetheless, Wilder exerted his political influence and visibility to influence Richmond politics. However, when the Marsh-led city council undertook reforms in the late 1970s, Wilder joined whites and conservatives to criticize what was seen as “raw racism” on the part of Civil Rights activists. These criticisms of the city council led to a widening rift between Wilder and Marsh.19

Wilder continued to agitate for change in Richmond and, in 1982, endorsed conservative Roy West as he challenged Dell in the city council election. As we have seen in Chapter Three, Dell lost her seat because of gerrymandering and personal attacks. Dell’s district had been redrawn to include more middle-class African Americans and more whites, groups which had, historically, not supported her. Moreover, the 1983 election saw unprecedented attacks on Dell’s appearance, her independence, and her manner of speech. Wilder resided in Dell’s district and as a recognizable and influential constituent, his open criticism had a deep negative impact on her campaign. Wilder was especially critical of her leadership style and what he saw as her “radical”

19 Randolph and Tate, 277-85
politics. These criticisms frequently entered the realm of personal attacks, such as when Wilder explained that “he did not approve of her wearing African attire to council meetings or her incorrect usage of the English language.” Alongside these personal attacks, Wilder was accused of undermining Dell’s campaign by favoring West in a debate that he moderated. As Randolph and Tate demonstrate, Wilder used his position as moderator to allow a hostile audience to provoke Dell and then directed questions to her for which she was not prepared. While accusations of favoritism and unofficial campaigning rely heavy on hearsay, Randolph and Tate do indicate that it is widely held that Wilder undermined Dell in order to shape and influence the city council.  

The 1982 election was the watershed moment in the rise of neoliberalism, African American conservatives, and Doug Wilder. Randolph and Tate neatly trace direct ramifications of that election, including the reemergence of schisms within the formerly aligned African American community; the increased visibility of African American conservative agendas; limited options for women of color in local politics; the establishment of coalitions among white and African American conservatives; and the establishment of coalitions between African American Republicans and conservative African American Democrats. The declining influence of Civil Rights activists, such as Dell, occurred alongside and through the rise of conservative politicians such as Wilder and West. As Byng has demonstrated, the outcome of the Civil Rights Movement in Richmond was, ultimately, the rise of moderate, conservative African American politicians who profited from the work of liberal, militant activists. While this process has occurred in other states, the particulars of Virginia and Richmond have regionally defined the process.

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20 Randolph and Tate, 280
21 Randolph and Tate, 288-92
Wilder is one of many highly visible, successful Democratic politicians who have embraced centrist politics, pro-business economic policies, and a managerial style of government. It is important to remember that while it has followed political trends common to Southern states, the region’s overwhelming shift from being solidly Democratic to being solidly Republican has not been complete in Virginia. While Lyndon Baines Johnson is the only Democratic presidential candidate to carry Virginia since Franklin Roosevelt, and although its congressional representation and General Assembly lean Republican, in state elections Democratic candidates have been successful. Five of the Virginia’s last seven governors have been Democrats. Wilder’s election came on the heels of the largely successful administrations of Democrats Chuck Robb (1982-1986) and Gerald Baliles (1986-1990). Wilder was followed in office by Republicans George Allen (1994-1998) and James Gilmour (1998-2002) who, in turn, were succeeded by Democrats Mark Warner (2002-2006) and Tim Kaine (2006-present). Many of these politicians have had successful political careers after leaving the Governor’s mansion. Despite personal scandals, Robb went on to serve two terms in the U.S. Senate and has recently served under President George W. Bush on the Iraq Study Group and the Tri-Lateral Commission. Allen defeated Robb in the 2000 Senatorial election and he and Warner have both been mentioned as potential 2008 presidential candidates. And in the decade between leaving the governorship in 1994 and being elected mayor of Richmond in 2004, Wilder worked as a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, hosted a local radio show, and continued to exert influence over local politics.

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22 Interestingly, Virginia’s gubernatorial elections are held one year after presidential elections—1993, 1997, 2001, 2005—and for the past three decades, the governorship has been the political inverse of the presidency. In that time, the party that won the presidency lost the Virginia gubernatorial election one year later. It would be interesting to investigate if there is a causal relationship between these electoral patterns.

23 In 1994 Robb came under attack for scandals in his private life—while governor he had had an extramarital with a beauty pageant champion—but won reelection largely because his Republican opponent was the infamous Oliver North of the Iran-Contra scandal.
We can attribute some of this electoral history to the fact that Virginia’s constitution bars governors from seeking election to a second consecutive term.24 Because candidates for governor do not have to run against incumbents they must frame themselves against or alongside the state government as a whole. And when they achieve office, governors are liberated from the stifling considerations of reelection that often define the actions of a first term. While this dynamic occasionally does lead to combative campaigns that assail the status quo, there exists a general, statewide streamlining and institutionalization of policy and procedure that keeps Virginia’s governors closely aligned with each other and the state bureaucracy. While some have embraced particularly partisan economic policies—Gilmour, for example, ran his campaign on a promise to cut the state car tax—Virginia’s governors have met in the center on economic policy and managerial practices. Through efficient management and balanced budgets, they have overseen a state that has been among the best rated state governments for two decades. Under Wilder, Virginia was twice rated the best-managed state in the nation and, in 1993, Wilder was one of three governors to be given a grade of “A” by the Cato Institute.25 That recognition was not anomaly. In Governing magazine’s February 2005 “Grading the States” issue Virginia was one of two states given an “A-“ for its performance on a range of issues; Utah was the other. The editors noted that “there is little Virginia does not do well in government management. That’s been true for a while. […] Virginia has an ethos of good management that has genuinely been institutionalized.”26

24 Virginia governors are constitutionally prevented from serving consecutive terms; however, there is no limit on the number of terms a governor serves as long as those terms are non-consecutive. However, in the past thirty years, no candidate has attempted a second, non-consecutive term.
The institutionalization of good management is facilitated through the closeness of partisan policy positions in Virginia. The similarity of economic policy and managerial practice is reflected in incredibly close elections. In the past ten years there have been few landslides in Virginia’s Presidential, Senate, and Gubernatorial elections. Apart from Republican Senator John Warner’s victory in 2002, in which the Democratic party did not field a contestant, no major party candidate has won more than 55% percent of the vote. In fact, most elections have been decided by less than ten percent of the vote. While these margins are not as razor thin as elections in other states, they do point to the relative competitiveness of Virginia politics. This parity is, in part, caused by demographic shifts such as the in-migration of largely Democratic/liberal voters to the Northern Virginia suburbs of greater Washington, D.C. But it also reflects the statewide embrace and institutionalization of neoliberal policy.

The difference in these campaigns has often been determined by candidates’ positions of social and “values” issues and particular strategies used to sway swing voters. Virginia is a neatly divided state of heavily partisan areas. Its key swing regions—the suburban areas of Northern Virginia, the greater Norfolk area, and the Appalachian, coal-mining areas of Southwestern Virginia—are regularly won by the candidate who appeals to particular social and cultural values. A strong example of this is Governor Tim Kaine, who positioned himself as a religious man. Kaine’s campaign emphasized that his Roman Catholic faith informed his outlook but not his policies. Employing a strategy similar to that of Catholic John Kerry in the 2004 presidential campaign, Kaine made clear that he was personally against the death penalty—a liability in Virginia—and opposed Abortion—generally an asset in Virginia politics—but would not let his personal beliefs affect his governorship. It was through these issues that Kaine
was able to appeal to both rural blue collar voters and suburbanites who had only recently settled in Virginia.

Wilder has been one of the most successful and trendsetting of Virginia politicians who deeply embraced centrist politics and neoliberal rhetorics of multiculturalism. Through his career, we can see the ways the divisions among African American Virginians. We can also see the ways that while colorblindness enables certain political careers, race remains the defining and salient feature of Southern political culture. While these positions enabled his rise to prominence and power, they were not ones he jettisoned after reaching the Governor’s mansion. As his biographers have all noted, Wilder framed his political career in terms of the moral language of the Civil Rights Movement and the colorblind multiculturalism of neoliberal politics. This maintained image indicates both Wilder’s steadfast commitment to these values and his larger political aspirations. As he left the Governor’s mansion, Wilder positioned himself for a run at larger, national office. In 1990 and 1991 he overtly positioned himself as a potential candidate for the Presidency or Vice-Presidency; in 1994 he attempted to replace Senator Chuck Robb as the Democratic candidate for Virginia Senator. In a telling 1991 interview with Playboy magazine, Wilder careful positions himself against national Democratic and Republican leaders. Critical of Republican attacks on social programs, Wilder also tried to position himself as a fiscal conservative whose managerial skills would make him the best candidate for high office.28


28 Ross Peter Range, “Playboy Interview: L. Douglas Wilder—A Candidate Conversation,” *Playboy*, 38.9 (September 1991), 61-81. The always provocative *Playboy* interview was especially so in the summer of 1991. Wilder’s September interview was preceded by the July interview with Darrel Gates, the chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, and the August interview with film director Spike Lee. In that context, situated alongside
Wilder criticized and downplayed the chances of assumed Democratic candidates like Paul Tsongas, Lloyd Bentsen, George Mitchell, Bob Kerry, Richard Gephardt, Al Gore, and Bill Clinton. He was also critical of the assumed front runner, New York Governor Mario Cuomo, but was careful to play up the potentials of a Cuomo-Wilder ticket. Throughout the interview, Wilder was called to task for the “Wilder dodge” and speaking in “Wilderese,” an obtuse rhetorical form in which the politician speaks at length without actually saying anything. This strategy is, of course, familiar to us now as “Clintonesque” and throughout the interview and other published materials, we can see that Wilder consciously positioned himself and was received in much the same ways as the future president.

Wilder and Clinton are interesting public figures to compare not only because of the similarities of their politics, their demeanors, and their careers—both were Democratic governors of Southern states who worked towards national prominence in the early 1990s—but because both embodied and performed the racial logics of multiculturalism. Clinton, famously called “our first black president” by Toni Morrison, has benefited from his ability to move among and comfortably and eloquently function in diverse public spaces, especially those of white elites and working- and middle-class African Americans. A recent example of this skill came at the 2006 funeral of Coretta Scott King. One of many prominent eulogists, Clinton largely outshone both President George H. W. Bush and President George W. Bush and his wife, Senator Hillary Clinton, who received modest, polite reception from an audience who had just given her husband rapturous applause. When asked about the potential negative effect this might have had on his wife’s political career, Clinton responded “This is my life. I grew up in these churches. I knew
more people in that church. … This is my life.”

Clinton traces his oratorical and political skills back to his childhood among the biracial working class worlds of Southern small towns and uses that biographical detail to explain his ability to cross racial lines. Because of Southern roots he is intimate with and able to employ a physical presence and linguistic and rhetorical strategies that would seem at best awkward and at worst be offensive if used by other white politicians.

Similarly, Wilder exudes a carefully polished demeanor and linguistic and rhetorical strategies that helped him move out of the poverty of his youth and into elite business circles. Like Clinton, he is a consummate politician whose policy and public relations skills are matched with incredible charisma. Among African American Democrats, Wilder became, for a time, the ideal political identity. While Jesse Jackson had largely inherited a mantle of leadership from Martin Luther King, Jr., it was Wilder who, in the early 1990s, who was seen as the answer for the Democrats. Because of Jackson’s commitment to political activism and civil rights, and because of his widespread popularity, he was seen as posing a problem to Democrats who wished to distance themselves from welfare-state liberalism. Wilder was, in this regard, the solution to the Democratic Party’s “Jesse Jackson Problem.”

A popular, visible African American who fell in line with the centrist politics that would propel Clinton to the presidency, Wilder became, for a time, the hope of the Democratic Party.

However, while multiculturalism enabled the clever, shape-shifting Clinton to succeed through race-bending public performance, Wilder was unable to achieve high office through the same techniques. Colorblind multiculturalism reinforced Clinton’s reputation as a compassionate, business minded Democrat. While he would, ultimately, contribute to the

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29 David Remnick, “That Wanderer: Bill Clinton’s Quest to Save the World, Reclaim his Legacy—and Elect his Wife,” The New Yorker, 18 September 2006, 60.
30 Range, 70
decline of the American welfare-state, he remained a popular and influential example of a
politician who deeply cared. For example, despite his role in eliminating welfare programs,
Clinton was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame in 2002. Upon his induction he
thanked the audience, telling them that “tonight, what you do for me is the only thing you ever
asked white America to do for you in all the long years of segregation and discrimination. You
looked beyond the color of my skin to the work of my life and the truth of my heart.”31
Clinton’s legacy is built not on his race, but on his work. He is, in this formulation, the
embodiment of colorblind multiculturalism.

Wilder, however, was unable to fully move beyond the expectations of race and the color
of his skin. Throughout his career, he was defined as an African American politician but was
regularly criticized for breaking away from other African American leaders, like Jackson. When
he staked out his centrist positions on welfare or political correctness, he was not read as a
progressive, centrist Democratic leader, but as an outlier who, it was assumed, should be held at
a distance because he broke from the solid ranks of African American leaders. He achieved
some success in an era that celebrated multiculturalism and honored people for the work of their
lives and the truth of their hearts, but, at the end of the day, race remained the defining fact of
Wilder’s life.

The Richmond Renaissance: Memory in Contemporary Virginia

The widespread network of historical sites and its decidedly centrist politics have made
the Old Dominion an exceptional and exemplary venue in the institutionalization of neoliberal,

31 Bill, Clinton, “Arkansas Black Hall of Fame, 2002,” The Clinton Foundation,
multicultural memories of the national past. As we have seen in preceding chapters, since Reconstruction there has been the proliferation of a widespread network of monuments, memorials, historical museums, and various shrines and restored plantation houses. These sites have uniformly stressed Virginia’s centrality in national narratives of settlement, revolution, and the Civil War.

However, as we have seen, a tension exists between those sites which claim primacy through Virginia’s importance to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries and those which have continued to enshrine the Civil War and the Confederacy as the defining elements of the state’s history. From Reconstruction through the Great Depression, Virginia joined much of the nation in remembering the Civil War. Richmond far outstripped all other cities, with the possible exception of New York City, in its commemoration of the Civil War. Monument Avenue was at the material and symbolic center of a widespread network of monuments and museums that structured the city around the Lost Cause.

At the same time, an even more widespread and more permanent embrace and celebration of pre-Revolution Virginia developed. The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), the leader of these efforts in the nineteenth century, worked to develop a narrative of national origins that ran counter to New England-centric narratives that emphasized Puritan and religious separatist colonies as the seeds of national character. However, while the central components of the APVA’s counternarrative, Pocahontas and John Smith, remain resonant tropes in popular culture, the sixteenth-century origins of the Virginia colony are less

32 Lindgren
33 Three recent examples of this popularity are the films Pocahontas and The New World and David Price’s 2003 book Love and Hate in Jamestown. This popularity certainly is related to the 2007 quadricentennial of the settlement of Jamestown. Pocahontas, Directed by Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, Walt Disney Pictures, 1995; The New World, Written and Directed by Terrence Malick, New Line Pictures, 2005; David Price, Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Heart of a New Nation, (New York: Vintage, 2003).
important national touchstones than Virginia’s role in the American Revolution. Starting with the preservation of Mount Vernon, a widespread network of museums, monuments and shrines to Virginia’s Revolutionary elite arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This trend reached a climax with the development of Colonial Williamsburg as a living history museum.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, the rise of Colonial Williamsburg and other Revolutionary sites worked alongside generational shifts to diminish the importance of the Civil War and the Confederacy for Virginia’s historical identity. By the 1961 centennial of onset of the Civil War, Virginia had to be reminded of the import role the state had played in the conflict. That series of programs, however, led to a resurgence of Civil War memory in Richmond. The centennial was seen as a way to reassert Richmond’s importance within the state and the nation and laid the groundwork for numerous attempts to develop the city’s tourist industry that would build off of and augment Revolutionary sites like Colonial Williamsburg.

The resurgence of Civil War and Confederate memory in Richmond was linked to larger, national trends but carries with it local specifics. Nationally, the centennial led to such modern heritage movements as battle reenactments and neoconfederate and Southern heritage groups such as the Heritage Preservation Association. While reenactments are ostensibly apolitical, neoconfederate and southern heritage groups have been linked to political parties and controversial symbolic acts, especially the display of the Confederate flag. Their actions have benefited and been promoted by some conservative, “states rights” politicians who, since the 1960s, have become intimately linked with the Republican Party.

Allied with Richmond Conservatives, Doug Wilder would, eventually, profit from a lifetime of moderate, pro-business stances. After his long career in the Virginia General 34 Prince
Assembly, Wilder gained widespread notice when he served as Lieutenant Governor and then Governor from 1984 through 1992. While a lifelong Democrat, Wilder has been defined by his close ties to business and conservative interests and institutions. And, although he is a groundbreaking African American politician, he has long been criticized for what is seen as his antagonistic attitude to liberal and militant African Americans. He has, as demonstrated in this chapter, been a defining politician in Virginia’s embrace of neoliberal racial and culture politics.

Wilder used his prominence and worked within national and local discourses of memory to influence Virginia’s historical identity and its tourist industries. In this, he built upon changes that were already happening. By the 1980s, museums had begun to incorporate Social History as an organizing disciplinary structure and social historians as curators and guides. Motivated by shifts in the practice of history and national trends towards multiculturalism, this history is well intentioned but has complex results. Again, Colonial Williamsburg has been a leader in this trend. As Richard Handler and Eric Gable demonstrate in their important ethnography of the museum, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*, the museum has, since the 1980s embraced social history and sought to move past traditional recreations which emphasized “silk pants” elites and has created a range of sites and programs that emphasize African American and, to some degree, working class histories. And in the past decade the museum has paid increased attention to Native American history as well. However, as Handler and Gable argue, the methods and materials employed at Colonial Williamsburg as well as the museums attention to narratives of national origins have ultimately frustrated the inclusive projects of social, multicultural histories. While African American and working class histories are represented, they remain marginalized through the location at the museum and,

35 Handler and Gable
more important, the epistemological and historiographic methodologies inherent to a site
museum that seeks to recreate the past.

This context would inform Wilder’s efforts to develop new museums and monuments. The Ashe memorial was the most recognizable and famous of these. We will return to this history in Chapter Five, at which point Wilder, shifts in memory, and the larger racial and political climate of the 1990s will be used to inform the development of and debates over the Ashe memorial. Before we move to that moment, however, it is necessary to take a small step backwards and consider the life Arthur Ashe and his unique trajectory from segregated, racialized poverty to enshrinement as a local, national, and international hero.
Chapter Five
Memories of Masculinity: Arthur Ashe in Body, Word, and Deed

On February 6th, 1993, Arthur Ashe died due to complications from HIV/AIDS. He was forty-nine years old. National newspapers reported his passing with pronounced mourning and loss. The Washington Post, which ran columns by Ashe beginning in 1979 until his death, paid considerable attention to his death. Along with a standard obituary, the Post recalled Ashe in an editorial as “a legendary figure in modern American history.”1 The Post’s Tony Kornheiser wrote that Ashe was “my hero. He was a man of grace, of intellect, of moral purpose, of courage and integrity.”2 Kornheiser’s fellow Post sports columnist Michael Wilbon wrote that “nobody brought more dignity or honor than Arthur Ashe” and defined his passing in terms of great loss and confusion: “Arthur Ashe is dead, and anybody who ever cared about fairness and enlightenment and the betterment of humanity is worse off. There must be some way to mourn his passing, while celebrating the many gifts he left us.”3 Wilbon’s call for a new form of mourning, one which would mediate the breadth of responses to Ashe’s passing, points to the complexity and gravity of the persona Ashe presented in life and in death. In all three of these pieces and in much of the elegiac writing that celebrated his life, the reason for mourning Ashe’s passing and remembering and learning from his life is his “grace,” “honor,” “moral purpose,” and “dignity.” These defining tropes of mourning resonated and echoed across the breadth of elegiac writing occasioned by his death, and through them Ashe was presented as an ideal example of personal behavior for all. This model was rooted in, yet stretched far beyond, his career in professional tennis to include his life’s larger work in social activism and writing.

1 “Arthur Ashe,” editorial, WP, 2-8-93, A18.
2 Tony Kornheiser, “A Lone, Clear Bell, Mournfully Ringing,” WP, 2-8-93, C1.
Ashe’s legacy began with his prowess as a tennis player. Because of the particulars of the sport and its history, Ashe constantly found himself alone among his competitors, set apart by race in a highly masculine environment. It was in these spaces that Ashe faced the dilemma many successful African Americans have faced—of being the only person of color in the room. This social location and the metaphors associated with it were familiar to W.E.B. Du Bois, who opens *The Souls of Black Folk* by tracing similar experiences and articulating white reactions to his presence. In these white spaces Du Bois and Ashe become a problem, and existed for whites as the unarticulated yet stark reminder of their own racism. This experience, Du Bois indicates, is foundational to the double consciousness that so deeply defines African American subjectivity.\(^4\)

While America reverberated with the violence of the late 1960s and the 1970s, Ashe found himself in the predominantly white and international world of professional tennis. There is a history of groundbreaking African American athletes being treated as, and taking up the roles of, spokespersons and trailblazers for racial justice. Like Jackie Robinson and others, Ashe was the first nationally known African American superstar in his sport. Ashe, however, was unique among such athletes in that for almost all of his professional career he was the only champion-caliber African American tennis player. Moreover, he is the only African American man ever to achieve superstar status in the world of tennis. In the 1950s Althea Gibson won major titles; more recently Serena and Venus Williams have been dominant players. Unlike Jackie Robinson, Ashe was a man unto himself, the solitary black body in a white arena. While Robinson was the first African American of many to achieve success in a specific, segregated league, Ashe, Gibson, and the Williams sisters are among the few African American athletes to have achieved success in the entire sport of tennis. Furthermore, tennis, like golf, is racialized and classed in

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terms of both participation and audience; this racialization of sports impacts the political possibilities open to individual athletes. Understood to be a sport played and watched by white elites, the milieu associated with tennis influences the tenor of discourse and most certainly alters the social behaviors and practices expected of individual subjects.

While there certainly are parallels between Ashe’s experiences and those of Robinson and Gibson, a better comparison might be Muhammad Ali, the most politically outspoken athlete of Ashe’s generation. Both Ashe and Ali were gifted athletes who gained international fame in a non-team sport. Neither shared the stage or were supported by teammates; their athletic successes and failures were theirs and theirs alone. Moreover, though both had coaches, trainers, and managers, the nature of boxing and tennis enabled each to be his own spokesperson. Ali and Ashe were almost exactly the same age, Ali was born in 1942, one year before Ashe, and grew up under the stringent social and political codes of the segregated upper South, Ashe in Richmond, Ali in Louisville, Kentucky. Thrust into the spotlight, Ali and Ashe both embraced the opportunity to address the racism they experienced as children and the racism they witnessed as adults traveling around the country and the world.5

Ali, however, was much more steadfast and vocal in his stinging criticisms of American power structures and, in comparison with Ashe, was far more aggressive and militant in pursuit of change. Ashe’s demeanor, quiet, cool, respectful, encouraged the assumption that he was politically and socially moderate, especially when compared with the militant Ali. Furthermore, despite criticisms of their politics in the 1960’s and 70’s, both athletes were embraced late in life

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as champions of human rights. It is noteworthy that both Ashe and Ali gained this level of recognition as their once prime bodies displayed the ravages of disease, HIV/AIDS in the case of Ashe and Parkinson’s in the case of Ali.

The public figures the two athletes presented, however, need to be read in context of the venue through which their bodies and identities were most commonly performed. Boxing is personalized aggression. Boxers spar face to face with a violent fury unknown in most other professional sports. Moreover, though they may face each other with regularity, boxers spend most of the year training and see their competitors only in public events, like weigh-ins, and the spaces of the boxing ring.

Tennis is different. While not as aggressively violent as boxing or football, tennis is a fierce athletic competition, one in which a player’s performance is intimately tied to her/his body and the performance of gender. Tennis, as those who have seen John McEnroe play know, can be the site of aggressive intimidation. However, the courtly behaviors and traditions expected of its players enforce the performance of a chivalric, gentlemanly man of manners. Moreover, as in golf and track and field, tennis players never come in contact with each other; their relationship as competitors is mediated through the physical space of the court; they communicate across a net and through the volley of a ball. During Ashe’s prime, however, tennis players had a degree of personal intimacy and friendship with their competitors unknown in most other sports. Most professional players had known each other since childhood, when they met in youth tournaments. As adults they traveled and trained with each other. While boxing requires a detachment and disregard for competitors, a tennis player’s success is built on his ability to channel aggression and express it across the net. These skills are paradoxically fostered through off the court friendships and relationships with competitors.
Ashe’s fellow athletes treated him with respect, but regularly expected him to distance himself from the political questions forced upon him by his race. African American political leaders, however, provided outside pressure, encouraging him to use his position as a public figure to take up specific, broad political goals. This tension was exacerbated by the gendering of sport. As an athlete, Ashe’s body and masculinity were constantly on display and an important consideration are the ways that racial and sexual/gender politics interacted to influence his development as a public figure. Hemmed in by the political expectations of other tennis players and African American political leaders, his actions and behaviors constantly on display, Ashe tread carefully the complex ground of racial and gender categories.

But this legacy was legitimated through stories that burrowed far into Ashe’s past, deeply connecting his public figure with the morally stratified histories of race and masculinity that cut across the mid-twentieth century. The elegiac writing occasioned by Ashe’s death built upon and drew the readers' attention to a self-sustaining narrative of an honorable life, one on which to write out our larger national struggles. Throughout his life, Ashe had consciously drawn from his childhood as he articulated and deployed a personal politics of morality, pragmatism, and moderation. These politics were not atypical; rather, they were representative of the larger culture systems that informed Ashe’s racial and gender identities.

The strict racial hierarchies of Jim Crow-era Virginia were predicated upon social codes of morality and civility. As we have seen in the history of race, memory, and politics in Richmond from 1890 through 1990, these racial hierarchies allowed for an African American middle class. This middle class was delineated through economic status and strict gendered hierarchies. While exceptional figures, such as Curtis Holt, were able to break through class barriers and make strong contributions to Richmond’s Civil Rights movement, the dominant
history is one of clear class and gender distinctions. Willie Dell, for example, was criticized from within Richmond’s African American community for the perceived threat she posed to strict gender hierarchies. Normative African American leadership was built upon middle class ideals of moderation, morality, and civility. These values were embodied in the carefully balanced masculine yet non-sexual bodies of African American men who led the fight against segregation.

Ashe carried the legacies of these hierarchies and used them in the careful process of crafting his influential public persona. As he discusses in his memoir *Days of Grace*, Ashe learned at an early age the realities of racism. In order to escape the segregation of Richmond, he moved at age seventeen to St. Louis, where he spent his last year of high school, and then to Los Angeles, where he attended U.C.L.A. After graduating from U.C.L.A. in 1965, he entered the world of tennis tournaments and traveled continuously around the nation and the globe. As he moved further and further away from Richmond he entered more permeable worlds, ones in which the spatial and social delineations of race were softened and in which Ashe was able to explore and express terrain denied him in Richmond.

Forced to negotiate the double consciousness particular to his social location, Ashe drew upon the memories of masculinity that were ingrained in him as a child in Richmond. These memories helped Ashe articulate a persona that was defined in his body, his deeds, and his words. His play, physical presence, and facial gestures, were on display for live and televisual audiences highly aware of the presence of a single African American man. Aware of this unarticulated difference, Ashe withdrew behind a mask, presented a front of coolness and control. He used this persona to pursue specific political goals. He was a leader of efforts to unionize professional tennis players and, over the course of his life, worked as a spokesman for a

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variety of causes, most especially education and the end of South African apartheid. In these endeavors, Ashe took moderate stances that oftentimes angered more militant political activists.

The double consciousness that underlay Ashe’s physical self-presentation and his political actions were examined, mediated, and crafted into a legacy through a considerable body of writing. As a public figure, Ashe was the subject of a large body of journalistic writing, the bulk of which was concerned with his tennis career. However, this sports coverage was produced in collusion with the lifelong crafting of a standard narrative of Ashe’s biography, politics, and private life that was written, studied, and celebrated by journalists, columnists, and Ashe himself. In this chapter, I will examine the textual production of the public figure of Ashe. My reading will focus on four books that contributed directly to this persona. One of the earliest and most influential treatments of Ashe’s life is John McPhee’s slim, 1969 volume *Levels of the Game.* The narrative McPhee set down was repeated in Ashe’s three co-written memoirs, *Portrait in Motion* with Frank De Ford (1975), *Off the Court* with Neil Amdur (1981) and *Days of Grace* with Arnold Rampersad (1993). These three volumes were published at important turning points in Ashe’s life. They often cover the same biographical and thematic terrain but rework the pieces of the subject’s past in new ways that respond to his ever changing present and future. By tracing the revision of Ashe’s biography through these four retellings and by reading them alongside Ashe’s other written work, notably his columns for the *Washington Post* and other newspapers and his multivolume history of African American athletes, *A Hard Road to Glory* (1988), I will trace the use of memory in Ashe’s negotiation of double consciousness in

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the face of his tennis career, his political activism, and, finally, his end-of-life admission of his status as HIV positive.⁹

Establishing a Biography: Oral Histories and Journalistic Narratives

In *Levels of the Game* McPhee worked from details provided by Ashe and those closest to him and established a narrative of Ashe’s life that would prove influential to later (auto)biographical efforts. *Levels of the Game* describes, in minute detail, Ashe’s victory over Clark Graebner in September, 1968, in the semifinals of the first U.S. Open tennis tournament. McPhee begins his account with an eight page description of the 1968 match’s opening volleys. Through this description, McPhee teases out the players’ styles and explains their relationship to the history and present of the game. McPhee makes a point of describing the two players’ commitment to the U.S. Davis Cup team; as members of the team they represent the U.S. in year round team competition against other countries in what functions as the global national championship. Their position as representatives of the U.S. is heightened when McPhee tells us that in this inaugural U.S. Open championship, Graebner and Ashe are the last Americans standing, the contestants in the other semifinal are from Australia and the Netherlands, and the winner of this match will become the last chance for the U.S. to protect its national championship from international hands.

The patriotic portent of the match carries a larger meaning when we consider the contexts of *Levels of the Games* initial publication. Originally published in two installments in *The New Yorker* on June 7, 1969 and June 14, 1969, *Levels of the Game* speaks of a time in which the

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promise of peaceful racial progress was a faint echo hidden behind the tense upheavals of 1968 and 1969. While there is not space here to undertake a full study of the reception of the initial run of *Levels of the Game*, I would like to offer a few observations regarding the potential meanings of its layout and the effect it might have had on its audience. As McPhee’s educated, predominantly urban audience read about Ashe and Graebner, their eyes were momentarily distracted by advertisements that evoked a lifestyle of urbane wit and sophistication. Colorful, full page images of Caribbean resorts, gentleman in fine wool sweaters, and a whole range of top shelf liquors broke up the pages of the story while smaller ads for personal services, summer camps, and curious products lined the margins of the pages.

Moreover, McPhee’s narrative, in its original publication, was momentarily interrupted by cartoons and poems. I would like briefly to discuss one cartoon and two poems that, I would argue, impacted the reading of *Levels of the Game*. The second page of the first installment shared space with a poem by May Swenson titled “The Lowering (Arlington Cemetery, June 8, 1968).” The poem harkens back to Robert Kennedy’s burial alongside his brother John one year earlier. The poem’s forty-seven lines grow in length from monosyllabic words to multi phrase lines at its middle. As the length lines grows, the narrator describes the slow folding of the flag that had been draped over Kennedy’s coffin. At the poem’s midpoint, the flag’s form is now “found to resemble that / of a 3-cornered pouch, or thick cocked hat,” and the narrator begins the slow descent back to one word lines. As the lines shorten, the flag is figuratively passed to John Glenn, and Edward, Joe, and Ethel Kennedy and becomes a replacement for Robert Kennedy. The narrator offers the flag and the grave to the nation in place of a leader and the grave to Kennedy in place of a country. The structure of the poem, the lengthening and shortening lines make it appears as a triangle on the page, builds and falls with the rising elegiac

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mood and melodramatic tension of the funeral for a second Kennedy. This melodrama draws from and cultivates the pervading sense of the Kennedy family’s reputation as the national family, and the assassination a year earlier is marked as the loss of our national redemption.

The gloom of that national mood is echoed in a poem on the third page of the second installment. “The Dump” by Donald Hall describes a man walking in a desolate landscape. The trolley has stopped running many years prior, but the passenger, as he is called, is confused and thinks that he is simply at the end of the line. But, we are told, he has actually found himself in “the graveyard of trolleys” now able to “see smoke rising / from holes in the roofs. / Old men live here, in narrow houses full of rugs, / in this last place.” The confusion of the passenger, suddenly aware of the end of the affluent, mobile networks of New York’s past, underlines the depression and stark gloom pervaded the late 1960s.11 The passenger has no idea how he ended up here, in “this last place,” and finds himself trapped in memories of what had been. This detachment of the older elite becomes a joke two pages later in a cartoon by George Booth. In the plush lounge of a hotel lobby or a gentleman’s club one dog-faced old man, facing the reader, a martini and pipe on his drink table, asks the man next to him “Ferguson, do you have days when you don’t feel a cut above the rest?” The decadence of their surroundings, the ease implied ease of their lives, is these men’s undoing.12 Their mental well being is dependent upon knowing they are better than the teeming masses. While Hall’s poem and Booth’s cartoon highlight the gloom of the posh lifestyle of New York elegance, they are juxtaposed with the very marketing of that lifestyle in the ads that line the pages of The New Yorker. There is, in these pages, a highly ambivalent sense of the nation and the role of the bourgeoisie

11 Donald Hall, “The Dump,” The New York, 6-14-69, 46.
12 George Booth, Untitled Cartoon, The New Yorker, 6-14-69, 48.
This ambivalence is important to note when we consider the narrative McPhee employs in *Levels of the Game*. Having introduced the players and their potential status as national icons, McPhee shifts back to the match, developing the on-the-court tension between the two men. It is in the moments of stark juxtaposition that McPhee establishes the characters of Graebner and Ashe and communicates the meaning of the portentous match. The two players could not have been more physically different. Graebner is a large, lumbering, powerful man who “looks exactly like, that is to say, he bears something far more precise that a striking resemblance to, Clark Kent” and plays efficient, if conservative, tennis.\(^\text{13}\) Ashe, on the other hand, is graceful and lithe, a physical presence which masks his slight, almost scrawny build, and his streaky, inconsistent, nervous play on the courts. While the articles did not come with photographs of the players, McPhee’s descriptions are echoed by cartoons of the players. The first installment opened with small cartoons of their faces; the second features images of their full bodies. On the left, Ashe is depicted midserve, his dark, almost scrawny body, is contrasted by the starkness of his tennis-white outfit. On the right, Graebner is poised, ready to return volley, his tanned white skin only shades lighter than Ashe’s, he looks imposing and heavy, thickly muscled and solidly built. But the contrast of white shorts and shirts with Ashe’s black skin and Graebner’s tanned white skin accentuates racial difference. In McPhee’s recounting, this physical difference becomes attached to the players’ social backgrounds, and the match becomes the unifying metaphor through which McPhee traces the distinct yet convergent paths that brought Graebner and Ashe together to stand at the cusp of tennis greatness. McPhee weaves a meandering double helix biography of the two athletes, juxtaposing Graebner’s carefully sculpted childhood in the white, middle class suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, with Ashe’s modest, by-the-bootstraps rise from the segregated playgrounds of urban Richmond.

\(^\text{13}\) McPhee 31,
In these beginning pages, as he builds his characters off of each other, McPhee, describes their lives off the court telling readers that Ashe was planning a trip to Kenya, his first such visit to Africa. This jump from national pride to Ashe’s interest in Africa is the jumping off point for a 250 year detour in which McPhee traces the tangent of Ashe’s family history back to 1735 and the Doddington, “a square-rigger of eighty tons and Liverpool registry, [that] sailed into the York River in Virginia, carrying a cargo of a hundred and sixty-seven West African Blacks.”

Among this human cargo was a nameless girl who was sold to Robert Blackwell, a tobacco grower in Lunenburg County. This girl would marry another slave, have a daughter named Lucy, who, through a series of biblical begets, McPhee positions as the fountainhead of the Ashe family in Virginia and North Carolina. This narrative, McPhee tells us, is scripted from a family tree that was carefully recorded and preserved in a six by seven foot rendering that hangs in the home of Ashe’s cousin, Thelma Doswell. Each identified member of this matrilineal tree is represented by a leaf on the tree and one leaf, Ashe’s, is painted gold.

McPhee ends his two page description of Ashe’s family history with the remark that “Graebner has no idea whatever when his forebears first came to this country.” Despite this ignorance of distant familial history, Graebner is the beneficiary of his immediate family’s success and their influence. He is, we learn, the son of a Cleveland dentist who, himself, had been a successful tennis player. Supported and nurtured his whole life, Graebner’s tennis game developed through the dedication of his mother and under the watchful eye of his father and the

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14 In these early days of professional tennis most players had non-athletic careers; tennis was not yet the full time commitment that other sports were. Graebner worked as an assistant to the president of the Hobson Miller division of Saxon Industries and Ashe was a lieutenant in the U.S. Army stationed at West Point, where from 1965 to 1969 he worked in the office of the U.S. Military Academy’s adjutant general and coached the cadet tennis team. Ashe had participated in R.O.T.C. at U.C.L.A. The army secured this particular post for him so that he could pursue his tennis career. A benefit of this post was that Ashe would not have to serve in Vietnam. A drawback was that he could not receive prize money from tennis tournaments. At the time, Ashe was also a part time employee of Richmond-based Philip-Morris, a relationship that would continue for most of his adult life.

15 McPhee 11

16 McPhee 13
best coaches and clinics in the Midwest. Though it was not an easy ascent, Graebner’s hard work and considerable progress were fostered by the cultural and financial institutions that ensured his family’s stability. In McPhee’s reading, Graebner’s social background is manifest in the style of his play. His careful yet efficient, lumbering yet agile, and powerful yet patient, tennis is, remarks Ashe, a type of “stiff, compact, Republican tennis.”

Graebner’s biography, woven together with the description of the match and Ashe’s biography, becomes an exemplar of traditional values and the benefits of privilege and insulation from social upheaval.

The tensions of Ashe’s biography are magnified through this juxtaposition and, in recounting it, McPhee describes a life defined by the inherited social codes and family bonds of working class African Americans in Jim Crow Virginia. Ashe’s family tree immediately sets him apart from Graebner and other suburban whites but also from the dominant assumptions about African Americans. The social and political exclusion of African Americans historically prevented the development of traditional family bonds and continues to frustrate the full documentation of familial histories. Ashe’s intricately traced family tree is seen as unique and stands as a textual and visual delineation of an African American family and fixes its pasts in distinctly national time and space. McPhee tells us the status of Ashe’s early ancestors, when the family exited slavery, where in Virginia and North Carolina they lived, and how they came to have the surname of Samuel Ashe, an early governor of North Carolina. Not only does Ashe know his past, he knows the wide reaching permutations of his family and its uniquely American characteristics. It stretches across Virginia and North Carolina, includes whites and African Americans and extends its reach deep into our national memory. Ashe, the golden leaf, is a culmination of an American past.

\footnote{McPhee 90}
This American past, however, is one that grew in the shadows. The anonymity of his first American ancestor reinforces the wholly American roots of Ashe’s family while pointedly indicating the legacy slavery has had on familial identity. The Ashes located this legacy on the ornate family tree. In an upper corner of the chart hangs the family crest. A central chevron bears a black chain with a broken link, signifying the end of slavery. Below the chain is a black well, above a cluster of tobacco leaves. The careful documentation and grand charting of the family’s past breaks the cycles established under bondage; the crest serves as the reminder of the victory over the grasp of that history. Through this family tree the Ashe family, and, through his prominent use of it, McPhee, lays claim to an ascendant, shadow memory of the national past. The amnesia of Graebner’s middle class, suburban family is overcome through the cultivated memories of the Ashe family. These cultivated memories enable a system of identification through lineage and storytelling. They form the backdrop of the stories which McPhee uses to fill in the backstory of Arthur Ashe Junior as he fought to win the first U.S. Open.

These stories place Ashe within the larger narrative of African Americans in Richmond and Virginia. Ashe’s biography, we learn, was deeply influenced by the example and guidelines set by his father, the early loss of his mother, and the tutelage of his first tennis coaches, Ronald Charity and Dr. Robert Johnson. Arthur Ashe Senior was one of nine children and grew up on the family’s small farm outside South Hill, Virginia, due south of Richmond near the North Carolina line. Barely literate, Ashe Senior left home in the 1930s at twelve to seek his living in Richmond. At first he worked part time doing odd jobs but, at thirteen, got a driver’s license and became a chauffeur-butler for wealthy white families. His employees were, for the most

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18 Arthur Ashe the tennis player always referred to himself as Arthur Ashe Junior. His family always called him Arthur Junior. In this chapter it will be necessary to differentiate between father and son. To do so, I will refer to them as Ashe Senior and Ashe Junior. If used alone, Ashe refers to Arthur Ashe Junior.
19 McPhee 61
part, Jewish business owners, including the Schwarzchilds, who owned a chain of jewelry stores, the Thalhimers, who owned a chain of local department stores, and Daniel Schiller, who was the treasurer for the Thalhimers.\textsuperscript{20} In 1960, Thalhimer’s department store became the focus of an important boycott in the Richmond Civil Rights Movement.\textsuperscript{21} While the business practices of the Thalhimers’ would become the subject of later political struggles, their personal politics and their personal responses to acts of anti-Semitism cultivated the young Arthur Ashe Senior’s ideas on proper masculinity. He often repeated a story about taking the family patriarch, William, to see a man about a piece of land he wanted to buy. The man did not want to sell the land; he especially did not want to sell the land to a Jewish man. The seller insulted Thalhimer in every imaginable way but, in the end, the deal was finished. Privy to the conversation, Ashe Senior, asked his employer why he had endured the onslaught of insults and slurs. Thalhimer replied by saying that he had come to purchase the land; he had bought the land and it was now his; the seller could go on cursing him as long as he wanted because, in the end, Thalhimer had won. In one of Ashe’s versions of this story, he tells us that “this incident had a major impact on my father. It deepened his pragmatic sense; it made him see the world in a different way.”\textsuperscript{22}

This pragmatism combined with the material and political demands of existing as a working class African American man in Jim Crow Richmond. Ashe Senior responded to these demands through hard work and a rigid sense of appropriate behavior rooted in familial responsibility. When Ashe Junior was a small child, his father took a job as a special police officer for the Richmond City Police. Charged with patrolling and maintaining an African American Park, Brook Field, Ashe Senior was a combination night watchman, groundskeeper, and equipment and facilities manager. In this job he “spent half his time encouraging athletic

\begin{footnotes}
\item[20] Ashe 1993, 162
\item[21] Randolph and Tate, 180-190.
\item[22] Ashe 1993, 162.
\end{footnotes}
games and the other half breaking up crap games.”

The family lived in the middle of the park and Ashe Senior’s labor was both close to home and tightly woven to Richmond’s African American communities. Located at the heart of the closely knit African American neighborhood Jackson Ward and next to the historically black Virginia Union University (V.U.U), Brook Field was the best equipped African American park in segregated Richmond, and was filled with fields, playgrounds, pools, and courts; it was the center of play and sport among African American Richmonders. As a child Ashe lived at the athletic epicenter of a threatened yet proud African American community that for one hundred years had been among the most affluent in the South.

In addition to this formal work, Ashe Senior performed a bevy of part time labor and odd jobs. He was, as his son described him, a “hustler,” a term “much used in black circles, especially in the South. It doesn’t mean to swindle someone out of something; it means working two or three jobs to make ends meet.” McPhee provides many examples of Ashe Senior’s hustling, including his small landscaping and janitorial companies; but the most striking is the description of how he built a family home in Gum Spring, Virginia, thirty miles outside Richmond. When Interstate 95 tore through Richmond, leaving a dust trail of destroyed homes, Ashe Senior made the best of the situation. He spent every free moment going to the site of demolished homes and salvaged every usable material, blocks, bricks, plywood, wiring, pipes, blocks, bricks, plywood, wiring, pipes,

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23 Ashe 1993, 65.
24 Brook Field, Jackson Ward, and V.U.U were clustered together in a manifestation of the spatial effects of racial segregation. It is also important to note that though tightly knit, this area of Richmond was threatened and, eventually torn apart by city zoning practices during urban renewal in the 1950s and 60s. When the Ashe family lived in Brook Field it was encircled by light industry, including a bottled gas plant (McPhee 64). The development of Interstate 95 razed a large swath of Jackson Ward and cleaved this historic neighborhood in two. By 1968, Brook Field’s trees and playgrounds had been torn down and the site had been turned into general post office (65).
25 Ashe 1981, 13
everything including the kitchen sink. He then used these materials and built a family home, out in the country, with his own hands and the help of his sons.26

This dedication to hard work manifested itself in Ashe Senior’s sense of familial responsibility and the rearing practices he used with his sons, Arthur Junior and his brother John. A key moment in the Ashe family history took place in 1950, when Arthur Junior was seven and John was one. Their mother, Mattie, passed away due to complications from her third pregnancy. Her death altered the family structure. No longer a traditional dual-parent household, the Ashe family became a single-parent, wholly masculine environment. Arthur Junior had no memories of his mother, save one: a week before her death, he remembers her standing by the door in a bathrobe as she was taken to the hospital. This image was linked to an event that through repeated retellings took on larger meanings. As Ashe Senior told McPhee, in one of the oak trees outside the house, there was a bluejay bird singing up a storm. I carried Arthur Junior’s mother to the hospital that morning. The bird sang for a week. I threw rocks at it. I shot at it with a .38, but not to kill it. The bird sang for a week and would not stop. A call came at five-twenty one morning from the hospital, and the bird stopped singing.27

Father and son both go back to this event and McPhee tells the story through their dual narrations. For both father and son, the loss of the mother was an event kept alive through symbolic images of fleeting images and naturalistic omens. Though the Ashe family always had a live-in female housekeeper and though Ashe Senior would soon remarry and bring a stepmother and stepdaughters into their family, Arthur Ashe Junior’s childhood, as told to and written by McPhee, was one of a father and two sons caring for and tending to each other.

26 McPhee 55
27 McPhee 62-63
In this retelling, the rigors of being "a lone parent seemed to increase in Arthur’s father his already rigorous sense of discipline."\textsuperscript{28} Father and son described to McPhee the rigid rules and absolute maxims that ruled Ashe Junior’s childhood. He was never allowed to tarry, never allowed to stray far from home, and was kept on a tight schedule. Explaining his philosophy on parenting, Ashe Senior told McPhee that "a parent has got to hurt his own child, discipline him, hold him back from things you know aren’t good for him."\textsuperscript{29} This traditional approach to parenting was forged in the crucible of racial politics in Richmond and influenced by the pragmatic example set by Thalhimer. Referring to himself as "a ‘crooked-knees’ Negro, which he define[d] as someone who has no class at all" Ashe Senior expressed a faith in the values of self-sufficiency, restraint, respect, and law-and-order. In McPhee’s hands, these values are expressed in maxims that Ashe Senior "bellows": "You respect everybody whether they respect you or not!"; "Never carry a grudge! I’ve seen Negroes wreck their lives through hatred of whites!"; “There’s a certain class of people, there’s a certain class of people you’ve got to handle by judge.”; “I don’t have any picks and pets … I make everybody come by me, rich or poor.”; and, finally, “I just want people to treat me as a human being. I’m sure my son is the same."\textsuperscript{30} The picture McPhee paints of the Ashe family home is one of political and personal moderation, one in which the reality of racism is acknowledged, yet deflected away from the subject by the shields of self-control and self-confidence. These politics did not ingratiate Ashe Senior with his peers. A man who, as Johnson described him, “once had a reputation for being strictly Uncle Tom” Ashe Senior was “one of the few blacks on the police force” and was in a unique position

\textsuperscript{28} McPhee 63  
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{30} McPhee 79-81.
to patrol and monitor the entire African American community.\textsuperscript{31} Ashe Senior admitted that his power and the success of his son bred jealousy and discontent in many of his peers.\textsuperscript{32}

Despite this criticism from other African Americans, these values were further cultivated by Ashe's early tennis coaches, some of whom were deeply invested in African American success over whites. Ashe first learned of tennis by watching V.U.U. students play on the courts in Brook Field. When he was six he became intrigued with one student in particular, Ronald Charity who was, in Ashe’s eyes, “the best in the world.”\textsuperscript{33} Charity was, by his own estimation, the best African American player in Richmond. A self taught player, he soon passed his lessons on to the very young Ashe. A natural athlete and, due to his father’s strict rules, an attentive and responsive student, Ashe very quickly developed into a solid player. Charity recounts that he was the ideal student. “He was a quiet child, observant. He took in everything, and read a lot. He was very disciplined.”\textsuperscript{34}

Impressed with his progress, Charity suggested that Ashe Junior enroll in Doctor Robert Johnson’s summer tennis academy. A former football player at historically black colleges such as Shaw, V.U.U., and Lincoln, Johnson had attended medical school and set up a practice in Lynchburg, Virginia, 100 miles west of Richmond. After taking up tennis as an adult, Johnson became a regular champion in the American Tennis Association (A.T.A), the fledgling national body for amateur African American tennis players. Tennis was not a widely popular sport among African Americans, and Johnson dedicated his free time and finances to improving the A.T.A. and the quality of its players. In 1949, Johnson attended the national junior championship, held in Charlottesville, Virginia. Impressed by the quality of the tennis and

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{31 McPhee 79; Ashe 1981, 22}
\footnote{32 McPhee 79}
\footnote{33 McPhee 36-37}
\footnote{34 McPhee 36-37}
\end{footnotes}
encouraged by the fact that tournament directors allowed African American players to enter, Johnson dedicated himself the development of young male African American players. The next year, Johnson brought two entrants to the tournament. They were nowhere near the level of play of the white youth players and did very poorly in the tournament. Embarrassed by the defeat and angered by the prevailing logic that African Americans lacked the finesse necessary to succeed at tennis, Johnson set about to cultivate African American players who could win the national junior championship. Althea Gibson was first to do this. Arthur Ashe Junior was the second.

In the summers, Johnson’s impressive Lynchburg home became a camp for his protégés. The players lived in his house and trained on his personal court with coaching from him and his adult son. The training was rigorous. Before being allowed to handle a racket, Johnson’s charges had to become proficient at hitting a tennis ball, suspended on a strong, with a broom handle. And everyday before breakfast they were required to hit a ball against a backboard 500 times. In exchange for room, board, instruction, and transportation to and from tournaments, the young athletes worked as gardeners for the doctor, weeding his flowerbeds, trimming his boxwoods, clipping his rosebushes, and spraying his apple trees.

In addition to tennis instruction and their chores, Johnson taught his athletes certain principles and manners. Because Johnson viewed the project as “an assault on a sport as white as tennis” he insisted that his players be prepared for adversity and the racist treatment they would assuredly receive. Because junior tennis players often stayed at the homes of other players or in dormitories, Johnson taught, demanded, and got proper manners. His players learned to make their bed everyday. They always hung up their clothes. When a woman entered a room they stood up. They were taught the table etiquette of knives, forks, spoons. Johnson

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35 McPhee 23-28
36 Ibid
37 McPhee 29
defended these rules to McPhee and recounted that he would tell his students “I want you to be accepted without being the center of attention […] I want you to be able to take care of yourself in any situation where habits or manners are important, so that you don’t stand out.”

These manners carried onto the court and their tennis games. They were taught, above all, self-control. In the heat of competition, an athlete naturally becomes tense, aggressive, and reactionary. Johnson’s players were taught to control their behavior no matter the situation. They could not question the judgment of an official, they could not holler or yell. And they certainly could not throw their rackets. And because in the early rounds of junior tennis tournaments players are responsible for calling shots in or out, Johnson insisted that his players call any questionable shots in the favor of the other player; further, they were instructed to return any shot that was less than two inches out of bounds. This way, Johnson reasoned, there would be no chance his players could be punished for cheating. Certainly, there would be unsubstantiated accusations of cheating, but through carefully practiced restraint, there would be no proof and Johnson’s players would be able to succeed solely on their success as athletes.

The strict training cultivated Ashe’s inchoate skills, and in 1961 he became the first African American male to win the national junior championship, fulfilling one of Johnson’s goals. However, while Ashe had gained success on the national stage during the summer, local segregation prevented his full participation in tournaments at home. He was barred from open tournaments in Richmond, and his high school had no team. His competition vastly limited, he had no equal and no challenger capable of pushing him to develop. To expand his game, Johnson arranged for Ashe to spend his senior year of high school in St. Louis which was relatively integrated compared with Richmond. Ashe lived with friends of Johnson’s and

38 Ibid
39 McPhee 28-29.
attended an integrated school, where he was able to compete on the tennis team and win a high school state title. After his year in St. Louis, Ashe went on to college at U.C.L.A., where he eventually won an N.C.A.A. title. Los Angeles was another step out of the strict segregation of Richmond into a relatively integrated community. Ashe was able to socialize with whites and explore a loosely defined social hierarchy. He would later describe this time in his life as one of freedom and exploration. It was his first experience outside the authoritarian rules of his father and his first chance to discuss and examine different political approaches.

However, it is important to note that Ashe experienced this liberation in a very controlled setting. As he himself notes, his time in Los Angeles was limited to the affluent Westwood area around the U.C.L.A. campus. His isolation from the diversity of Los Angeles was replicated in his continuing isolation due to the rigors of highly competitive athletics. As a champion player at the junior level, Ashe had been given rare access to a predominantly white world. And, at least for Johnson, his success in that sphere had political ramifications. His victories were symbolic victories, demonstrations that an African American man could succeed where least expected. This isolation was not simple and not without trauma. As he gained more and more success, Ashe’s isolation within the white, and increasingly international worlds, of tennis deeply influenced his identity. The symbolic victories espoused by Johnson became the space in which Ashe could express himself and respond to the pressures of his double consciousness and the gendered expectations of his athletic performance.

These symbolic victories run through McPhee’s meandering account of Ashe’s victory over Graebner. McPhee juxtaposes the biographies and playing styles of the two contestants in order to draw attention to the weight of the match. Both players were members of the U.S. Davis

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40 Ashe 1981, 61
41 Ibid
Cup squad and were dedicated to representing the United States in international competition. The national implications of the match are heightened by McPhee’s assertion that the winner would be the last American standing in this, the first U.S. Open championship. The match carries huge symbolic import.

As the match turns in Ashe’s favor, McPhee pointedly heightens the tension by quoting, at length, the competitors’ descriptions of each other. The journalistic sketches of the contestants are filled in as the figures size each other up. What comes through is the stark differences between two men who have a long history of playing against and with each other and who, in almost all instances, are close associates. In Ashe’s words

Graebner is a straight true Republican … Clark is tall, strong, white, middle-class, conservative. […] He’s tight with his money, and he wants to see the poor work for their money. I don’t entirely disagree with him, but he probably doesn’t see all the ramifications. He probably doesn’t care what’s happening in Spanish Harlem. […] The guy was spoiled rotten when he was a kid. […] He’s a nice guy, but he has been accustomed to instant gratification.  

For Graebner, Ashe is defined by the tensions of being an African American man with a foot in the white, conservative worlds of tennis and business. He told McPhee that

I don’t know how deeply rooted Arthur’s feelings are. I would guess they are getting deeper at the moment. He’s going to be very wrapped up in civil rights. He’s got to come through that first. The question is: Is he going to make a business out of civil rights, or going to be a businessman and give time to civil rights? […] With his poor, liberal Democratic background, he had to be always striving to get ahead, striving for recognition, and he is achieving something daily

42 McPhee 89-90
through his tennis conquests. […] I accept Arthur any way, but many people
don’t. He’s accepted only because he’s a tennis player. […] I think he’s too smart
to marry a white girl. That’s a headache. If he marries a white girl, who’s going
to house him? He’ll live in a lovely residence somewhere, but I don’t know
where. I don’t know where a Negro executive lives in New York. I don’t even
know. I don’t know where they live. I just don’t know.43

In McPhee’s hands, the players’ estimations of each other are indicative of the larger struggle,
the political and racial tensions that play out as they battle to become the representative of the
United States on its home court.

Graebner’s honest estimation of the difficulties Ashe will face are particularly important.
McPhee, by ending the above passage with Graebner’s refrain of ignorance, “I don’t know. …I
don’t even know. … I don’t know. … I just don’t know”, draws a picture of the loss of control
the conservative establishment he embodies felt in the face of the Civil Rights movement.
Echoing the detached disenchantment described in the accompanying cartoons and poems,
Graebner’s account underscores the ambivalent anxieties of metropolitan elites and their
assumptions of subjects like Arthur Ashe. Ashe had Graebner’s respect; but that respect is
personal, it derives from their relationship. Graebner can envision Ashe’s future success, but
beyond that he cannot imagine the overall success of African Americans. Ashe’s unique position
as the solitary African American in an arena of white athletics enabled a symbolic victory that
carried no material effects; in Graebner’s eyes, Ashe’s success is atypical and the larger masses
of African Americans would never be able to profit from it.

The larger expectations of Ashe’s success were palpable in 1968. As McPhee notes,
“because Ashe is black, many people expect him to be more than a tennis player, in fact, demand

43 McPhee 102-3
that he be a leader in a general way.” The African American press had criticized him for not being more visible and vocally involved. He had been asked to resign from the Army and the Davis Cup team. Stokely Carmichael, even, had been upset at Ashe’s frequent refusals to participate in marches and protests. This lead to accusations and name calling and “inevitably, they have called him an Uncle Tom.” But, for Ashe, the demands of others were not enough to change the pragmatic approach to race and politics he learned from his father and the measured and subtle politics he learned from Johnson. Confessing to McPhee that he disapproved of militant groups and felt that the appeal of leaders such as Carmichael was the identity it gave to poor African Americans, Ashe espoused a slow approach, one which was founded on education and symbolic victories. He saw his life as the realization of a politics in which all people are treated equally regardless of class or race. His father’s pragmatism, forged in the strictly segregated worlds of Virginia, had filtered through the isolated experiences Ashe had as a tennis champion. He was given unique access to white worlds because of his personal skills and achievements. As in childhood, he had to practice the cool calm taught by Johnson. He could, then, effect slow, symbolic change.

As McPhee’s account winds down, he tracks the last points of the match. As we see Ashe bringing the victory to a close, McPhee jumps forward to the finals, where Ashe defeated Tom Okker, before returning to the victory over Graebner. Thus, we know the ultimate outcome of the tournament as we follow the final strokes of the Graebner-Ashe match. In rich prose, McPhee describes the final point of the championship round and the way Ashe immediately turned to his father and Johnson, sitting high in the stands, and bowed to them. Their tears are echoed in the three-and-a-half minute standing ovation that, McPhee tells us, Ashe received that

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44 McPhee 143
night in the West Point dining hall.\textsuperscript{46} It is a moving paragraph, the culmination of one hundred and forty pages of subtle tension that reaches deep into the concerns of the nation. The reader’s emotional response to an image of filial love and the success of the long struggles of three pragmatic, cautious African American Virginians, Ashe, his father, and Johnson, draws to a close a rumination on the future of race and politics in the United States. While McPhee’s immediate audience was, undoubtedly, engrossed by the fears of 1968 and 1969, he gives them a hope for the future, a faith in symbolic victories.

Politics and Travel: Ashe on Civil Rights at Home and Abroad

These symbolic victories began to be echoed by Ashe’s direct involvement in social and political activism. Looking back with the hindsight of thirteen years, Ashe described 1968 as the most drama filled year of his life.\textsuperscript{47} Stationed at West Point, Ashe was daily confronted with the faces and names of young men being sent to Vietnam and funeral and memorial services for those who did not return. In March of that year, he was invited to give a speech at Washington, D.C. Church of the Holy Redeemer. Ashe had continually rebuffed invitations from the pastor, the Revered Jefferson Rogers, on the grounds that Army officers were not allowed to make political speeches. After being accused of “copping out,” Ashe accepted the invitation, knowing full well it was against regulations.\textsuperscript{48} Uncomfortable with the expectation that, as a prominent African American, he was expected to be an outspoken expert on race relations, Ashe gave a speech that emphasized the importance of Justice as a keyword in the Civil Rights Movement. Chastised by the Army, Ashe stepped back from the pulpit and quieted his outspokenness on

\textsuperscript{46} McPhee 149  
\textsuperscript{47} Ashe 1981, 103  
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid
American Civil Rights. His first public speech did not lead to a further politicization but, rather, brought about the reinvigorated dedication to the pragmatic practices he learned as a child in Virginia.

However, 1968 saw Ashe become deeply involved in the two struggles that would define his off-the-court life for the next decade. 1968 was the first year of open tennis and the first year in which tennis players played as true professionals. The financial stakes grew as tournaments gave more prize money and sponsors paid more and more for endorsement. As the stakes grew higher, the players recognized the benefits of collective bargaining and, with Ashe at the helm, formed the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP). The ATP would become the central arbitrary body for players in their struggles against the competing interests of various national and international federations and organizations.

1968 also saw Ashe’s first foray into the world of international politics. In the 1960s, international tennis was dominated by teams from the United States, Europe, Australia, and South Africa; players from these nations traveled with, lived with, and practiced against each other as they journeyed around the globe playing in major tournaments on their respective continents. Since 1964 South African had been barred from the Olympics, and numerous international sports organizations banned its athletes from competition. Tennis was one of the few sports in which individual South Africans could compete. In 1968, pressure was growing to bar South Africans from international tennis competitions and to boycott the South African Open, which was, at the time, one of the premier tournaments in the world. Interested in the issue, Ashe became intrigued by the tournament. Curious if he, the recent U.S. Open Champion and number 1 ranked player in the world, would be allowed to play he began ask his South African colleagues. Cliff Drysdale, Ashe recalled, made it very clear that Ashe would never be
allowed to play in the tournament because the government would never award him a visa. He would be permitted to enter the tournament, the national sports association was invested in maintaining symbolic integration, but the government would never allow him to enter the country, in part because he was seen as a political agitator. The next year, Ashe began an annual tradition of applying for a visa to travel to South Africa and play in the top tournament hosted by the Apartheid government. He was continually rebuffed, but he continued to apply.

After 1968, Ashe dedicated himself to tennis, remained involved with his nascent business career, and was involved in a degree of volunteerism in the United States. He gave his free time and energy to teaching tennis clinics and promoting education to African American youths. However, the challenges that awoke in 1968, organizing a tennis union and playing in South Africa, became full time commitments that began to define his character. In 1973, these challenges became the defining elements of his life. In that year, a labor dispute arose among ATP, the International Lawn Tennis Association (ILTA), Wimbledon, and the Yugoslav Tennis Association Federation (YTAF) over the status of one player, Nikki Pilic. The YATF attempted to bar Pilic from playing in Wimbledon because, they argued, he was committed to playing for the Yugoslav Davis Cup team. The ILTA and Wimbledon sided with the YTAF; the ATP, headed by Ashe, agreed to support Pilic. This show of solidarity led to ATP players being barred from competing at Wimbledon and Ashe, and his union fellows, were publicly driven from the centennial installment of the world’s oldest and grandest tournament.

It also happened to be a year that Ashe chose to document. Working with Sports Illustrated’s Frank Deford, Ashe kept a diary that Deford then turned into a memoir Portrait in Motion. In this memoir, Ashe documented the labor disputes and racial conflicts of 1973-1974. In his first person account readers are given Ashe’s insights on sports, labor, and race. They are
also given an insider’s view of the world of pro tennis. Throughout, the biographical materials that were used in *Levels of the Game* are recycled and reinvented. Ashe’s childhood and the lessons learned in Jim Crow Richmond continue to appear as defining moments, ones that drive and motivate his personal and political life.

*Portrait in Motion* begins, appropriately enough, with Ashe in motion; in London to prepare for Wimbledon, Ashe is summoned back to Richmond for the funeral of his maternal grandmother, whom he simply refers to as Big Mama. Ashe waxes nostalgic, tells the reader that Big Mama was one of his heroines for her dedication to family and her community. The motif of Ashe’s traveling between international worlds of tennis and home and the tone with which he describes Big Mama resurface throughout *Portrait in Motion*. As a professional tennis player, Ashe did travel across the globe; in the book’s preface he calculates that in 1973-74 he “played on five continents, made 129 airplane trips, slept in 71 different beds and traveled 165,000 miles.”49 The book is set up to reflect this endless global travel, each entry headlined with a date and a location. On particularly busy days the entry reads, for example, “Thursday, December 20—Miami/New York/Deer Lake, Pennsylvania/New York” or “Monday, March 18—Belém, Brazil/Miami/Tampa/Dallas/Tucson.”50

This travel takes Ashe to the wide reaches of the globe. But the first journey and many subsequent trips reinforce the identity formation that happens through Ashe’s textual documentation of his international life. He begins by going home, to racially segregated Richmond and the lessons he learned on how to be a man. Big Mama’s funeral enables Ashe to foreground his dedication to family and his childhood in Richmond as central aspects of the figure he presents. Big Mama was one of his heroines, he writes, because of her dedication to

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49 Ashe 1975, viii
50 Ashe 1975, 153, 203
keeping her family together. A single mother of ten, she worked her whole life so that her children could all grow up together. “She was a strong, dear, fine woman,” who Ashe respects as the leader of a “matriarchal black family.”  

Aware of the negative perception of African American matriarchs as the symbol of the failure of African American men, Ashe makes clear that Big Mama’s status does not stem from the failures of his grandfather or their family. She was a matriarch and raised her ten children by herself because her husband had died when her oldest child was only seventeen, “because she had to be and because she was good at it.”  

Back home for the funeral, Ashe is overcome by memories of the folk wisdom, discipline, and love he learned in her house which had been the center of the maternal side of his family. Sitting in the church he had attended as a child, Ashe reminisced and as the pallbearers carried her casket outside his Uncle Reudi began to cry. For Ashe, that was the breaking point: “I was gone. I cried like I haven’t cried in years. I couldn’t stop. I cried until I got outside to my cousin’s car. Maybe for the first time in my life I felt something of what I imagine women experience when they are permitted to have a good cry.”  

After attending the burial, Ashe “got a flight back to New York and was on the nine P.M. Pan Am to London.”

Ashe’s physical and mental movement between home and memories of his childhood and the tense, international world of tennis and politics is the structuring device of his diary. Over the course of the year he makes sporadic visits to Richmond to hunt and fish with his father. Like Big Mama’s funeral, these trips home become chances to extol the values he learned from his father and his early coaches, Charity and Johnson. While the diary begins with his breaking down in tears at the loss of one of his heroines, this reminder of the struggles of women in his

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51 Ashe 1975, 2  
52 Ibid  
53 Ashe 1975, 4  
54 Ibid
family become background material for his masculine struggle for personal freedom and racial justice. Big Mama was dedicated to her children and, like Ashe Senior, spent the bulk of her adult life as a single parent. The conditions that predicated the common awareness of African American matriarchs among Ashe’s readers are distanced from the particular struggles of his family. The challenges a single, African American mother faced are not differentiated from those his father faced. Both figures are remembered as fiercely devoted to their families and embodying a personal politics of racial pragmatism.

Ashe, as did McPhee, dwells at length on the early loss of his mother. She remains a shadowy figure in these periodic reveries, one who disappeared in the ghostly images McPhee reiterated: the bird singing in the tree; the vision of her standing in a blue nightgown as she left for the hospital; the father crying at her death. In his New Year’s Eve entry, Ashe revisits these images and describes his childhood and his father’s example for the readers. Some details have changed from McPhee’s version, for example, in Portrait in Motion, it is Schwartzchild, not Thalhimer, who teaches Ashe Senior about the values of pragmatism, but the morals of those stories remains. Ashe’s childhood remains one dominated by strong willed, patient men, Ashe Senior, Charity, Johnson, who, in what are remembered as wholly masculine environments, teach Ashe Junior to believe in himself and the importance of slow, steady gains.

While the labor disputes of the ATP consumed some aspects of his year, the figure Ashe creates in Portrait in Motion was defined by his travel to South Africa. After five years of rebuffed applications, South Africa’s government finally agreed to award Ashe a visa and allow him entry to the country to play in the South African Open. Both South Africa and Ashe made certain stipulations regarding his visa; after negotiation he agreed to make the trip and become

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55 And, Ashe spells the name Schwartzchild; McPhee spells it Schwarzchild. This deviation is, most likely, a result of McPhee hearing the name from Ashe Senior or Ashe Junior and not seeing it written down.
the first person of color to play under Apartheid. Ashe was widely criticized by African American political and civil leaders for, it was argued, becoming a token for the Apartheid government. This criticism combined with the public perception that he was responsible for the debacle at Wimbledon made 1973-1974 a very trying year for Ashe.

Ashe’s visa to South Africa was awarded after careful negotiations between both parties. Eager to have one of the world’s best players and, it was assumed, a token black person play in the tournament, South Africa allowed Ashe to enter the country on the condition that he not make political statements while in South Africa. Ashe agreed to play on four conditions: that he could travel and come and go around the country as he pleased; second, that the stands and the spectators be integrated for Ashe’s matches; third, that a conscientious effort be made to arrange a meeting between Ashe and South African Prime Minister Vorster; and, lastly, that Ashe be given a visa as a black man and that the government not give him temporary honorary white status. This last stipulation was important for Ashe; he told the South African government that he could not stomach the idea of being accepted through the purposeful alteration of government documents.56

While in South Africa, Ashe fared well on the tennis courts; he made it to the semifinals of the singles tournament and won the doubles tournament with his partner Tom Okker.57 However, the bulk of the trip was spent exploring the segregated worlds of South Africa. Through meetings with apartheid apologists and government officials, Ashe learned first hand the logics and tensions that underlay white minority rule. He was discouraged by the unexamined racism and capitulation to history and social pressure that propped up the regime. Through the freedom granted by the government, he was able to visit Soweto and other

56 Ashe 1975, 18
57 Ashe 1975, 138
townships in which Black South Africans were forced to live. The journey was, as he tells us, eye opening and painful.

Ashe made a journey few Americans or athletes would. His first-hand experience allowed him to see and speak with those trapped within and those benefiting from apartheid. He used these experiences as the basis for later educational endeavors; for example he hoped to produce a film documentary about his trip. After the trip, he set up a foundation to fund tennis clinics for nonwhite South Africans. Furthermore, his presence on the courts was, for some, an important symbolic act. Nelson Mandela wrote to Ashe from prison and had his wife deliver the message of gratitude to him as he left the country. However, the benefits of his trip where drowned out by criticisms by South Africans and African Americans. In Soweto, crowds of young people surrounded him and berated him for coming to their country. Many militant African Americans criticized the trip, calling him an “Uncle Tom” who would serve to bolster the image of the Apartheid state. When Ashe set up his foundation to help residents of Soweto, an African American newspaper writer criticized him for not “providing for the tennis players of Harlem first.”

In *Portrait in Motion*, Ashe responded to these criticisms by harkening back to the lessons learned in childhood. He specifically invokes Dr. Johnson when discussing the importance of cultivating young athletes in South Africa. And, his overall approach to apartheid, of making slow symbolic steps that will lead to incremental change and by engaging politics through personal mediation are hallmarks of the pragmatic approach he learned from his father. This pragmatism had served him well when McPhee painted him as a rising great

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58 Ashe 1975, 143
59 Ashe 1975, 136
60 Ashe 1975, 143
61 Ibid
American. The national dialogue of 1968 had called for a patient and admirable role model. But, for the critics of his trip to South Africa, what was needed was not patience but a direct challenge affected through racial solidarity and aggressive political action.

Ashe was quick to defend and reinvest himself in his approach. While he attempted to shrug off criticism, it is probable that, given the attention he pays to defending himself, Portrait in Motion can be understood to be a memoir of self defense. Throughout the diary, Ashe argues for his right to dissent from the prevailing logic of African American political action. This logic, he fears, was too unified and, he felt, African Americans would not “have arrived in politics until [they] start[ed] publicly disagreeing with each other.”62 This unity belied the lack of direction he saw in African American politicians. “Too often, I’m afraid, some of us blacks in this country are more interested in methods than objectives. There is much rhetoric without any follow-up … Some blacks, and some whites too, get mad at me because they feel I don’t make enough waves.”63 He defended his trip to South Africa on the grounds that rather than pay lip service to global civil rights he went out and did something. Furthermore, Ashe defended the global reach of his political interests and his relative lack of involvement in the American Civil Rights Movement. In discussing the United States’ unending connection with England and the global connections of the Jewish diaspora, Ashe bemoans the political and cultural hurdles that stand in the way of a global African diasporic consciousness that could be used for political ends.64 This diasporic consciousness would articulate a weight that his symbolic work in South Africa lacked at home. But because of the legitimate barriers to that consciousness, his goals and his methods were delegitimated by Civil Rights activists who wanted him to work more closely to home.

62 Ashe 1975, 94
63 Ashe 1975, 151
64 Ashe 1975, 105
Ultimately, Ashe saw these tensions arising from the expectations placed on African American public figures. At one point in the diary, he recounts a conversation with Bill Cosby, who points out that “if any picture ever appeared of him and [his wife] Camille just vacationing on the Riviera, blacks would have a fit. He would be accused of being insensitive, uncaring, greedy, of deserting the black cause.” Ashe considers the implications and writes that it’s a curious thing. The white man who is a success is considered foolish if he does not take some of his money and enjoy himself. Then, later, when he has grown old, he is expected to show some gratitude back to society … It is the reverse with blacks. Those of us who have made it are not permitted to enjoy themselves until after we have paid our arbitrary dues.

Ashe’s location as the only African American man in a white sports arena exacerbated the isolation he experienced as an African American.

Ashe defended his right to approach the racism he encountered through the slow, pragmatic means he learned from his father and Johnson. Through the careful crafting of his experiences in South Africa, he was able to create a public image that created positive change through this approach. Potential criticisms of Ashe’s elitism, his travels around the globe, the relative plushness of his life, are deflected by the work produced through its far reach. And, while he travels around the globe, he remains rooted in Virginia, in the memories of his father and his early coaches, still brought to tears at the death of his grandmother.

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65 Ashe 1975, 173
66 Ibid, emphasis original
The Second Phase: Ashe as Historian and Pundit

Portrait in Motion ends where it began, at Wimbledon. In 1974 the ATP had settled its labor disputes with the various world bodies, and Ashe and his fellow union members were able to play. What had been a challenging year for Ashe ended in bitter defeat. He lost in the third round; it was one of his worst showings at Wimbledon. In the aftermath, Ashe chose to scale back his schedule and drew back from some of his union and business commitments. The extra time paid off, and in 1975 he won Wimbledon and finished the year ranked number one in the world. That year would prove to be the highwater mark of his career. In 1977 he missed most of the season due to injury; in 1979 he had the first of many heart attacks and was forced to retire from professional tennis.

Ashe continued his work for corporations such as Philip Morris and Aetna and became an on-air commentator for ABC and HBO tennis broadcasts. But he remained unsure how he could continue what he saw as the central projects of his life. While recuperating from open heart surgery, Ashe chatted with Cosby, who suggested that Ashe prepare a proper memoir, one which set the bits and pieces of his life in a coherent narrative. Ashe saw himself taking on new responsibilities, new projects, and new political and social work. This work would be based upon and develop out of his life story. While this narrative had been told and retold, Ashe felt that it needed a linear retelling, one which would help people “understand how Arthur Ashe came to be who he is.”

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67 Ashe 1981 225-6
68 Ibid
69 Ashe 1981 vii
70 Ashe 1981 219
The resulting book, *Off the Court*, was co-written with Neil Amdur. Ashe begins with a description the life changing event of his first heart attack. He and Amdur skillfully frame the heart attack as the last blow, the last sign that Ashe’s tennis career was over. The memoir then moves chronologically through a series of chapters in which Ashe describes the experiences and ruminates on the psychological significances of key events and figures. The second chapter, “Daddy,” retells his childhood in terms and with details familiar to readers of *Levels of the Game* and *Portrait in Motion*. We are given, once again, the memories of a childhood dominated by the ghost of a mother and a the strong, caring hand of a father. The next chapter continues this conceit and the familiar materials as Ashe recounts his time under the tutelage of Charity and Johnson. He then devotes a chapter to his time at U.C.L.A. The title, “J.D.” refers to his college coach, J.D. Morgan, and, remarkably, continues the dominant strain of the narrative that has Ashe remembering being molded and formed by the examples of his masculine role models. This influence remains a presence in later chapters, in which Ashe recounts his early involvement in politics, his victory at the first U.S. Open, his life on the road and his initial trip to South Africa. Throughout, Ashe traces the familiar development of his pragmatic approach to race and politics that was grounded in his childhood in Richmond. These materials, which were well covered in *Levels of the Game* and *Portrait in Motion*, are supplemented by a chapter on his 1975 victory at Wimbledon.

*Off the Court* ends with two important chapters which point to the turns Ashe’s by now familiar biography has taken. In the penultimate chapter, he describes his relationship with his wife Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe. Ashe’s romantic life had been a casual minor subject of previous books. In *Levels of the Game* Ashe’s progressivism is attested to by his liberal ideas on interracial dating. And, in *Portrait in Motion* Ashe describes the development and eventual
dissolution of his relationship with a white, Jewish, Canadian woman named Kathy. And, in both *Portrait in Motion* and *Off the Court* Ashe willingly describes his sexual history. With the exception of a brief mention of a visit to a brothel in Thailand, Ashe’s sexual history comes across as considerably traditional. He describes dinner dates, visits to romantic beaches, and the challenges of interracial and long distance relationships. This traditionalism is furthered through his frank discussion of the sexual behaviors of other pro tennis players, many of whom, Ashe recounts, had liaisons with different women at every tournament. Ashe describes himself as enjoying the company of women and wanting, at some point, to marry. This juxtaposition underlines Ashe’s heteronormative yet non-threatening masculinity.

Moutoussamy-Ashe was the woman through which Ashe would fulfill this identity. Ashe describes his initial attraction to her as being rooted in her features and her professional talent as a photographer. But in the soul searching narrative of *Off the Court*, Ashe finds other, more psychological reasons for his attraction to her. When she first meets his father, we are told, Ashe Senior looked at is he would faint and “just stood there and stared at Jeanne” because, he told his son, she looked just like Ashe’s mother, Mattie.\(^1\) The physical resemblance mirrors what Ashe describes as the psychological resonance imparted by Moutoussamy-Ashe’s presence. She is the first woman to whom Ashe feels spiritually close, who is capable of helping him grow and develop as a person. In *Off the Court* Ashe acknowledges that while his father had been a wonderful parent, the early loss of his mother had left him emotionally stunted. It is wife who fills that gap and helps him move beyond that early loss. The memories and masculinities that had dominated his documented life up until then were now supplemented by a maternal presence that enabled him to move forward.

\(^1\) Ashe 1981, 181
This moving forward will, as Ashe writes in the final chapter, “Then, Now, Hereafter,” be consumed with creating change that is rooted in his personal experiences. He begins the chapter by stating that “I feel this is a good time to offer some strong observations about trends and practices that I feel strongly about” and then offers a lengthy explication of the ways tennis can be a metaphor for life. The game takes patience, can turn quickly, and is something one learns over time. Ashe uses this metaphor to justify his position on political issues. While he remains committed to ending South African Apartheid, he argues that it must be done slowly, with patience, and through established political channels. He uses his own experiences there to justify this position. Juxtaposed to this, he offers an anecdote regarding his acquaintance with former Jamaican president Michael Manley. While Ashe respected Manley’s goals, he felt that his tactics, reaching out to the Third World and breaking away from the United States, were imprudent and hasty.\(^{72}\) Ashe’s commitment to established institutions and his pragmatic approach to racial politics also makes him question the viability of Pan-Africanism. In *Portrait in Motion* he had bemoaned the lack of a global African diasporic consciousness; but by the time he retired from tennis he had come to see that while a lofty goal, Pan-Africanism “as originally conceived is just some dream of a few black intellectuals” and was wholly unrealistic given the realities of ethnic and linguistic differences and postcoloniality.\(^{73}\) What had been an attempt to defend his politics’ potential became, later in life, a legitimate concern over the course of global rights.

Ashe remained committed to Civil Rights and Human Rights. He also remained committed to the pragmatism and patience he learned as a child. Although his faith in the American Dream still marked as him an “Uncle Tom” and, in one instance, led to his being

\(^{72}\) Ashe 1981, 209-10
\(^{73}\) Ashe 1981, 211
nearly booed off the stage at Howard University, he believed deeply in the value of hardwork and the opportunities inherent in self-sufficiency. These values had been tempered by his wife, who, through example and encouragement, had encouraged Ashe to explore the memories that had defined his familiar biography. In *Off the Court*, for the first time, Ashe was not simply recounting his past and present; he was engaging and exploring its meaning, using that material to chart a new path.

That path would wend its way through the 1980s and find Ashe continuing his business work, by now he was a board member at Aetna and an advisor for various resorts, and his sports commentary. These ventures were to provide the financial basis for the projects that would define the last decades of his life and his legacy. In 1988, after seven years of research, Ashe published a three volume history of African American athletes, *A Hard Road to Glory*. In this history, Ashe provides an overview of the contributions of African Americans to various sports. He provides interesting and important details about athletes long lost to historical knowledge. His summary is accompanied by a reference section that lists recorded participants of early sports. Influenced, in part, by his own experiences as a solitary African American, Ashe sought out those athletes who had faced similar challenges. He reaches deep into American and African history to find outstanding Black athletes, many of whom had been lost to history. While primarily concerned with chronicling these athletes’ contributions, the overall argument it presents is one of faith in the symbolic value of athletic victory. Ashe recounts the slow, slow progress made by individual athletes; he demonstrates the unique challenges they faced and the tight line they negotiated. This faith in symbolic victories highlights Ashe’s chapter on tennis. Focusing almost wholly on Althea Gibson and himself, the chapter reminds readers that like eighteenth century boxers and nineteenth century jockeys, Gibson and Ashe were placed in

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74 Ashe 1981, 213
difficult settings that forced a particular politics upon them. An interesting addition to African
American popular history, *A Hard Road to Glory* emphasizes Ashe’s own experiences.

Ashe’s empathy for the hard road African American athletes faced was translated through
his own experiences, enabling his readers to better understand the complex nexus of sport and
society. His project was furthered through the occasional column he began writing for the sports
pages of the *Washington Post* in 1981. Through these columns, Ashe weighed in on national
debates over standards of behavior and success facing athletes and African Americans.
Comparing his experiences as an African American in the all-white world of tennis with
professional golfer Calvin Peete’s dilemma of playing on courses at country clubs that still had
all-white memberships, Ashe painted a picture of the difficulty of playing in spaces in which the
athlete was the only African American in a non-service role.75 Ashe did not reserve his criticism
for country club sports; he was equally critical of the systemic racism at work in the National
Football League and Major League Baseball. In both leagues, African Americans were regularly
barred from positions in team management; moreover, African American football players were
regularly considered unable to play positions such as quarterback.76 Ashe also remained
steadfast in his belief that slow, symbolic victories through athletics was a key component to
ending South African Apartheid.77

These systemic problems, he worried, ensured that African Americans would grow
athletically and be celebrated for their physical prowess but be left emotionally, intellectually,
and morally immature. He concurred with Joe Paterno, the long term football coach at Penn

75 Arthur Ashe, “Peete: Green Jackets, Black Ironies at Masters,” *WP*. 5-1-83, D6; Arthur Ashe, “Private
Membership, Public Relations,” *WP*. 8-6-90, D3.; Arthur Ashe, “No Shades of Shoal Creek: Townsend Brings a
First to Augusta the Will Last,” *WP*. 4-11-91, B9.
76 Arthur Ashe, “An Open Letter to Al Campanis: It’s Not What You Said, It’s What You Never Did,” *WP*. 4-12-87,
77 Arthur Ashe, “Curren’s Obscurity a Result of South African Background,” *WP*. 7-7-85, D5.; Arthur Ashe, “The
Surest Way to End South African Apartheid is Through Sports,” *WP*. 2-20-90, D3; Arthur Ashe, “Rugby, Soccer,
Others at Dawn of New Era,” *WP*. 7-10-91, D3.
State, that big time athletics have “been raping the black athlete.”  

He found evidence of this everywhere. He criticized the on-the-field showboating of the University of Miami, Florida football team and the off-the-field antisocial behavior of boxer Mike Tyson and his manager Don King. 

However, Ashe was careful to place the behavior within the contexts of the social and economic challenges facing African American athletes. He was especially critical of the questionable academic standards college athletes faced and the limited opportunities for non-athletic success facing all African Americans. Ashe saw these problems as being rooted in the downfall of African American families and the discipline they had historically enforced and even went so far as to call for a national service program along the lines of the Civilian Conservation Corps. 

He remained steadfast in his belief that the route out of the dual oppressions of racism and poverty lay in the discipline and self-sufficiency that could be learned through the example of male role models. Deeply concerned by the comparative levels of celebrity enjoyed by Michael Jordan, Colin Powell, Mike Tyson, Clarence Thomas, Ashe questions the cultural politics that make two athletes vastly more popular and influential than two successful governmental leaders. Ashe wrote his column on Tyson and Thomas before Anita Hill came forward with her evidence of Thomas’s long history of sexual violence. However, at the time Tyson had been indicted for rape and Ashe used this fact to juxtapose these two figures. While Ashe certainly could not have predicted the unraveling of Thomas’s public image, the gender politics of his overall critique of sports celebrity is indicative of his larger concerns for the

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82 Ashe 2-11-1991; Ashe 9-15-1991
futures of African Americans. Rarely in these discussions does Ashe comment on the challenges facing African American women or the lack of female role models. His concern is emphatically on male African American athletes and adolescents, the nation’s debt to them, and their importance to African Americans. He endorsed a national service program, in part, because it would teach African American males discipline and self respect, to qualities they would need to be caring, supportive fathers.

This faith in the role of the father and the traditional family is underlined throughout Ashe’s columns by his formula of grounding his arguments through examples set by his own father. Ashe becomes the medium through which the lessons are communicated. His own experiences are exemplars and his voice is the voice of reasons and gravitas, one which carries the weight of the heavy historical burden he consciously carries. This use of personal weight and pain to expound on the virtues of the family and the importance of fathers would become more deeply and intimately pronounced in the last year of Ashe’s life.

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83 He would later be convicted and given a lengthy prison sentence.
Chapter Six

Parting Words: Popular Culture, HIV/AIDS, and Memories of Arthur Ashe

In May, 1989, Arthur Ashe was profiled by *Style Weekly*, a free, weekly newspaper based in Richmond.¹ The article, by Robert Goldblum, was occasioned by Ashe’s acceptance of an honorary doctorate from Virginia Commonwealth University but focused on his identity as an activist and public intellectual whose views on race, politics, and sports were well regarded and influential. VCU was the third Richmond institution to honor Ashe. In the preceding year he had received an honorary degree from Richmond’s other state university, Virginia Union, and had been honored by the city, which had named a sports arena for him.

The title of the article, “A Native Son Returns,” recalls both Richard Wright’s novel and the Biblical parable of the Prodigal Son. In this phrase, Ashe is equated with both Bigger Thomas, the trapped, unjustly judged, working-class, African American man, and the Prodigal Son, that child who leaves home to seek pleasure and excitement abroad only to return humbled and impoverished. However, in this new parable, Ashe’s life is painted not as a cautionary tale but as an example for potential native and prodigal sons. Unlike Bigger Thomas, Ashe has risen above the abuses of a segregated, racist society. And, unlike the Prodigal Son, Ashe leaves his home to do good in the world, and, when he returns, he brings greater good to his home.

Goldblum establishes this reading by reiterating many of the themes Ashe set down in his memoirs, which were discussed in depth in Chapter Five. He reminds the readers that Ashe left his hometown at a young age and, for much of his life, harbored little nostalgia for that period of his life. However, in 1989, ten years removed from his tennis-playing days, Ashe was willing to

admit that while segregation and class politics drove him away from home, he had come to appreciate the “very strong moral, education and even social foundation” provided by a childhood in Richmond.

That shift in perspective was accompanied by increasingly close ties to his home city. In 1989 Ashe campaigned for his childhood friend Virginia Lieutenant Governor L. Douglas (Doug) Wilder, as he ran for Governor. When Wilder became the governor of Virginia, he used his position of prominence to encourage Ashe to work with Richmond’s African American community. In 1990 Ashe established Virginia Heroes, Inc, a tutoring program in which prominent Richmonders visited public schools as examples for disadvantaged children. Soon after he began raising funds for and promoting the Hard Road to Glory African American Sports Hall of Fame to be located in the Jackson Ward area of Richmond, not far from the Richmond Convention Center. In 1993, largely through Ashe’s lobbying and the considerable prestige he brought to the project, the Richmond City Council set aside $250,000 for that project.

When, mid-interview, Ashe pauses to take “five or six pills,” something he has to do five times a day, Goldblum asks about his health. Ashe responds “My health? My health is holding its own. I have problems like everyone else. I had a setback last September. Now I’m a walking medical case. All sorts of things go wrong. But you learn to deal with them. You take the problems one at a time. ... I’m still here, right?” Ashe acknowledges his health problems but cuts off any more probing. The medical setback he refers to is the minor heart attack that prompted his being tested for HIV/AIDS. The pills, we can realize, are part of the intensive regimen HIV/AIDS patients took to keep the virus at bay. What is readily apparent to us was present but unexplained and unquestioned by those around him. From 1989, when returned to accept honors and begin charitable works, until his exposure as HIV positive in 1992 and his
death in 1993, Ashe’s motives, like his infection, were hidden as he poured himself into
resurrecting his home town.

These projects are remarkable not only as an example of an athlete using his largesse to
contribute to his home community, but also because Ashe had remained away from home for so
long. The exact reasons Ashe decided to undertake charitable and cultural projects in Richmond
at this point in his life are unclear. His new found perspective on the city was certainly the
product of the wisdom distance affords. And it is possible that this new found perspective was
also affected by drastic changes in Ashe’s personal life. His 1988 diagnosis as HIV/AIDS
positive was quickly followed by the March, 1989 death of his father from a massive stroke. His
deepest influence, Ashe’s father had also been his surest connection to Richmond. We can only
speculate about Ashe’s private motivation, but it seems likely that as he became more and more
aware of the shadow cast over his life by HIV/AIDS, he worked tirelessly to give young people
in Richmond the opportunities given to him by his now deceased father. He wanted, it seems, to
use the remaining years of his life to rectify the challenges facing his hometown.

As we have seen in Chapter Five, Ashe’s public persona and reputation were the ongoing
result of a lifelong crafting of image and identity. Through his actions and deeds Ashe had
positioned himself as a pragmatic, self-assured man who labored to improve the conditions of all
people. Ashe supported this image through continuous reference to his family and his position as
a son and father. When his positions on and approaches to racism and activism were criticized,
he cycled back to the lessons taught to him by his father and by the racism of Jim Crow
Richmond. And, as we shall, when his reputation and legacy were threatened by cultural
assumptions surrounding his status as HIV Positive, he embedded himself in the landscape of his
family. As a son, Ashe had learned to overcome racism through the protective, guiding arms of
his father; as a father, he was the keystone in a private world that helped his daughter face the challenges of American culture.

This formulation is in many ways indicative of larger political and cultural shifts that occurred across political, cultural, and racial lines in the 1980s and 1990s. Ashe embodies the values espoused by an influential contingent of conservative cultural and political leaders who worked within the cultural and economic logics of what has been termed neoliberalism.

However, equally important is that Ashe was embraced across the political spectrum and held up as a model of African American manhood. As we have seen in Chapter Five, Ashe had begun his career in the harsh middle ground between moderates and militants. By the time of his death, despite his rather conservative social views, Ashe was celebrated as an icon of the Civil Rights Movement.

This celebration was, I argue, a result of both the racial climates of the late 1980s and early 1990s and Ashe’s life long performance of race, masculinity, and illness. In this chapter, I examine Ashe’s death in light of that performance, as laid out in Chapter Five and through close analysis of media coverage of his status as HIV positive. However, in order to fully present Ashe’s performance and media coverage, I contextualize Ashe’s death within larger discursive structures of race and memory. Drawing from and synthesizing the work of cultural critics Julius Lester, Bakari Kitwana, and Mark Anthony Neal, and the African American feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, I begin this chapter by examining the complicated nexus where race intersects political culture and popular culture. Throughout this analysis, it is important to remember that while seemingly tangential, the important interventions made by Lester, Kitwana, Neal, and Collins and the myriad texts they analyze are crucial to understanding the larger contexts race, memory, and popular culture that defined Ashe’s death and his enshrinement in
the memorial landscape of Richmond. As an African American celebrity associated with the era of the Civil Rights Movement, Ashe’s legacy is naturally tied to the discourses surrounding memories of that moment. And, as a willful participant in the culture wars of the 1980s and as a figure who sculpted his own memories into a public persona, Ashe’s identity needs to be read in light of politics and economics of African American celebrity and popular culture. These contexts are made more complex by the fact that Ashe was a public figure whose fame was built upon physical success but whose health quickly declined. This chapter will consider these forces before returning to the issue of Ashe’s status as HIV positive and the ways that racial and sexual politics impacted his infection and death.

Remembering the Civil Rights Movement

In 1987, conservative activists David Horowitz and Peter Collier organized the “Second Thoughts” conference in 1987. Bringing together a number of former leftist writers and activist, the conference worked to establish a unified, multicultural countermemory of the 1960s. Bridging racial and partisan ranks, Collier and Horowitz brought together seemingly non-aligned figures such as talk radio host Michael Medved, journalists P.J. O’Rourke and Irving Kristol, and academic Nathan Glazer, to reconsider the 1960s and, as Collier describes it, conclude that “the ‘60s left had failed them personally and been a disaster for the country. So they came to Washington [site of the conference] to bury the New Left rather than praise it.”² The conference had the intended aim of countering the work of what Collier called “affirmative, indeed euphoric,

views of the New Left experience” that were circulating at the time.\(^3\) Citing recent books by James Miller, Maurice Isserman, and Todd Gitlin, Collier calls the conference “a voice of experience challenging the voice of innocence these authors adopted in taking about an era they insist was motivated primarily by an earnest idealism and moral passion they seem to believe is sadly lacking in the present day.”\(^4\) Providing an “antidote” to the “simple, monochromatic” view of those who want to motivate new activists, the participants at the Second Thoughts Conference told a “cautionary tale” of the pain they felt when they realized that “the leftism in which they had once believed was an infantile disorder.”\(^5\)

Largely given over to accounts of personal fallings out with particular areas of the 1960s left, the proceedings of the conference are not remarkable in tone or scope. They largely retread and present variations on the themes advanced in the forward. This countermemory used personal experiences to validate a vision of the 1960s as a threat to the national order that was overcome through the slow maturation of misguided youths. In the midst of the right’s ascendancy under the Reagan and Bush administrations that would lead to the Republican takeover of the United States Senate and House of Representatives in 1994, this countermemory echoed throughout the influential blocks of the Republican base and facilitated the decimation of the memorial base and material and policy manifestations of the liberal/left. By criticizing 1960s activism, the right called into question the qualifications of Democratic candidates. Another recognizable example is the repeated criticism during the 1992 Presidential election of Bill

\(^3\) ibid  
\(^4\) ibid xi-xii  
\(^5\) ibid xii
Clinton’s antiwar activism. A fundamental means of this criticism was an attack on activism as corrupt, debased, and anti-family.\(^6\)

More important, as conservatives sought to undo the material and policy legacies of the New Deal and the Great Society, Social Security, the Voting Rights Act, and Affirmative Action, for example, they necessarily sought to shift the racial logics that had informed many of those programs. These shifts had to occur without resort to racist language or direct reference to racial fears. One of the many successes of the activism of the 1950s and 1960s was the banishment of such rhetoric from acceptable political discourse. Unable to directly and overtly tap white fear, conservatives deployed a highly abstract platform that spoke to those fears without engaging in weighted, offensive language. Often called the “Southern Strategy,” this technique has proven influential for national candidates from Nixon through George W. Bush. As Republican strategist Lee Atwater noted in 1981, “you start out in 1954 by saying ‘Nigger, nigger, nigger!’ by 1968 you can’t say nigger’—that hurts you. So you say stuff like forced busing, states’ rights, and all that stuff. You’re getting so abstract now. … all these things you’re talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is blacks get hurt worse than whites.”\(^7\) As we have seen in earlier chapters, this strategy was, to some degree, widely familiar to Virginia and Richmond’s ruling white elite and a version of it had been deployed in the patrician rule of the Democratic machine of Harry Byrd. By the 1990s, however, these rhetorics had become common currency across national political discourse.

As language shifted, so too did national memorial culture. By the mid-1980s, a dominant memory of the Civil Rights Movement was becoming solidly entrenched in a range of cultural,


political, and educational spaces. Through historical sites, museums, memorials, holidays, and policy and legal actions, a fixed memory of the Civil Rights Movement was defined as a period extending from 1954 and the Brown versus Board of Education decision to 1968 and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. In this narrative, King is celebrated as a great man who envisioned and guided a moral, multiracial movement towards colorblind multiculturalism. Oftentimes, he is placed in inaccurate juxtaposition to other Civil Rights activists, especially Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party, a practice which obscures King’s anti-poverty and antiwar activism and which vilifies X and the Black Panthers. These narratives, as Dwyer carefully demonstrates, emphasize a “great man” narrative in which King and his close male associates are seen as leading a national struggle for equal rights. The effect is that “this mainstream narrative is forcing women’s, working-class, and local histories to the margins in order to focus on charismatic leaders and dramatic events.” This dominant narrative has been contested, both with African American communities, as Alderman notes, and by some fringe white supremacist and Confederate heritage groups who have fought for the Confederate Battle Flag and against Martin Luther King Day.

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8 There is a rich body of work on memories of the Civil Rights era. Many recent works on Southern Memory in the twentieth century examine this history as part of the long process of heritage and memory in the South. Among these long studies, some of the best are W. Fitzhugh Brundage, The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory (Cambridge, MA: Belknap P, 2005) and James C. Cobb, Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity (Oxford: Oxford U P 2005). These long studies are usefully augmented by numerous important scholarly articles, including Vincent Harding, “Beyond Amnesia: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Future of America,” Journal of American History 74 (September 1987):468-76 and Thomas Kane “Mourning the Promised Land: Martin Luther King Jr.’s Automortography and the National Civil Rights Museum.” American Literature. 76.3 (2004): 549-77. However, the best primer for the multiple manifestations of memories of the Civil Rights movement are the articles in Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, eds., The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory (Athens, GA: U Georgia P, 2006). Particularly useful for my work are essays by two cultural geographers, Owen J. Dyer (“Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement: Contradiction, Confirmation, and the Cultural Landscape,” 5-27) and Derek H. Alderman (“Street Names as Memorial Arenas: The Reputational Politics of Commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. in a Georgia County,” 67-95) and political scientist Edward P. Morgan (“The Good, the Bad, and the Forgotten: Media Culture and Public Memory of the Civil Rights Movement,” 137-166).

9 Dwyer

10 Ibid, as well as Coski, Horwitz, Prince.
While consensus memory is never truly the product of national consensus, dominant memories of the Civil Rights Movement serves as a common meeting point for a range of racial and political groups. This is certainly true of the Ashe memorial, and in order to understand the celebration of Arthur Ashe, we would do well to consider dialogue over race, memory, and popular culture that criticizes yet contributes to these consensus memories. As we have just seen, Martin Luther King is a useful figure for conservatives who cannot resort to overt racism. How, then, are there arguments and actions supported and refuted by liberal and leftist African Americans?

Nestled amongst the shrill narratives of the “Second Thoughts” conference is an insightful and careful consideration of the 1960s by Julius Lester. A writer and activist in the 1960s, Lester spent most of his adult life as a professor of Near East and Judaic Studies and of History at the University of Massachusetts. Invited to give the keynote talk at the first “Second Thoughts” conference, Lester continued the motif of other presenters and traced his involvement and eventual disillusionment with 1960s social movements. However, Lester breaks from the larger narrative of the conference by demonstrating that his disillusionment was not the result of personal growth that pulled him away from the childish and destructive forces of ill-conceived and naïve radicals, but came about through the shifting priorities of the national Civil Rights Movement. Lester paints the origins of the Civil Rights movement as a regional, religious based agitation for the expansion of legally protected citizenship. In his telling, political action was the means for full spiritual expression. Gains in education and voting rights were the means to fashion a new, morally based community.

Lester’s disillusionment with activists came in the late 1960s as the goals of the southern Civil Rights Movement were attached to and eventually supplanted by northern, western, and international movements that worked towards the human rights of the African diaspora. While Lester acknowledges the importance of these larger goals, he takes issue with the strategies invoked and the effect they had on national racial discourse. Critical of the violence and aggression he found in the work of Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon, Lester’s larger indictment of the second wave of Civil Rights movements was that it demanded an intraracial focus. Rather than serve as an example of nationalized, interracial dialogue and community that recognized the intertwined histories of whites and blacks, northern and western groups like the Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers were seen as enforcing racially exclusive hierarchies that fomented internal divisiveness. Recounting the criticisms he faced for not being militant enough, for not looking the part of a radical—he “did not have a ten-foot high Afro and [did not wear] a dashiki made by Jomo Kenyatta’s grandmama”—Lester is clear in tracing his disillusionment with the 1960s came to the realization that “both Black and White movements attacked individuals within their ranks more viciously than they attacked the administration in Washington.12

Lester’s argument is not unique among perceptions of the Civil Rights Movement but it was unique at the 1987 “Second Thoughts” conference in that it was directly concerned with race and civil rights whereas the bulk of other presentations were concerned with disillusionment with an amorphous entity proclaimed to be the “the left.” Lester’s argument, though, proved to be the foundation for the Horowitz and Collier’s 1990 conference “Second Thoughts About Race” which featured examinations of race in the America and the legacy of the Civil Rights

12 Ibid 217.
Movement by writers and activists such as Lester, Walter Williams, and Juan Williams. In his paper, “What Happened to the Civil Rights Movement,” Lester reiterates his previously established themes but nuances them by arguing that the Southern Civil Rights Movement focused on equal civil rights for all Americans while later movements moved towards an embrace of global human rights. This distinction is crucial and forms the crux of his argument as well as those of Walter Williams and Juan Williams.

Lester’s conviction is that the embrace of global human rights rendered obsolete discussions of rights afforded under the U.S. Constitution. Rather than embrace the “chaotic maelstrom that democracy can be” activists sought entitlements through claims to divine human rights. Lester saw this turn as the downfall of the civil rights movement and argued that it abdicated responsibility for the society as a whole and opted for the sloth of blacks being eternal victims who lay claims on the emotions and sympathies of others, who no longer are aware of or even care to work toward something that might be agreed upon as the common good but, instead, focus exclusively upon their own concerns as if there were no others that also demand the nation’s legitimate attention.

Walter Williams echoes Lester’s sentiments and describes the downfall of African American urban communities, particularly his hometown Philadelphia, and institutions such as small business and education, as rooted in the failures of the Civil Rights movement. Because, he argues, African Americans have been taught to identify urban poverty and attendant calamities

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14 Ibid 9

15 Ibid
like crime as civil rights issues, they have lost a sense of community and have become “immune to the traditional roots out of poverty.”

Juan Williams continues this pattern and argues that the antagonism that bisects African American communities has contributed to the decline of communitarian ideals of interracial solidarity and rights through the American government. This position is echoed by Ashe himself, who, in *Days of Grace*, wrote that “1968 was the beginning of the end of the dominance of morality in African American culture. Instead, the amoral quest for naked and vengeful power would rule thereafter.” Ashe saw this decline as rooted in the logics that underlay black power, arguing that while he was “completely in support of the idea that blacks should garner as much power and wealth” as could be legitimately accrued, “Black Power, as promulgated, may have created more problems than it ever solved, because legitimacy was deliberately excluded as a criterion.”

None of these scholars calls for an end to public programs like welfare and Affirmative Action. And though their arguments could be used to bolster claims for the expansion of federal aid and protection, they are, through juxtaposition, put into temporary association and support for the larger project of conservative and neoliberal agitation for privatization and an ethos of self-sufficiency. This support comes not only from the dialogue that occurs among figures like Lester and Horowitz in conference settings but in the mutual terms with which they express their positions. Recall that conservative pundits have embraced multiculturalism as they have called for the end of legally assured entitlements. More specifically, as Robin D. G. Kelley notes, they “have couched their opposition to affirmative action and welfare in terms of Dr. Martin Luther

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16 Walter Williams 31.
17 Juan Williams 31-36
19 Ibid
King Jr.’s dream for a “color-blind” society.”20 Kelley goes on to note that groups such as the Heritage Foundation, which, in 1994, hosted a seminar titled “the Conservative Virtues of Martin Luther King,”, have appropriated the language and legacy of the central figure of the Civil Rights Movement in order to end the outgrowths of that very movement: affirmative action, race-based welfare, the voting rights act, and other Civil Rights legislation.21

Through the temporary alliance of reconsidering the legacies of the 1960s and their mutual embrace of King and his tactics, Moderate and Conservative African Americans contributed to the discursive shifts that underpinned the widespread acceptance of neoliberal economic policy. This does not mean, however, that this was their primary goal or that they had ceased agitating for Civil Rights. Importantly, writers such as Lester maintained a commitment to African American Civil Rights through multiculturalism and color blind practices in employment, economics, and politics. However, as he makes clear, that commitment to interracial solidarity was forged in and reinforced by the constant remembrance of Jim Crow and other forms of American Apartheid. In but one small example, Lester expresses a facet of this when describing criticisms he faced for marrying a white woman; he responded “having grown up in the South where whites decreed who I could and could not marry, I was not going to turn around and give blacks that power.”22 For Lester, color blindness was a privilege and right afforded to individuals under the constitution but, like all civil rights, needed protection and guarantees against the historical and economic forces of racist exclusion. It was, for him, a goal and ideal, not a reality.

While his position aligned him with neoliberal and conservative activists, memory was a key point in Lester’s disillusionment with the Civil Rights Movement and is a reminder of key

20 Kelley, 89.
21 Ibid 89-91.
distinctions among African American activists. Lester himself points to regional specifics leading to shifts within the Civil Rights Movement. And while the motivations, goals, and strategies of Southern, Northern, Midwestern, and Western African American activists did depend upon regional variations in housing, labor, and educational policy as well as African American civic institutions, another factor which needs to be considered are the effects generational shifts have had on the life experiences of African Americans and the strategies and goals of activists.

Generational Conflicts: African American Conservatives, the Hip Hop Generation, and Popular Culture

Generational perspectives explain in part divisions within the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Despite their differences, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin shared the generational perspective of people born in the 1920s, their birth years were, respectively, 1929, 1924, and 1925, whose childhood was spent under the harsh restrictions of pre-World War II racial hierarchies. King, X, and Baldwin entered the public sphere in the wake of a previous generation of activists, such as Thurgood Marshall, born in 1908, and Oliver Hill, born 1907, who had worked to open up voting laws and begun the fight for school desegregation.

The combined efforts of these generations fundamentally altered the life experiences of the next generation of activists who were born in the 1940s. To cite two examples, Stokely Carmichael, born in 1941, migrated from Trinidad to New York City 1952, and Angela Davis, born in 1944, grew up under the promise and liberation of the early Civil Rights Movement. Their formative years coincided with the opening up of civic, educational, and political
institutions. Moreover, shifts in American popular culture during this era saw the rise of popular and marketable African American performers and forms that moved away from the overtly racist imagery of Jim Crow era minstrelsy. Black Power, however, did not simply embrace this new found status quo, but worked against the increasingly economic basis of racism and worked through self-determinacy. For example, in “What We Want” Carmichael argued that “black Americans have two problems: they are poor and they are black.”

The goal of SNCC was the remedy of African American poverty through the development of African American communities and institutions, not integration into white-dominated institutions. He opposed integration as practiced in 1966 because it spoke to the problem of blackness in a despicable way. As a goal, it has been based on complete acceptance of the fact that in order to have a decent house or education blacks must move into a white neighborhood or send their children to a white school. This reinforces, among both black and white, the idea that “white” is automatically better and “black” is by definition inferior.

Davis makes a similar point in tracing the prevalence of crime in inner cities to the condition of poverty: “the occurrence of crime is inevitable in a society in which wealth is unequally distributed, as one of the constant reminders that society’s productive forces are being channeled in the wrong direction.”

Black Power was a means of asserting claims to economic inequality that depended upon and reinforced racism despite the decline of racial segregation. To do so, it was necessary to give up the rhetorics and strategies of activists like King and embrace a more militant and strategy of resistance and agitation. Moreover, as Lester aptly points out, the Black

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25 Ibid 402.
Power movement left behind the conservative embrace of the constitution as the protector Civil Rights and replaced it with notions of global human rights. This strategy was necessary because of the shadowy reaches of racism after desegregation. Lester took issue with attempts to alter the way people think; but because racism had shifted from being expressed in policy to being practiced in economic strategies and symbolism, the situation necessitated the alteration of discourse.

Ultimately, however, the national influence of Black Power would falter as conservative and moderate African American activists and leaders gained significant influence. Despite their efforts, rising economic and discursive structures of racism has become more entrenched in the past thirty years. This has led to the rise of a new generation of African Americans who experiences are distinct from previous generations. Termed the “Hip Hop Generation” by Bakari Kitwana and the “post-soul” generation by Mark Anthony Neal, the generation of African Americans born between 1965 and 1984 has faced a challenging world in which race and racism exist in complex arrays that exist across and within political economies and cultural landscapes.26

As Kitwana demonstrates in The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and The Crisis in African American Culture the economic challenges facing young African Americans are not completely distinct from those facing earlier generations; like their parents and grandparents, many young African Americans are faced with great inequalities in “education, housing, health care, employment opportunities, wages, mortgage loan approval, and the like.”27 These problems are exacerbated by discursive structures present across political and popular culture. Because the Hip Hop generation has lived the entirety of its life in the post-segregation era, it has

26 Kitwana, The Hip-Hop Generation; and Neal, Soul Babies
27 Kitwana xx.
lost the indicative power of tracing inequality to clear power differences. Under neoliberal logics, in which the individual is held accountable and responsible for all actions, the material and spiritual effects of racial hierarchies in political economy becomes attached to those people who suffer the most. Cultural criticisms of Affirmative Action and Political Correctness collude with the embrace of multiculturalism to erect a discourse in which systemic, racial disparities are attached to individual African Americans. As Kitwana describes it, “African American youth, for much of the past two decades, have been deemed the problem, whether criminalized in sensational news crime reports or demonized as the architects of American’s declining moral values.”

This assignment of blame is furthered through the collective “near obsessive national attention given to praising the long gone civil rights movement.” Assigned a near mythical status by public figures across the political spectrum, the Civil Rights movement sits as the enshrined moment at which a courageous generation moved the nation into the light of racial equality. This structure of memory both denies the reality of inequality for the Hip Hop generation and undermines as insignificant their political actions. It is this narrative of generational decline which underlies the arguments presented by Lester, Juan Williams and Walter Williams, and which presents a stark challenge to young African Americans who might be working to better their station.

The cultural pathologization of the Hip Hop generation has occurred through deeply entrenched, gender politics that are echoed in popular culture. In her most recent book, *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism*, Patricia Hill Collins demonstrates that under the conservative trends of neoliberal multiculturalism, American nationalism has become increasingly exclusionary and defined through the white, Christian,
family. Under this rubric, domestic spaces are “actual sites of social reproduction as well as ideological sites where individuals and groups are socialized into their appropriate places in the social order” and the family is “a crucial template for conceptualizing nation.” The nuclear family is deployed as the basic unit of the nation and individual subjects are defined through familial relations. Citing feminist theory, Collins finds interesting parallels between the family and the nation in which women fulfill “specific functions for all sorts of nationalisms” including reproduction of the population, keepers and transmitters of traditional culture, and as symbols to be protected. These roles are often expressed through maternal imagery and symbolism and are embedded in public policy. Moreover, nationalism assumes that men’s relationship to the nation is expressed through the violent rhetoric of the military, protection of the homeland, and patriotism. This rhetoric of nationalism has created detrimental cultural politics for the Hip Hop generation and working class African Americans in general. Because of the stark reality of inequalities in the United States, young African Americans are more likely to be part of a non-traditional family structure. This social reality places many African American youths outside the structures of American nationalism and the assumptions of proper citizenship. Again, this cultural construction is further complicated by enforcement of self-sufficiency. African Americans are assumed to exist outside the realm of the nation because of personal failures.

As Kitwana and Collins note, this pathologization of the African American family as inherently fallable has roots that go at least as far back as the 1950s and 1960s. As Robin D. G. Kelley demonstrates in *Yo Mama’s DisFUNKtional! Fighting The Culture Wars in Urban America*, a key moment in this process was the Moynihan Report. In 1965 New York Senator

30 Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop*
31 Collins 16
32 Ibid.
33 Collins 17-18.
Daniel Patrick Moynihan issued a report which examined urban families and found them to be a “tangle of pathology.”^34 And while political argument and policy are key sites in the construction of failed African American family,^35 Kelley presents a strong argument for the role of academic ethnography and the pervasiveness of African American popular culture in the marginalization of African American familial structures. Kelley examines the work of social scientists in the 1960s and 1970s who, with good intentions, employed ethnography to examine and describe urban, African American communities. Examining commercially successful books by John Langston Gwaltney, Caroline Mirthes, Charles Keil, and Stephen Joseph, Kelley demonstrates that in trying to pinpoint and analyze what has been called the “culture of poverty” that was assumed to be inherent to America’s inner-cities, these social scientists have created the image of a static and non-variable African American popular culture that reinforces the pathology of failed families.

As the titles of their books suggests, Kitwana, Collins, and Kelley are deeply committed to explication of popular culture as a key site of resistance and negotiation for young African Americans trapped by the rhetorics of neoliberal nationalism, family values, and self-sufficiency. While it is not possible to present all of their detailed and powerful arguments here, a few key points need to be summarized and synthesized in order to understand the embrace of Arthur Ashe within Richmond’s popular memory and its relationship to the culture wars of the 1990s. Kelley is critical of sociologists who constructed “the black urban world as a single culture whose function is merely to survive the ghetto” because they “ultimately collapsed a wide range of historically specific cultural practices and forms” and thereby eliminated agency in the terrain

^34 Kelley, 2.
of African American popular culture. Kelley and Kitwana both see that within this popular culture lie challenges and opportunities for young African Americans. In part because of the work of sociologists and the embrace of multiculturalism, today African American popular culture is more visible and widely celebrated than at any time in history; Hip Hop is the central medium in this exposure. Kitwana notes that “whereas previously the voices of young blacks had been locked out of the global age’s public square, the mainstreaming of rap music now gave black youth more visibility and a broader platform than we had ever enjoyed before.”

This widespread visibility has led to troubling paradoxes that further trap African American youth. Collins is particularly critical of the homogeneity of Black Nationalism as presented through various hip hop forms, including rap music; she clearly demonstrates the misogyny that is reinforced through the performance of hip hop identities. Kitwana, who spent much of the 1990s as the editor of the Hip Hop journal The Source, is equally troubled, and comments that “young blacks have used this access, both in pop film and music, far too much to strengthen associations between Blackness and poverty, while celebrating anti-intellectualism, ignorance, irresponsible parenthood, and criminal lifestyles.” He goes on to note that hip hop has become generally void of open or consistent criticism of racism and reinforces “myths of Black inferiority and insulate the new problems in African American culture from redemptive criticism.”

However, all three writers find vast potential and widespread moments of critique and agency with African American popular culture. Kitwana and Collins note that popular culture is one of the few public spaces in which African Americans can express their plight. And Kelley,

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36 Ibid 25
37 Kitwana, 10
38 Kitwana xxi
39 Ibid
in a complex analysis, demonstrates that play, in forms as various as music, dance, and sport, has become the key mode of economic advancement for young African Americans. While play can be seen as the wasteful opposite of work, for Kelley it is the premier site of urban African American labor. Rather than critiquing popular images of African American celebrity as indicative of poverty and inferiority, Kelley argues that athletes, musicians, and dancers have used the tools given them and repopulated deindustrialized, racially segregated cities with a form of African American entrepreneurship.

Kelley acknowledges the pervasiveness of negative images and misogyny, but provides the useful reminder that there exists agency for African Americans in the nexus of political economy and popular culture. This agency has encoded within it the paradoxes inherent to African American cultures from the 1970s through the 1990s. Marginalized by the stark inequalities of contemporary American economic, political, and educational institutions, African American youths have little chance for material gain. And the structuring of the family as the template for nationalism marginalizes urban, working class African Americans. Further, because the logics of neoliberalism place the onus of responsibility on the individual, urban African Americans are blamed for their inherited marginalization; and because progressive memories of America’s multicultural history claim that we have moved past race, attempts to trace the origins and effects of that marginalization are preemptively frustrated. Within current racial politics, some African Americans have gained a degree of economic and cultural influence. For working class, urban African Americans, one area of that influence has been in the worlds of popular culture. This does not mean, of course, that there are no longer laborers, community leaders, or business owners in urban communities. However, the omnipresence of African American celebrities and assumptions of a monolithic “black culture” limits the visibility
of teachers, bank workers, carpenters, and preachers. What remains are athletes, musicians, and other performers, many of whom have struggled to make the most of the materials and public spaces afforded them. This paradoxical location provides financial benefits and influence but reinforces assumptions of African American culture as monolithic, misogynist, anti-intellectual, and preoccupied with “play” at the expense of “work.”

Further, the generational and philosophical conflicts over racial identity and politics have combined with noncritical embrace of black nationalism within popular culture to create ill-suited coalitions that ultimately have a negative impact on working class and urban African Americans. For example, while well-founded and insightful, Julius Lester’s critiques of the Civil Rights Movement ultimately benefited the cultural projects of conservative countermemories that have altered our understanding of race within the national past. And, as Collins notes, black nationalist embrace of norms of racial solidarity led to support for Clarence Thomas who, despite his legal record and history of sexual harassment, became one of many “’black appointees who, often hand-picked by conservatives, failed to represent African American interests.”

40 Collins, From Black Power..., 10-11.

41 John Singleton, Writer and Director, Boyz ‘N’ The Hood, 1991; Albert and Allen Hughes, Writers and Directors, Menace II Society, 1993.

Within these paradoxes and frustrating circumstances, some African American artists, performers, and athletes have been able to both profit from and critique American racial politics. Amongst performers who reinforce racial stereotypes, Kitwana finds much to praise in the work of filmmakers such as John Singleton and Allen and Albert Hughes, whose Boyz in The Hood and Menace to Society presented stark, yet accurate, portrayals of the challenges facing young African Americans and their families. Similarly, I would argue that Spike Lee, in films such as Do The Right Thing and Bamboozled has traced, respectively, the complex web of social and economic relations and the histories of caricature and stereotype that affect the lives of all
African Americans. And, I would argue that the hugely successful and popular novels of Toni Morrison, especially *Beloved*, and the similarly lauded work of Edward P. Jones, the story collections *Lost in The City* and *All Aunt Hagar’s Children* and the novel *The Known World*, do similar work by placing fleshed out characters within the social and political histories of their real-world audience.

However, while these influential and popular artists are positive examples of the agency afforded to African Americans, their positions as celebrities are fundamentally defined by the nature of their art. As filmmakers and writers, they occupy an absent-presence for their audience. While some of these artists, especially Lee and Morrison, are recognizable figures, the nature of their media separates them from the consumption of their art. An audience can consciously seek out a Morrison novel or a Spike Lee film and, in consuming it, know they are watching the work of a known entity. However, the collaborative nature of film and the traditions of the novelistic narrator allow the audience to suspend disbelief and enter the world of the narrative on its own terms. Of course, Lee does appear as an actor in his films, but even that presence is as part of a cast and has to be understood through juxtaposition with other performers. The audience is aware of the author’s role in the formation of the narrative, but, in that the author exists at a remove from the text, her or his presence is, in sense, an absence.

Distinct are those celebrities and artists whose art is expressed and whose fame is attached to their bodies. For athletes, singers, and dancers, the medium is the body and celebrity comes through self-presentation. The stakes are clearly much higher for these types of

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performers who are constantly on display in front of the audience. For example, those musicians who have received praise for the willingness to critique economic and racial inequality, such as Tupac Shakur and Kanye West, have come under greater scrutiny than filmmakers or, even, record producers whose work occurs largely behind the scenes. This is the condition in which Ashe constantly found himself and which W.E.B. Du Bois examined as fundamental to the experiences of African Americans. As the sole person of color in front of a white audience, the African American athlete or musician becomes the embodiment of the political struggles that define and are defined by American racial hierarchies. Faced with expectations and assumptions, athletes and musicians’ performances are a key site of political struggle. And, while their individual deeds and acts are what they are judged by, those deeds and acts are comprehensible only in how they speak to larger discursive struggles over race.

Approaching Death: Arthur Ashe and the Performance of Illness

After his 1979 heart attack and retirement, Ashe’s health slowly deteriorated. Although he was an active writer and remained involved in tennis as a television commentator and the coach of the U.S. Davis Cup team, he was occasionally sidelined by serious health problems that required surgery. In 1983 a second heart attack was particularly challenging and forced him to scale back some of his active schedule. It was a very painful heart attack that resulted in a double-bypass surgery. Recuperating from that surgery, Ashe asked for a blood transfusion. Unbeknownst to him and his doctors, that blood transfusion would become transform Ashe’s body, his outlook on the world, and the world’s vision of him and his life’s work.

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44 Du Bois 9-16.
45 Ashe, Days of Grace, 206.
Five years later, Ashe awoke one morning to find that the fingers on his right hand had ceased working. As the numbness did not abate, Ashe began to worry that perhaps he had suffered a small stroke. His doctor, however was not overly concerned and suggested Ashe come in the next afternoon. The next day, Ashe was interviewed live from his home on ABC television’s morning program, *Good Morning America*. By the time of the interview, Ashe’s hand was completely lifeless and hung limp from his wrist. Self-conscious of his appearance on television, Ashe sat carefully, propping his right hand on top of his left, not gesturing with either, quietly concealing his concern and its cause.\(^{46}\) That afternoon Ashe’s doctors ordered a battery of tests, CAT Scans, MRI’s, blood tests, spinal taps, which indicated that Ashe’s limp hand was caused by toxoplasmosis, a parasitic infection of the brain that opportunistically occurred during full blown AIDS.\(^{47}\) Ashe’s limp hand was the first physical manifestation of the internal infection that had wound its way through his body for a number of years. And his efforts to conduct a televised interview while concealing the limpness of his hand would serve as the first act in a four year struggle to conceal the bodily condition of AIDS while keeping his image within the public view.

On April Seventh, 1992 Ashe was approached by a childhood friend and *USA Today* sportswriter Doug Smith. *USA Today*’s editors had sent Smith to verify rumors that Ashe had contracted HIV/AIDS. Confronted with the prospect of being outed by a national newspaper, Ashe elected, after close consideration, to make the announcement himself at a press conference the next day. That announcement marked the end of a crucial turning point in Ashe’s life.\(^{48}\) Thrust into a new spotlight, Ashe now had to negotiate a world in which his life was now defined by his looming death and pervasive, lingering doubts over the nature of his body. As Ashe

\(^{46}\) Ibid, 196-7  
\(^{47}\) 197-201  
\(^{48}\) Ibid, 3-32.
articulated his AIDS status, he reaffirmed the value and importance of that life and the stability of his athletic, masculine body. This turn in Ashe’s life was not without precedent and it is important to consider the rhetorical mechanisms he employed as manifesting via the unique contexts of black masculinity, homophobia, and national response to HIV/AIDS

As Philip Brian Harper demonstrates in *Are We Not Men? Masculine Anxiety and Problem of African American Identity*, black masculinity is constantly challenged by the perceived threats of “rampant black male sexuality that constitutes so much sexuopolitical structure of U.S. society.”\(^49\) These threats are, at times, defused through the suppression of African American sexuality in general. Through a close reading of the treatment of HIV/AIDS in the coverage of the death of television anchorman, Max Robinson, and the retirement of basketball superstar Earvin “Magic” Johnson, Harper demonstrates that this suppression of discussion frustrated efforts to provide information on HIV/AIDS to African Americans. While Robinson’s death and Johnson’s announcement could have been fruitful media through which to challenge heterosexist assumptions regarding the nature of HIV and its transmission, both occasioned the reaffirmation of African American sexuality as built upon attractive, athletic bodies, eloquence, intelligence, and heterosexuality. Rather than open up a dialogue as to the potential origins of infection, the discourse surrounding Robinson’s and Johnson’s infections emphasized their connection to their families and, more important, the promiscuous heterosexual activity through which they acquired HIV. In both cases, a series of public statements were made in response to questions and criticism raised with mass media. After Robinson’s death, Jesse Jackson continued to reaffirm that it was promiscuity not homosexuality that led to his death from AIDS. Johnson’s initial announcement was followed by public appearances and media campaigns that attested to his rampant heterosexual habits. The unwillingness of

\(^{49}\) Harper, *Are We Not Men?*
Robinson, Johnson, and Jackson, to address the realities of HIV/AIDS further suppressed the discussion of African American sexuality. It rentrenched images of African American masculinity and suppressed a discussion of homosexuality among African Americans.

We cannot know the precise rationale for Ashe’s decision to remain silent after he learned he had AIDS. But, certainly, the milieus of his life in the late 1980s would have frustrated a frank and open dialogue regarding his status. As an athlete, Ashe had defined his masculinity through physical prowess and, like Johnson, would have found the public imagination of his body shift from away from narratives of calm dominance and become a site of fear and fascination. And, like Robinson, Ashe’s public figure rested upon his public image as an articulate, handsome man who transcended the limitations placed on Africans Americans. As Harper notes, Robinson’s success as a television news anchor and his prestige among African Americans were rooted in his verbal facility and his command of Received Standard English. Robinson, who had grown up in Richmond with Ashe, used this dialect to gain entry into the social and economic mainstream and then took advantage of this vantage point to comment upon the realities of race and racism. Ashe had exuded the same personal charisma and, for Michael Wilbon of The Washington Post, had been pointed to, by Wilbon’s parents, as a model of public speaking and demeanor for African Americans. Effectively silenced by the suppression of discussions of African American sexuality and the structures of masculinity, Ashe avoided disclosing his health to any but his doctors, family and close friends. His silence was a personal coping mechanism, a mode through which to limit potential criticisms and threats associated with his condition. And, when he was finally forced to acknowledge his status in public, Ashe both challenged and colluded in the perpetuation of these structures. While he questioned

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50 Ibid 6.
51 Ibid.
heterosexism’s effect on the treatment of those living with HIV/AIDS and gave his name andody to efforts for HIV/AIDS education, he remained deeply concerned with his legacy and the
impact it would have on his family.

When he finally went public, Ashe was careful to indicate the 1983 blood transfusion as
the source of his infection. Media coverage emphasized this infection as accidental and unfair.
Major newspapers emphasized that blood supplies were not tested for HIV until eighteen months
after Ashe’s infection. Many papers ran two statistics: that less than five thousand of all
documented HIV cases could be tracked to transfusions of blood, blood components, of other
tissues; and. that since screening of blood supplies began there were only twenty documented
cases of infection through transfusion.\textsuperscript{53} The misfortune of this infection was highlighted by a
chart that accompanied Lawrence Altman’s coverage in the \textit{New York Times}. Altman, using
information from the Centers for Disease Control, indicated that of the 213,641 documented
cases of HIV/AIDS, only two percent were the result of transfusions.\textsuperscript{54} This pales in comparison
with the twenty-three percent of cases of infection through intravenous drug use and the fifty-
eight percent of cases through sexual contact between men. Ashe becomes the pitiable victim of
chance and poor planning on the part of others; his infection was not the result of deviant
sexuality or promiscuous sexual behavior and was not his fault.

Media coverage of Ashe’s infection quickly turned to the ways the information was
disseminated. In his announcement, Ashe indicated that he was aware that many in New York’s
medical community and the international tennis community knew about his infection but


\textsuperscript{54} Altman, ibid.
remained silent. This fact is corroborated, in part, by former tennis players and sportswriter Tony Kornheiser, who recounted the wide spread speculation and rumors that circled tennis tournaments for years.\(^{55}\) This willful silence underscored what Ashe saw as the mean-spirited actions of the person who “ratted” him out to \textit{USA Today}. In his announcement, Ashe’s wife and daughter, both of whom were HIV negative, figured heavily as he negotiated the next turn in his life. He emphasized his right to privacy and the desires of he and his wife to keep his infection quiet so as not to cause problems for the young daughter, Camera.\(^{56}\)

As media coverage exploded in the days after his announcement, most newspapers quickly bypassed the speculation as to the origins of his infection and engaged in a the big story of whether or not it was right for \textit{USA Today} to threaten to expose his medical secrets.\(^{57}\) While most columnists and editorial pages acknowledged that they would have behaved in the same way, others, especially Anna Quindlen in The \textit{New York Times} and Jonathan Yardley in The \textit{Washington Post}, expressed frustration and outrage at the prevailing journalistic ethics which stressed the scoop over the privacy of a person’s medical records. Such debates skirted central issues, such as the stigmas associated with HIV/AIDS and compared Ashe’s outing to other media spasms of the day, Bill Clinton and Gennifer Flowers, Gary Hart and Donna Rice, Donald Trump and Marla Maples, and thereby further silenced the discussion of sexuality that was central to HIV/AIDS. Because Ashe had unfortunately been infected by the rare chance of receiving of a tainted blood transfusion, this juxtaposition underlined his sexual normality, further silenced the discussion of the prevailing heterosexist discourses which forced him to


\(^{56}\) Ashe, \textit{Days of Grace}, 3-33.

remain silent. This tension reached a head in an editorial in The New York Times in which Nat Hentoff reaffirms a journalistic ethics in which Ashe’s infection should be treated with the same delicacy as clinical depression, mental illness, and homosexuality. It was, he argued, a private matter.

Ashe willfully supported this position and, in his dying days, attempted to solidify a legacy that reaffirmed his citizenship through narratives of masculinity that built upon his location as the leader the private sphere of his family. The first space through which affected this was his final memoir, Days of Grace. Co-written with Arnold Rampersad, a Woodrow Wilson Professor of Literature at Princeton University who is best known for his biographies of Jackie Robinson and Langston Hughes, Days of Grace finds Ashe rehearsing his life experiences and offering a set of lessons that come from beyond the event horizon of assured death. Ashe, Rampersad writes in the introductory materials, contacted him in June, 1992. Written in eight months, Days of Grace covers terrain familiar to readers of Ashe’s prior memoirs. He describes his time within the international worlds of tennis and includes a full chapter on his attempts to resuscitate the U.S. Davis Cup program in the 1980s when he served as captain and coach. More important, it is in this space that Ashe addressed his belief that race is the burden placed on the backs of African Americans. Attached to their bodies, the histories and social realities of racism are something all African Americans must address through the course of their lives. He also spends considerable time considering the challenges to human rights that exist in South Africa and in the United States’s policies towards Haiti.

Ashe spends a considerable amount of time discussing his infection and his anger at his outing. Describing in technical fashion the medical realities of his infection, Ashe demonstrates

58 A graduate of Bowling Green State University, Dr. Rampersad is now Dean of the Humanities at Stanford University
his rhetorical command of the processes through which he became ill. This command of medical discourse underscores his frustration at losing control of the trajectories of this knowledge as it was spread through rumor and insinuation. Moreover, in a chapter on sex and athletics, he laments the sad fact that his friend Max Robinson made a deathbed request that his heterosexuality be attested to in the face of rumors that he was homosexual. In this same chapter Ashe attests to his own heterosexuality. He does not, however, do so by attesting to his promiscuity. Readers of his earlier memoirs know that he often commented on the promiscuity of other players with a clinical, journalistic tone. In contrast, when discussing his own relationships he emphasized their romantic, long term nature. In *Portrait in Motion* he traces the challenges of having a long term relationship with a Jewish Canadian woman while on the road. In *Off The Court* he emphasizes the spiritual and psychological connection he has with his wife. In *Days of Grace* he continues to emphasize his gentlemanly treatment of women and his clinical fascination with the behaviors of others.

However, he does recount two encounters with homosexuality. At sixteen or seventeen, he explains, he was visiting an aunt in New Jersey and was walking home late one night. An older man offered him a ride and proceeded to place his hand on Ashe’s thigh. Despite Ashe’s resistance, the man persisted and, after a few blocks, Ashe jumped out of the car. In the second encounter, he describes catching a man watch him use an airport bathroom. In this case, Ashe writes that he hollered from behind the stall door and the man fled. Ashe brushes away these experiences, telling the reader that he “had no difficulty resisting both men. I do not believe I felt any attraction to them, and I do not think that fear of censure kept me from becoming involved with them.”

He explained that though his religious upbringing discouraged homosexuality, for him it was a personal choice based on a lack of personal interest. He goes on

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59 Ashe, *Days of Grace*, 228.
to note the prevailing homophobia of some tennis players, especially the Romanian player Ilie Nastase and Australian players, who traveled in incredibly masculine, homosocial circles. While Ashe says he knew no homosexual players, he explains that he did know two homosexual men who worked on the tour. Despite the prevailing homophobia, Ashe explains that he knew of their homosexuality and the fact that one was privately dying of HIV/AIDS. Through this discussion, Ashe employs a clinical distance to articulate his own sexuality as one rooted in personal choice. Moreover, he emphasizes, through contrast with other players, his own progressive openness to homosexual men. His knowledge of the sexuality of some men on the tour indicates that they were confident enough to be open with him.

Our knowledge of Ashe’s coming death becomes the subject of this book. Ashe demonstrates control over the discourses surrounding his infection and the stigmas associated with it. Working quickly, Ashe set down his a new version of his life’s narrative, one which served as an example for future generations. This memoir functions like his previous texts; but the specter of looming death and the fact that it was posthumously published underline the gravity of Ashe’s life and work. Days of Grace is, then, one of those rare texts that Thomas Kane has theorized as automortography, “the attempted representation of one’s own death.” Kane continues and indicates that automortography “describes the subject becoming an object (in the form of the corpse) and entails attempts by survivors to reanimate that subject through the object act … [and] because it is performative … its construction enables an emotional projection (by self and other) and ruminations on mortality and the intersection of identity and community.” While he had always been the physical carrier of the dreams and hopes of some, in his dying days Ashe became a truly messianic figure and passed his word down for the future.

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60 Ibid 228-9
61 Thomas Kane, “Mourning the Promised Land: Martin Luther King Jr’s Automortography and the National Civil Rights Museum,” American Literature, 76.3 (2004): 549-77.
As Kane argues, *Days of Grace* finds Ashe passing these lessons down to his daughter, Camera, as she becomes the ideal, blank, feminine receptor for the lessons learned through his life. The books concluding chapter, “My Dear Camera,” takes the form of a letter sent posthumously to Camera. In it, the overwhelming narratives of Ashe’s experiences are distilled into a final missive, one which will last past his body and through which he can continue to be a strong and guiding parent.

As Ashe prepared for death and used the gravity of the situation to transform his life into a narrative for his child’s development, he used every last chance he had had to make a final contribution to the world. He had, in the late 1980s, begun a program with Doug Wilder, Virginia Heroes, Inc, that provided tutoring and life coaching for African American students in Richmond public schools. His contributions had earned him praise in his hometown. As his health declined, he worked closely with Wilder to develop a Hall of Fame for African American Athletes that would build off of his work in *A Hard Road to Glory* and would become a new centerpiece for Richmond’s tourist industry. In early 1993, Ashe met a Richmond sculptor, Paul Di Pasquale, who indicated his desire to design a statue of Ashe that would be placed outside the Hall of Fame. Ashe agreed and helped Di Pasquale come up with a design. He asked that he be positioned among a crowd of children and shown offering them books. At Di Pasquale’s suggestion, Ashe agreed that the statue should also show him holding a tennis racket and in a tennis outfit. Ashe did stipulate that the statue depict him as he looked in 1993 as he was nearing death. Di Pasquale finished the design and Ashe approved it right before his death. The statue, which depicts a gaunt Ashe offering a tennis racket and books to children, is the visual

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manifestation of the lessons offered in *Days of Grace*. Ashe’s dying body became the symbol and the medium through which children came to education and athletic glory.

The statue’s intended location outside the African American Athletes Hall of Fame would have underscored Ashe’s position as the great mediator of race, sports, and politics in the late twentieth century. However, plans for the Hall of Fame were eventually abandoned and the statue would, after a time, find a new home where its meanings would be constructed by a new audience.
Chapter Seven

The debates over the Ashe memorial have come to be defined by periodic moments of intense arguments in public venues. These three moments, December, 1994; July 1995; and the Spring of 1996, are intriguing examples of mass media frenzies, in which local coverage of an issue churns out editorials and opinions pieces that draw the attention of the regional and national press. The complexity and sensitivity of the topic, especially as it related to the cultural and racial politics discussed in preceding chapters, made the public debates even more intriguing for a national audience. Furthermore, because Richmond sits at a slight remove from the Washington Metropolitan area, it exists both within and without the confines of the cosmopolitan realms of the Eastern Seaboard. As we have seen in preceding chapters, Richmond has historically defined itself as temporally and culturally different from both the North and the rest of Virginia and the South. This self-constructed difference in urban identity made Richmond an oddity for Washington and New York based media; as a political and cultural space, Richmond and Virginia did not fit nicely into narratives and identities of North and South assumed to be separated by the Potomac River.

As the city set about arguing over the meaning of its past and the appropriate methods for remembering it, national media outlets, such as The Washington Post, The Washington Times, and The New York Times, approached the story with intrigue and a degree of condescension. In their coverage, the moments of heated, emotional debate, became the major events of the story. That practice, unfortunately, reinscribes assumptions about the patterns of discourse and the history of race, memory, and planning in Richmond. The peak moments of the debate saw
combative arguments set out across the fundamental rifts in Richmond’s communities. Media attention largely treated these events as culture war battles over racism and cultural pluralism. While this is partly correct, the real arguments occurred in the chambers of city government and were carried out through the templates and within the contexts of the legacies of long running struggles that occurred during the era of the Civil Rights Movement.

What we have, I argue, is a public debate that came out of that history and which must be understood in that context. As we move forward, it is important to take into account the difficult and intricate work that occurred outside the purview of national media but which directed and defined the debates. In this chapter, I will examine the debates over the Ashe memorial and plans to place it on Monument Avenue. From the time of Ashe’s death in February, 1992, through the memorial’s unveiling in July, 1996, various factions with Richmond presented possible projects with which to memorialize Ashe. In almost all cases, Ashe was seen as an ideal subject for celebration. Many of these proposals sought to build upon the work Ashe undertook late in life. These debates were enflamed by public statements, editorializing, and grandstanding by citizens, influential public figures, and regional and national newspapers. While these comments garnered the most attention, the difficult work that led to the Ashe Memorial was carried out within Richmond’s city government and occurred among the elected, majority-African American city council and the more conservative City Planning Commission. While public debates influenced the direction of the city council’s actions, ultimately, power rested with the council, which was made up of figures intimately attuned to the racial tensions of the city and the matrix of race, memory, and politics within Richmond. In this chapter, what becomes clear is the impact the Civil Rights movement and the long struggle for political
representation had on the city. That work, however, was framed and criticized within contemporary discursive constructs of neoliberalism and multiculturalism.

Memory’s Backstory: 1992-1994: The Ashe Memorial as Art-Object

Scholarship on the Ashe memorial tends to repeat these public debates and tacitly view the statue as a mimetic manifestation of Ashe’s body and life. While late in the debates there were short-lived aesthetic attacks on the monument, little attention has been paid to the statue, its origins, its maker, or its visual rhetoric. I argue that to fully understand the debates over the Ashe memorial and their relation to Richmond’s racial politics we need to step back and consider all these elements that enabled the creation of this specific statue.

Sculptor Paul Di Pasquale had a history of creating controversial public sculptures that migrated before reaching their permanent homes. A native of New Jersey, he attended Virginia Commonwealth University as a graduate student in fine arts in the mid-1970s and then moved to Washington, D.C., where he conceived the first of three racially and aesthetically controversial sculptures. In 1983, Di Pasquale completed the massive sculpture “Connecticut.” Designed to sit above the entrance of a Washington liquor store, “Connecticut” depicts a Native American man wearing a feather headdress and holding a bow and arrow. The sculpture depicts the figure crawling and peering out from the roof of the building. Drawing its name from the Washington Avenue upon which the liquor store was located, “Connecticut” was nixed by the building’s owners and Di Pasquale sought a new home for his work.

Di Pasquale was able to convince the Richmond-based department store chain Best Products, Inc, to display the sculpture on one of its Washington-area showrooms. The CEO of
Best, Sydney Lewis, and his wife, Frances, were Richmond arts patrons and, through his acquaintance with them, Di Pasquale was able to exhibit “Connecticut” atop a Best store in Montgomery County, Maryland.\(^1\) Intended for only a brief, six-month display, “Connecticut” remained atop that store until June, 1984, when the county government demanded that it be removed.\(^2\) Visible from the Washington Beltway, “Connecticut” had gained notice in the local and national press and drawn some positive attention for the store. But it had its detractors, many of whom criticized it on aesthetic terms. It was also vandalized in November, 1983; vandals shot arrows into the sculpture’s head.\(^3\) It is not clear if the vandals were upset with the depiction of a Native American or with the stereotypical and problematic treatment of a fighter/warrior as building décor. It is of course, possible that they simply disliked the sculpture on aesthetic grounds or were engaged in juvenile behavior and, because of the height at which the piece was displayed could only reach it with a projectile. However, their choice of vandalism interestingly drew attention to the symbolic imagery associated with representations associated with Native Americans that was used in Di Pasquale’s statue.

From correspondence between Di Pasquale and the Lewises, we can tell that the Richmond art patrons did their best to find the sculpture a home, but that the nature of their attempts and Di Pasquale’s expectations did not always mesh. A similar department store chain, La Belle’s, initially expressed interest in adopting the sculpture and placing it atop a store in New Mexico or Wyoming. However, Di Pasquale’s requested fee and the costs of transport, storage, and insurance were prohibitive and they withdrew their offer.\(^4\) Instead, Di Pasquale

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\(^1\) Private Papers, Sydney and Frances Lewis, Virginia Historical Society, letters from Di Pasquale, 6-17-83, 8-2-83, 8-25-83, 9-20,83.

\(^2\) Lewis Papers, letter from Di Pasquale, 5-16-84.

\(^3\) Lewis Papers, letter from Di Pasquale, 12-3-83.

\(^4\) Lewis Papers, letters from Di Pasquale, 11-30-83, 2-1-84, 3-2-84, 5-25-84.
took the sculpture with him to Santa Cruz, California, where he hoped to place it atop City Hall.\textsuperscript{5} He also began scouting out San Francisco Bay Area Best stores and attempting to convince the chain to buy the sculpture. The Lewises were unwilling to take the sculpture off his hands but, it seems, did help Di Pasquale find it a home.\textsuperscript{6} When Bay Area plans fell through, “Connecticut” was placed atop the entrance to the Richmond Braves’ new stadium. A minor league affiliate of the Major League Baseball team the Atlanta Braves, the Richmond Braves’ took Di Pasquale’s sculpture on the condition that he donate the piece. Miffed by this financial arrangement, Di Pasquale first endeavored to have the Lewises support him in negotiations. Five local businesses did agree to pay for the statute and donate it to the Richmond Braves and Di Pasquale took to selling prints of the sculpture to make up his debts.\textsuperscript{7} Colloquially known as “The Brave,” “Connecticut” now perches, crawling out of the stadium. Located at the north end of The Boulevard, “Connecticut” looks down on drivers as they travel from the adjacent Arthur Ashe athletic center south towards Monument Avenue and Byrd Park.

Di Pasquale followed his sculpture to Richmond and in 1992 completed a bronze titled “The Headman.” Located in a park on the James River’s Brown Island, “The Headman,” depicts Frank Padgett, a slave who lost his life in 1854 while saving a large crowd of people whose canal boat had been stranded in the James River during a freezing storm. Part of a large-scale redesign of the park, “The Headman,” was placed next to an existing monument to Padgett. “The Headman” gained local supporters and its silhouette was added to the Richmond city flag.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{5} Lewis Papers, letter from Di Pasquale, 2-16-85.  
\textsuperscript{6} Lewis Papers, letter and photos from Di Pasquale, No Date.  
\textsuperscript{8} “James Padgett,” \textit{The Upper James Atlas}, (Richmond: Virginia Canals and Navigation Society, 1953) 57-69. This information was brought to my attention by a post made by Bill Trout on the e-mail listserv “Discussion of Research and Writing about Virginia’s History,” which is maintained by the Library of Virginia. See <http://listva.lib.va.us/cgi-bin/wa.ewe?A2=ind0307&L=va-hist&D=0&T=0&P=7046>
As “The Headman” reached completion, Di Pasquale had a chance encounter that led to his third, and most well-known, sculpture. In April, 1992, just days after announcing his status as HIV/AIDS positive, Ashe made an appearance at Richmond’s Byrd Park where he spoke to an audience of young tennis students and a huge crowd of news media. In the audience with his children, Di Pasquale had the chance to chat briefly with Ashe. The event stuck in his mind and influenced his next sculpture. He had wanted to do something monumental and was thinking of designing a statue of politician Tip O’Neil, Muhammed Ali, or Malcolm X but settled, instead, on Ashe.9 In January, 1993, just weeks before Ashe’s death, Di Pasquale was able, through Joseph James, Richmond’s director of Economic Development, to speak with Ashe about the statue. Ashe agreed with plans for a statue that would be located outside a Richmond-based African American sports Hall of Fame.10 Over the phone, he described his wishes for the statue with Di Pasquale. He requested that he be depicted holding a tennis racket and books and be surrounded by children; he also asked that he be shown dressed in a tennis warm-up suit and untied tennis shoes. Because the sculpture was originally meant to be placed at ground level and situated in front of a building, Ashe and Di Pasquale’s conversations emphasized the frontal elements of the sculpture at the expense of creating a piece to be viewed from multiple angles. The last element of the statue that Ashe requested was that he be depicted as he looked then, just weeks away from death.11

As they got off the phone, Di Pasquale asked Ashe to send photographs so he could begin designing the statue. Two weeks later Ashe passed away. A package of photos arrived at Di Pasquale’s house on the day of Ashe’s funeral. Although Ashe had selected the photographs, his

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
wife, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, had sent them after her husband’s death along with a note asking Di Pasquale to go ahead with the statue as it was one of her husband’s final wishes. Over the ensuing weeks Ashe began preliminary sketches for a plaster model. The Virginia Historical Society has ten of these sketches archived and, through them, we can see Di Pasquale’s early ideas for the sculpture and the fact that he did not remain committed to depicting Ashe’s sick body. Four charcoal and ocher sketches, dated March 16, 17, 18, and 19, 1993, depict Ashe’s head and shoulders from multiple angles. In them, Ashe wears a tie and he has the gaunt, wan face that he had near death. However, later sketches, from March 31 through April 14, 1994, show Ashe as he is most commonly remembered. In tennis clothes, with a short afro hairstyle, and glasses, Ashe appears as the healthy, confident, and determined young athlete of the 1970s.

Although Di Pasquale considered depicting a young, healthy Ashe, he settled on depicting Ashe as he wished. Throughout 1993 and 1994 Di Pasquale worked on a plaster cast of the sculpture. He remained in touch with Moutoussamy-Ashe, who introduced him to Marty Dummet, president of Virginia Heroes, Inc., and Tom Chewning. While plans for a hall of fame fell into doubt without Ashe’s leadership, Di Pasquale continued work, hoping that, after completing a model, the city and private donations would refund his early efforts and pay for bronze casting, and purchase the statue for placement in Richmond. Throughout the ensuing debates, Di Pasquale remained committed to completing the visual elements Ashe requested, but easily acquiesced to a location Ashe never publicly considered. Di Pasquale had made a name for himself as a creator of public art that was controversial but which, through hard-fought

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12 Hickey, Ibid.,  
13 I am indebted to Jeffrey Ruggles, Assistant Curator for Prints and Photographs and the Virginia Historical Society, who brought these sketches to my attention and kindly dug them out of storage for me to view.  
14 Hickey Ibid,
negotiation, found its way into the landscapes of Richmond. When the model was unveiled in December 1994, its location would quickly alter course from that proposed by Ashe, assumed by the sculptor, and planned by the city government.

Honoring Ashe: The City Council’s Initial Plans

In April, 1993, just two months after Ashe passed away, the Richmond City Council formed an exploratory committee “to study an appropriate memorial for the life of Arthur Ashe, Jr.” Roy West, the conservative African American politician who in 1981 won a seat on council with Doug Wilder’s support, introduced the resolution. The committee was headed by the City Manager and included two members of the city council, a representative of the Ashe family, and citizens representing Richmond’s nine council districts. In the origins of this mandate and the makeup of the committee, the city council’s resolution had the symbolic weight of city-wide approval and the capacity for completion.

Working with a time-frame of three months, the committee’s instructions included specific ideas for honoring Ashe that, it was assumed, would direct their plans. The city resolution asked the committee to consider “renaming the Boulevard from its northerly terminus at its intersection with Brookland Parkway and Westwood Avenue to its southerly terminus at Byrd Park to ‘Arthur Ashe Boulevard.’” This proposal would have been easily effected but had a deep symbolic significance. Renaming a road would have required only changing street signs, updating maps, and noting the change in city planning documents. There would be no need for surveying or studies of traffic plans and no consideration of locations or designs for a

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15 Resolution No. 93-R38-81, Richmond City Council, 4-13-93.
16 Ibid.
monument. However, this tactical ease belies the potential challenges and the deep symbolic weight of renaming what is one of Richmond’s grandest boulevards.

The Boulevard is simply that: a large boulevard, with a tree-filled median, that carries no specific designation as being named for any person, place, or thing. The simple yet stately name of the road speaks to the aristocratic ideals of Richmond and Virginia. Running south-north, The Boulevard begins at Byrd Park, a large urban park along the banks of the James River to which a young Ashe was denied entry; it continues North through the affluent neighborhoods of the Fan and Monument Avenue to North Richmond, where Ashe grew up in a thriving African American community. As a thoroughfare, this corridor connects older, aristocratic spaces with spaces marked by the histories of urban renewal and popular leisure. Traveling from Byrd Park, The Boulevard crosses the commercial and arts district surrounding West Cary Street before entering the affluent neighborhoods that surround its intersection with Monument Avenue. Effectively extending the Confederate and Lost Cause iconography of Monument Avenue, this section of The Boulevard is home to a cluster of New South era institutions that early in the twentieth century “comprised a Confederate Vatican: a city within a city devoted to a single faith. The enclave, spanning several blocks, embraced a former Confederate soldiers’ home and veteran’s hospital, the Confederate Memorial Chapel and the Confederate Memorial Institute.”17 While some of these buildings have new purposes, the structures remain and their purposes, while not necessarily devoted to the Lost Cause, speak to the economic, social, and political influence of that ideology. Along with above-named institutions, The Boulevard is home to the Virginia Historical Society, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and the headquarters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Just a block from Monument Avenue, this cluster of institutions is a reminder of the curatorial power and designs of Richmond elites who have, historically,

17 Horwitz, 243.
traced their legitimacy through the Lost Cause. The Boulevard is both the spatial center of this symbolic landscape, and its name lends an aristocratic gentility to the institutions that bear its name in their address.

Crossing Monument Avenue at the Stonewall Jackson Memorial, The Boulevard quickly shifts from being an affluent space dominated by aristocratic institutions and becomes a slightly run-down thoroughfare lined with fast-food restaurants and gas stations. This comparatively blighted landscape is what has become of Ashe’s childhood neighborhood. At the northern stretch of The Boulevard, just as it gives way to access for Interstate 95, are the Richmond Braves’ stadium, with Di Pasquale’s “Connecticut” overlooking the road, and The Arthur Ashe Athletic Center. A much less aristocratic space, the northern end of The Boulevard has more in common with the automobile-friendly, urban highways of post-war development. And its major civic institutions, the stadium and the athletics center, are truly public spaces devoted to the popular endeavors of amateur and professional sports. While this new growth creates a mobile, democratic space, it also, we should note, was facilitated by the wholesale destruction of African American communities and civic institutions, such as Brook Field, were Ashe grew up and learned tennis from committed community members.

While the northern end of The Boulevard is materially and symbolically different from the central and Southern ends, as a thoroughfare it links these distinct spaces and two very different eras of urban development and public memory in Richmond. By renaming the thoroughfare Arthur Ashe Boulevard, the city council would have taken away the aristocratic airs of the genteel name The Boulevard and positioned the life of Arthur Ashe as the defining feature of this spatial movement from the formerly-exclusive Byrd Park, the still resonant Confederate
and Lost Cause associations of the intersections of The Boulevard and Monument Avenue to suburbanized, modern development of inclusive athletic institutions.

While renaming the road for Arthur Ashe would have had a symbolic weight not mirrored in the ease of the project, it was, in many ways, a safe choice that echoed other modes of remembering the Civil Rights Movement. Street naming has become a widely used practice for commemorating historical figures associated with the Civil Rights movement. As Derek Alderman notes, the most common occurrence has been for municipalities in the deep South to rename roads for Martin Luther King, Jr.; at least 730 places have renamed roads for King and of those, seventy percent are located in North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. While Richmond, interestingly, is not one of these 730 places. While King is the figure most commonly honored with street names, cities across the United States and the globe have employed this practice to honor relevant figures and remake the urban landscape. These debates often are attended by difficult public debates over local identity and are carried out by politically active members of racial and ethnic minorities who work, through traditional channels of power, to alter the symbolic, spatial, and semiotic orientation of the city.

While, for unclear reasons, the plan to rename The Boulevard for Ashe fell by the wayside, it would be revived in 1995 and 1996 as the city debated the Monument Avenue.

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19 There is not space here to consider the remembrance of King in Virginia. However, it is important to note that in 1994, the Virginia General Assembly elected to celebrate King’s birthday alongside those of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, creating the holiday “Lee-Jackson-King” day which was celebrated the same day other states honored King. This holiday had a short life and was repealed in 2001. See Linda Wheeler, “New Date for Lee, Jackson; Va. Honors Confederate Heroes on Rescheduled Holiday,” *WP*, 1-13-01, B3.

location. At that point, the practice of renaming would be presented as a compromise. But as a reorientation of the city’s racial landscape that came from the largely African American city council, it began as a remarkable, groundbreaking statement of shifts in Richmond’s historic and racial identity. However, as with Di Pasquale’s statue, these plans would be altered when presented to the public.

December, 1994 as Prelude

On Monday, December 5, 1994, allied political, civic, and business leaders proposed two additions to Richmond’s memorial landscape. Though their proponents had often found common cause, the projects were placed in opposition to each other as mutually exclusive attempts to further express local historical identity through racially symbolic additions to the city and its tourist industry. The first was made by Richmond Renaissance, a longstanding business group that had worked with State Senator Henry Marsh to develop Richmond’s old downtown, which proposed the development of a National Center for the Civil War and Emancipation as part of a fifty million dollar tourism initiative. This initiative, it seems plausible to say, would have profited from the resurgence in Civil War nostalgia associated with Ken Burns PBS Documentary *The Civil War* and other popular texts such as the films *Gettysburg* and *Glory*, and the increased popularity of hobbies such as reenactment and heritage tourism. As journalist and travel writer Tony Horwitz notes, the new-found popularity of the Civil War was pop-cultural but had a clear political element. By the early 1990s the Civil War had become “a

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Rorschach blot in which Americans now saw all sorts of unresolved strife: over race, sovereignty, the sanctity of historic landscapes, and who should interpret the past.” Horwitz, like many commentators, found the new popularity and political salience both bewildering and intriguing, and his travel-narrative, *Confederates in the Attic*, is one of many entertaining and engrossing studies of Southern Memory to come out of the 1990s. However, like many commentators, his historical vision misses the resonating presence of similar battles that occurred in the 1960s as the Civil Rights and anti-integration movements fought through the symbolic landscapes of the past.

While the proposal for a National Center for the Civil War and Emancipation echoed earlier proposed museums and tourist centers, it broke from the 1960s attempts associated with the Civil War Centennial, in that Richmond Renaissance intended to include the wide range of experiences of the Civil War. A major goal of the center was drawing in African American tourists. Frank Jewell, a director of Richmond Renaissance, reminded the city council that Richmond has one of the richest African American histories of any American city and that “we can go after this market and we can get it.” The center, according to Richmond Renaissance chairman and Crestar Bank Chief Executive Officer Richard Tilghman, would cover “the gamut of the Civil War, including the emancipation of slaves” and would include exhibits featuring “a Richmonder who led the first slave revolt in the United States in 1800 and an Ashe-inspired African American Sports Hall of Fame.” Attuned to the political and cultural weight of the past, Tilghman explained to the city council and the press that “the black community deserves to...

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23 Horwitz 6.
24 Horwitz’s journey across the South is framed by the fact that he began the trip upon returning from a decade abroad. *Confederates in the Attic* is, in many ways, a humorous narrative of reacquaintance. For a soberer take by an outsider with little prior knowledge of the South, see V.S. Naipaul, *A Turn in the South*, (New York: Knopf, 1989).
26 Ibid.
know that if the issues are going to be dealt with, [they’re] going to be dealt with with integrity and sensitivity,” and that the center was “not just about celebrating the Lost Cause.”

Despite the embrace of socially informed, multicultural history, the new center was quickly attacked. Councilmember Henry “Chuck” Richardson responded to the proposal, arguing that a new Civil War museum would reopen old wounds and would be an insult to the city’s now-majority African American population, declaring that “’you wouldn’t request the Jewish community to accept the glorification of Nazi Germany today,’” and adding that “’It’s somehow insulting to accept any aspect of the Confederacy.’”

While these plans were criticized by some city council members, there was acknowledgement that the city would have to develop new tourist sites in order to be reborn. Mayor Leonidas B. Young recognized that the city needed to make careful use of its past, telling council and Richmond Renaissance that the museum “’can’t be a monument to the Old South, but it has to truthfully represent what happened,’” which was a war to end slavery, a fact that “’African Americans can take pride in.’”

The local press took somewhat similar positions. The widely circulated Richmond Times-Dispatch argued that fears that the center “would sugarcoat the past are misplaced,” suggesting that “trends in historiography suggest the last thing a center would do would be to glorify the Confederacy,” and that the center offered “an opportunity for the area to build on its remarkable past.” Conversely, without singling the new museum out, The Richmond Afro-American, endorsed, in principle, plans to reinvigorate the downtown and the city’s tourist industry through the linking of development strategies and the creation of a campus system for the city’s museums, including the Black History Museum and Cultural Center, the Museum of

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Hickey Ibid.
the Confederacy, the Science Museum and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.” Without encouraging historical tourism, the Afro-American endorsed the broad development of the city’s many historical resources.

While accepted in principal, the particulars of Richmond Renaissance’s plans were questioned not for their racial inclusiveness but, for their temporal focus. While some political leaders, such as Young, agreed that the city needed to capitalize on its historical resources, others, such as Richardson, were deeply resistant to the idea of perpetuating the city’s attachment to the nineteenth century. While temporal disputes had run throughout the development of memorial landscapes in Richmond, the debates of the 1990s lay not in the tensions of the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries, as was the case through the 1960s, but in the racial tensions of period set off by the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement. As initial responses to their plans made clear, the proposal for a new Civil War and Emancipation museum is defined by the symbolic power of the past and urban planning that defined Richmond in the 1960s and 1970s. The old downtown, like many urban centers, had become a ghost town under development schemes that emphasized suburbanization, “slum-clearing,” and the development of large freeways that cut through old neighborhoods. Moreover, as we have seen in preceding chapters, these practices walked hand-in-hand with efforts to reassert local identity through traditionalist memorial projects. Attempts to revive Monument Avenue in the 1960s were the product of this confluence.

Despite general support, Richmond Renaissance’s plans were slow to gain traction in large part because of the discursive constructions of race and memory in the 1990s. By the 1990s Richmond was much more attuned to the racial sensitivities of memory and, despite the embrace of social history, the new center failed to address the realities of generational

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attachment to affective memories. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the celebration of the Civil War and the Confederacy came about not only during a period of increased racial segregation but also during a period in which participants passed away and their children and grandchildren were charged with securing those lived memories into cultural memories. While the 1990s did see the third great remembrance of the Civil War, it was also a period in which, as we have seen in Chapter Five, activism and change associated with the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s were brought into the mainstream of American popular memory. Richmond Renaissance’s proposal was slow to gain support in large part because Richmond was still healing from the trauma of the 1960s and 1970s battles over annexation and was finally in a position to embrace and celebrate an icon associated with the Civil Rights Movement.

Coincidentally or not, on the same that day Richmond Renaissance announced its plans to the City Council, a statue of Arthur Ashe was unveiled to a crowd of two hundred. At a kickoff event at the Richmond Centre, Paul Di Pasquale unveiled a twelve-foot plaster model of the statue and the organizing committee began raising the necessary $400,000 to complete the bronze, twenty-four foot tall monument. Di Pasquale was joined onstage by council member Tim Kaine who, as a representative of mayor Young, presented a check for $43,000 from the city government. Fundraising efforts were headed by Tom Chewning, a white, childhood friend and tennis partner of Ashe’s and, in 1994, president of Dominion Energy, and organized through Virginia Heroes, Inc, the philanthropic and tutoring group Ashe had started late in life. The city’s donation was augmented by a $15,000 check from Nations Bank. With strong corporate support, a near-complete statue, the approval of the city government and, as Robertson notes, the

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32 That cast is now held by the Virginia Historical Society. See appendices 16 and 17 for images
33 Kaine is currently Governor of Virginia.
support of Ashe’s family, the monument was, it seemed, well on its way to quick completion, even though it did not yet have a definite home.

However, these efforts’ greatest asset was the support and influence of the most recognizable public figure on stage that day: former governor Doug Wilder. Although he had left office in January, 1994, Wilder retained a large degree of visibility and public influence. And, through his close relationship with Ashe, he had long come to be associated with memories of his friend. Ashe’s immense state funeral was orchestrated by then Governor Wilder. And, as a highly successful, well-regarded African American politician, Wilder embodied an image similar to Ashe’s. Ashe was able to marshal the support of business and political entities and, through his life long experiences in Richmond’s electoral politics, was adept at framing and directing public discourse. Although the idea had certainly percolated for some time, that rally marked the first time any public figure openly called for the placement of the Ashe memorial on Monument Avenue. That day, Wilder told the crowd “‘I just feel it needs to be on Monument Avenue,’” and that “‘it will send a transcending message,’ just as Ashe transcended racial and geographical boundaries.”

The juxtaposition of Richmond Renaissance’s new plans and Wilder’s calls for locating Ashe on Monument Avenue led to the first public debate over the Ashe memorial. These early comments lay out the pattern for later arguments and in them we can see the complex discursive formations surrounding race and historical identity. While Wilder publicly endorsed the Monument Avenue site, it is important to note that Kaine, Young, and other members of the city government who were supportive of the statue did not endorse the Monument Avenue location. As we have seen, the city government had long planned to celebrate Ashe and their actions were, in a sense, lost in the furor that erupted over the Monument Avenue location.

35 Ibid.
Like the city council, all concerned parties embraced the idea of celebrating Ashe. The debate, then, did not center on the monument or its subject but on the location. As Jonathan Leib carefully argues, the long debate would superficially be concerned with the symbolic power of space and place.  

Even those who self-identified with the Civil War and Confederate remembrance took public positions that deferred to the city’s larger heritage and Ashe’s legacy. Margaret Palmer, the President-General of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, offered that she had no personal objection to it and Robin Reed, executive director of Richmond’s Confederate Museum stated that “if the city decides they want to have other notable people who weren’t important to the history of the Civil War but were important to the history of Richmond, I certainly can’t argue against that.”

However, not all Confederate organizations supported the plan. One of the loudest voices against the Ashe memorial was that of Wayne Byrd, president of the Danville, Virginia chapter of the Heritage Preservation Association. From the initial, 1994 proposals until well after the unveiling of the monument, Byrd spoke out against what he saw as the inappropriateness of the Ashe memorial because of a perceived lack of national importance. Comparing Ashe’s impact to that of Lee, Jackson, Davis, and Stuart, Byrd stated that “I don’t think the man was significant enough in the history of Virginia or the country to be included along with these monuments that are along that avenue. These men contributed more to the founding and the values of this country than a tennis player.” This position was soon joined by other voices who objected to what they perceived as a celebration of Ashe in place of the

37 Baker, Ibid.
38 Ibid.
remembrance of Civil War figures. Writing in The Washington Post, Northern Virginia businessman Brian Pohanka argued that criticism of the Civil War museum and the decision to move forward with a non-Civil War statue on Monument Avenue did a “great disservice” to those African Americans who fought in and lived during the Civil War. Citing the case of Richmond native and Union Soldier Powhatan Beaty, Pohanka argued that it would be better to remember and honor black and white figures from the Civil War in new, social history-informed structures on Monument Avenue.39

In many ways, the proposals set forth on December, 5, 1994, and responses to them serve as preludes to the ensuing debates. But, as we move ahead, we need to remember the confluence of events that enabled that moment to occur. By this point, the city of Richmond and its major political interest groups were committed to honoring Ashe. Over the next eighteen months few would call into question the appropriateness of honoring this Richmond native; those who did would question the mode of memorialization, not the subject. The prelude to the Ashe memorial debates makes clear that Ashe, his family, and his friends, were crucially aware of the symbolic weight of his legacy. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, this legacy was built through a lifelong crafting of public persona. This persona would eventually come to be enshrined on the city’s grandest boulevard, but only after those close to him fought over the best way to perpetuate this persona and its legacy.

The city was taken a bit aback when Doug Wilder unveiled Di Pasquale’s model and announced his desire for the completed monument to be located on Monument Avenue. While, as mentioned in Chapter Five, there had been attempts to add Civil Rights figures to the avenue, those proposals had been so short lived that few expected renewed efforts to alter the memorial landscape of that particular road. However, Wilder’s proposal carried with it the gravitas of his

reputation within local politics and gained credence through the juxtaposition of the near-
simultaneous announcement of Richmond Renaissance’s plans for a new museum. That moment
called into question older standards employed in remembering the past and was crucial to the
positioning of the Ashe memorial as a great step forward for the city.

When compared with Richmond Renaissances plans or those to place the Ashe memorial
outside a new sports Hall of Fame, the Monument Avenue site had the added benefit of already-
existing material, financial, and political support. A model of the monument already existed and
fundraising efforts had gotten underway; and the city council had, for some time, made clear
their intentions to celebrate Ashe by dedicating a city thoroughfare to his memory. Other plans,
though possible and supported in principle by the city’s major civic, political, and business
institutions, would have required raising far larger sums of money and the painstaking processes
associated with any major building project. Furthermore, Wilder, as a friend of Ashe and the
coordinator of Ashe’s grand funeral, was able to position himself as the representative of the
deceased and seemed to speak for his friend. While Wilder’s proposal built on the work of the
city council, the artist, Ashe, and his family, it diverged, greatly, from their intentions and goals.
These fundamental rifts in the coalition working to celebrate Ashe would arise throughout the
ensuing eighteen month debate. At the heart of these rifts are concerns over ways to alter
Richmond’s memorial landscape to include the politically powerful voices of Richmond’s
African American community. While Richmond Renaissance’s plans were informed by social
history, the emphasis on the nineteenth century created discomfort for those who saw within that
historical moment painful reminders of and the potential for overt and covert displays of white
supremacy. And, as the generation that had fought for Civil Rights in the face of such displays
during the 1960s came to new heights of political influence, they began an effort to shift the city’s memorial landscape to include the remembrance of that struggle.

Selecting the Site: Agenda Setting within City Government

By late 1994, the city council decided to reconsider its plans and find a place for the statue. In January 1995, a committee formed to consider possible locations for the statue. By June, 1995, the committee made its recommendation to place the statue on Monument Avenue. Those plans were enacted only after City Council heard commentary at a July 17 meeting at which over one hundred citizens voiced their opinions. That wrenching debate became the central moment in the dispute over race and memory in modern Richmond, as hundreds of people argued passionately about the symbolic landscape of Monument Avenue.

That central moment provides an interesting array of voices engaged in an organized argument and provides structure for commentators and scholars examining the Ashe memorial. The usefulness of the moment has, however, meant that undue attention has been paid to the largely symbolic value of the statements given at those meetings. While a crucial moment in the development of public discourse, the city council had, by that point, already chosen to place the statue at the intersection of Monument Avenue and Roseneath Road and the public hearing was, in terms of municipal procedure, a formality, despite the passions it aroused. The juxtaposition of difficult subjects addressed in the procedural spaces of government would, in many ways, define the proceedings. City council’s discussions, which began with committee work in January and continued through 1996, were largely concerned with the mundane issues of urban planning. However, as Jonathan Leib demonstrates, these issues of planning continued to hover
As the central deliberative body, the City Council set and maintained agendas and made decisions that existed in communication with public discourse. Council’s actions were influenced by and contributed to the ongoing public debate. It is important, then, to consider fully the development of the government’s internal debates and trace their relationship to public discourse.

In January, 1995, the city council elected to support and proceed with plans to erect a statue of Arthur Ashe within the city confines. These plans did not immediately supersede previous plans to rename The Boulevard for Ashe but ultimately proved more viable than the city council’s initial idea for more thoroughly incorporating Ashe into the memorial and symbolic landscape of Richmond. A committee, headed by councilman Tim Kaine and City Manager Robert Bobb and including Ashe’s brother Randy Ashe, initially considered five possible locations for the statue: outside the Ashe Athletic Center and the planned Ashe-inspired sports hall of fame; at the intersections of Belvideer and Broad Streets; at the tennis courts in Byrd Park; on Monument Avenue west of Roseneath Road; and next to a pedestrian mall along an old canal, adjacent to the James River. The committee considered six criteria in selecting a site: visibility; safety for vehicular and pedestrian traffic; likelihood for immediate and independent fundraising; concurrence with city economic and Master plans; chance for 1995 groundbreaking and/or installation; and acceptance by Ashe family. The committee found that only the Monument Avenue and Ashe Center locations met all the criteria. In a vote, the committee chose Monument Avenue. Randy Ashe asked Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe and Ashe’s sister Loretta Ashe, to tour the sites. They agreed with the committee’s work and endorsed the idea of placing the Ashe memorial somewhere on Monument Avenue.

40 Leib 2002.
While the committee considered plainly material issues of finance, safety, and accessibility, many of these sites, not just the Monument Avenue location, were imbued with rich symbolic meaning that resonated with the histories of race and planning in Richmond. The first site, would have solidified the area surrounding North Boulevard as a populist site associated with athletics and African American achievement in sport. The second site, at Belvideer and Broad streets, was tied to the development of a new urban park that would be built in the place of two shuttered department stores. That site was near the historic Jackson Ward district and would have created a memorial and public space reinvigorating the community history lost through early urban development plans. And, perhaps more important, one of the department stores, Thalhimer’s, had been the site of an important 1960 boycott that led to the integration of business services in Richmond. The third site would have carried reminders of the well-known moment early in Ashe’s life when he was barred entry from a tournament on those courts.

The racially symbolic value of these sites was not lost on the committee or the few observers of their work. Bobb immediately recognized the volatile potential of Wilder’s proposal for placing the statue on Monument Avenue and assumed that it was included among potential sites as a red herring to draw critics’ attention away from the larger project of honoring Ashe. He was right. While the committee worked through early 1995, a few aware observers expressed criticisms of honoring Ashe at the Monument Avenue location in terms that would be widely used in later explosive debates. One critic wrote to city council, complaining that “Arthur Ashe, by most accounts, was a nice boy and a good tennis player. I would stop short of calling him a hero for being nice. A hero by most definitions is one who saves another’s life.”

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42 Randolph and Tate, 180-190.
This critic went on to say that the city should erect a statue of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Tyler, or Woodrow Wilson, all of them presidents from Virginia who “changed the course of history.” Another critic directly attacked the Monument Avenue location on the grounds that “The statues on that street are dedicated to one cause, a single cause,” and that by adding a non-Confederate statue, the city would delegitimate Richmond’s existing historical identity. Neither of these statements is far removed from criticisms of Wilder’s initial proposal and, as we shall see, are echoed by statements given at the July public meeting. However, they and those like them seem to have had little impact on the decisions made by the city council.

On June 16, 1995, the committee brought its proposal to city council. At that meeting, spatial considerations and the relationship to racial symbolism consumed the city council and, through this dialogue, divisions among the city’s elected leadership were laid bare. The committee, accompanied by Di Pasquale and the city’s landscape architect Barry Stark, gave an overview of the process and made clear that they did not begin with Monument Avenue, but settled on it as the best possible location. Committee member Viola Baskerville indicated that the committee had chosen the avenue, but not the location on it. The city council then considered the merits of two proposed intersections: Monument and Kent Avenue and Monument and Roseneath Road. The committee had originally pushed for Kent Avenue because, as per their recommendations, it was west of Roseneath Road and outside the historic district of Monument Avenue. Moreover, at Roseneath, the buildings on Monument Avenue change perceptibly from Victorian mansions to postwar single family homes. At the Kent Avenue location, the statue would be part of the larger memorial structure, but would be folded

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44 Ibid
46 Richmond City Council, Minutes, “Location, Character and Extent, Arthur Ashe Memorial Statue and Monument,” Agenda Item No. 17b, File No. 8197, 6-19-95
into a part of the city that was less tied to New South opulence. However, just one block west of Roseneath, Monument Avenue crosses Interstate 195, and the committee and city council felt that by placing the statue on the other side of the freeway, the city would send a message that Ashe was not historically significant to the city. As Bobb noted, “the symbolism there would have been the statue was on the back of the bus. If all the other monuments were in the historic district, why not Ashe?”⁴⁷ Roseneath Road, however, posed other problems. Not only would that site confront criticism for being too close to the confederate monuments, Roseneath traced the line that had been the outer Confederate defenses of Richmond. The intersections was marked with a cannon, pointed westward, commemorating the fall of Richmond.⁴⁸ As Di Pasquale pointed out, if placed at the intersection of Roseneath and Monument, the figure of Ashe would face the cannon. This stark juxtaposition was a problem, and the city council decided that while the Roseneath location was ideal, they would have to move the cannon to a site among the confederate statues; it now rests in an area among the Confederate memorials.

Because the committee had worked quietly, and because the council had not yet made a firm decision, there was little publicity that Monument Avenue was the likely location for the statue. Still, some observers were aware and came to council meetings to express their opinions. These opinions circled around the racial meanings of Richmond’s spaces in carefully considered language of neoliberal multiculturalism. As the statue approached endorsement, the terms of the debate were being laid bare. One critic, Eugene Price, who said he was a childhood classmate of Ashe’s, called for the statue to be placed on the city’s northside, where they had grown up. Another critic, Monroe Meyer, a resident of Monument Avenue, said it didn’t belong there and

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⁴⁷ Quoted in Hickey 7-8-96.
⁴⁸ According to Alex Monroe, archivist for the Richmond City Council, the cannon that marks this location is actually a Union cannon. Monroe reports that upon close inspection one can locate the mark of a New York foundry. While minor, this irony reminds us of the confused meanings encoded in symbolic landscapes. See appendices 16 and 17 for images of the cannon in its current home.
should be placed where it could inspire young people.\textsuperscript{49} While supported with distinct logics, Meyer’s argument had some things in common with Price’s. Both assumed Ashe should be honored and avoided reference to the continued racialization of Richmond’s neighborhoods or the justness in honoring Ashe. And the ideas they presented reinforced that segregation through appeals to the proper role Ashe played within Richmond’s memorial landscape. By arguing that Ashe belonged in the northside, Price assumed that Ashe’s legacy was best employed as an example to the children of the area of town from which he came. Similarly, Meyer felt that while a part of Richmond’s past, Ashe could best serve to inspire the city by being placed in a predominantly African American neighborhood.

As we will see, these arguments would prove popular with many in the city. However, some city council members saw that by placing Ashe in an African American neighborhood, Richmond would reify spatial patterns of segregation in the city’s memorial landscape. One council member, a Mr. Green, quickly retorted that he was insulted by the suggestion that Monument Avenue was a space only for white Richmonders and that the city needed to break down white-black spatial barriers. Green’s agitated response led Meyer to respond that he simply meant to say that it should be put where African American children could see it so that they could have a role model. Green quickly retorted that those children had role models and that they, Green and Meyer, could and should be examples for the children of the city. By embracing a model of multiculturalism, in which we are all role models, regardless of race, Green deflected an effort to reinforce symbolic spatial segregation.

Green followed up this exchange by reading a portion of a letter he received from a constituent that is worth quoting at length:

\textsuperscript{49} Richmond City Council, Ibid
The purpose of putting Mr. Ashe on the Avenue, close to other statues, is to show that Richmond has more than Civil War military figures to boost about, and that Black Richmonders finally recognizably share in the train of events that has produced this urban city. What we need to understand and what we need to recognize is that we need to come together and not put them on our side of the town or your side of the town. They need to be together.\(^{50}\)

As this exchanged ended and after a few short statements were made regarding the positive impact on tourism and the logistics of placing a rotunda in the intersection, the city council approved the Monument Avenue and Roseneath Road location. The decision signaled a victory for the long struggle of Civil Rights activist in the city. Older members of the council, such as Richardson, and younger benefactors of their work, such as Green, Baskerville, and Mayor Leonidas Young, had used the apparatuses of government to symbolically honor the majority African American population. Aware that the city’s memorial landscape was a central feature of the tourist industry and, more important, a spatial manifestation of racial politics, these civic leaders had committed themselves to celebrating Ashe in a manner that broke down old racial barriers. Employing language of multiculturalism, they placed the Ashe memorial within the confines of the greatest shrine to the Lost Cause as a reminder of the role African Americans played in the city’s history and as a reminder of their work, as Civil Rights activists, fighting against the legacies of that ideology.

One week later, however, the city council’s decision was questioned from within the city government. Edward Winks, the chair of the City Planning Commission (CPC), introduced a resolution on June 26, 1995, calling into question the propriety of the council’s decision. The CPC’s resolution drew upon three provisions in the City Charter: “it is the responsibility of the

\(^{50}\) Richmond City Council, Ibid.
Richmond City Council to develop a master plan for the development of the City of Richmond, including its monuments”; that “it shall be the duty of the [city planning] commission to make and adopt a master plan”; and that “it shall be the further duty and function of the [city planning] commission to preserve historical landmarks and to control the design of statuary and other works of art what are or may become the property of the city.”

This resolution caused some concern for city council. As a distinct body in the city government, the CPC had, in the 1960s, pushed forward plans to place new Confederate-themed statues on Monument Avenue. In 1995, it briefly sought to redirect the city council’s efforts to alter the racial memorial landscape of Richmond by asserting jurisdiction over the process. It is unclear whether the motivations were simply a matter of proper procedure or if members of the CPC wanted to prevent the Monument Avenue location. Also unclear is whether or not the city council sought to avoid bringing the matter to the CPC because of resistance to the Ashe memorial within the members of that body.

City council sought a quick resolution to the matter. On June 29, 1995, Baskerville asked the City Attorney John Rupp to examine the matter and decide whether the council or CPC was “the final arbiter of the placing of statues in the City.” Rupp found that council had “ultimate control and final authority over the issue.” Recognizing that the CPC could approve or disapprove particular locations, Rupp argued that ultimately the CPC reported to council and was an advisory body and did not have exclusive control over the development of historical landmarks, as some had argued. In an effort to resolve these disputes, council member Kaine sent a letter to Winks tracing the history of the council’s efforts to honor Ashe, arguing that the council had acted in the best interest of the city and did not intend to supplant the role of the

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51 Richmond City Council, Minutes, “Resolution No. 95-R191: Concerning a plan of development of monuments,” Agenda Item No. 20, 6-26-95.  
52 John A. Rupp, Letter to City Council, 7-6-95.  
53 Ibid.
CPC. The CPC was left with the responsibility of deciding upon issues concerning traffic safety and utilities, but had no jurisdiction over the choice or placement of statues. While a minor moment in the efforts to place Ashe on Monument Avenue, the internal dispute between the council and the CPC is a reminder of the effects expanded political franchise has had on the development of new memorial landscapes. By this time Richmond’s city council was largely made up of people who had been active in or were indebted to the Civil Rights activism of the 1960s, ‘70s, and ‘80s. While the work of an earlier generation, the voter registration drives and annexation debates of earlier times had enabled these politicians rise to power. These figures were not, however, outsiders who were unaware of the practices of government. The deftness city council showed in the internal dispute over jurisdiction demonstrates the fact that they were politically savvy, well-educated civic leaders who altered the memorial landscape by working within the structures of local government.

Secure in their actions, city council moved ahead and, in June 1995, passed Resolution No. 95-R190. Citing the need to celebrate Richmond’s “history as well as its future, to celebrate its modern day heroes,” the resolution referenced earlier decisions to honor Ashe as the precedent for a decision to place Ashe on Monument Avenue. The resolution, however, was not final. Recognizing their legal duty to listen public input and the CPC’s role in making decisions regarding the construction of the memorial site, council called for a July 17 public meeting at which citizens could express their positions. They then resolved that they would take those opinions into consideration, as well as the recommendations of the CPC, and make a final decision no later than July 31, 1995.

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54 Timothy Kaine, Letter to Edward Winks, 7-6-95.
55 Richmond City Council, Resolution No. 95-R190, “Concerning a Plan of Development of Monuments, 6-16-95.
As Richmond debated its past and present, national dialogue over race was impacted by electoral politics. Propelled to majorities in both houses of congress in November, 1994, the Republican party had fought back to power by rallying support for “family values,” states’ rights, and a balanced budget, and began 1995 working through the items on Newt Gingrinch’s “Contract with America.” As this agenda proceeded, the Republican majority pushed legislation that worked as wedge issues, driven between groups in the Democratic base. Calling for a return to family values and an end to affirmative action, these rhetorical and political strategies worked to divide a coalition of identity, labor, and social interest groups that were often at odds. Among African American voters, the appeal towards family values and, to a lesser degree, an end to affirmative action, resonated through the traditional political venues of African American churches and the civic associations built through them.

As the city council elected to place Ashe on Monument Avenue, the city’s African American newspaper, The Richmond Afro-American, responded to the rising visibility of family values politics and attacks on Affirmative Action. As a weekly, the Afro-American was slower but more nuanced in its responses to the days’ events than daily papers such as The Richmond Times-Dispatch, The Washington Post, and The Washington Times. However the Afro-American’s content demonstrates the forces structuring the discourse surrounding the Ashe memorial. In the edition for June 15 through June 21, the lead editorial ignored simmering debates over memorializing Ashe and, instead, celebrated Father’s Day with an editorial that began with the rhetorical question “Who needs Superman When we’ve got dear old Dad?”56

Next to the piece, editors used the question as a caption for a cartoon of an African American

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man, in suit and tie, with his hands on the shoulders of two children, with the explanatory
description “friend, provider, supporter, defender, protector….” Celebrating the father’s role
as leader of the family, these editorial comments reinforced traditional structures of the family
that, as Patricia Hill Collins notes, have proved fundamental to the enforcement of traditional
gender and sexual politics and notions of national identity. Drawing from the rhetorics of the
African American church, this appeal is squarely in line with conservative national politics
which, as Collins, Mark Anthony Neal, and Robin D. G. Kelley make clear, were part of larger
attacks on governmental programs through appeals for domestic- and self-sufficiency.

Two weeks later, The Afro-American ran a front page story describing the indefinite
status of the Ashe memorial. Largely sympathetic to the effort to place Ashe on Monument
Avenue, the article appeared alongside one examining efforts to revive commercial activity in
historically black Jackson Ward. On the commentary page, readers found an exchange
between two writers, Oscar J. Coffey, Jr. and Bernice Powell Jackson, who were concerned with
the present state and future of Affirmative Action policy. Coffey’s piece, “A Black
Republican Examines Affirmative Action Debate,” took up the top two thirds of the page. In it,
Coffey described the use of Affirmative Action as a wedge issue used by “unscrupulous White
political forces hoping to profit from the discontent among American middle and working class
Whites.” Critical of the basis and execution of the program, Coffey was also largely critical of

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58 Collins 2006.
60 Terry White, “Ashe Statue Still Without a Home,” The Richmond Afro-American, 6-28-95—7-5-95, A1.
63 Coffey Ibid.
the treatment of the program by whites who never questioned their own privilege. Writing in response, or at least conversation, Jackson argued for the importance of a program that enabled the rise of many African Americans, including Colin Powell and Clarence Thomas, despite Thomas’s attacks on those programs. What is clear from these examples is that the racial and cultural politics through which Ashe defined himself and was celebrated were not simply those of a national white elite but were being considered and debated by African Americans in Richmond. Furthermore, while Richmond’s African American community embraced some aspects of neoliberalism and multiculturalism, such as the centrality of the family, there was a wide degree of ambivalence over policies such as affirmative action.

While The Afro-American carefully considered the complexities of the issues, dailies which covered the news tended towards traditional expectations of editorially detached journalism. The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Richmond Times-Dispatch, traced the development of the monument dispute without endorsing either side. While The Post did speak favorably of and tacitly support the Monument Avenue site, the bulk of the overt editorializing came from columnists, such as The Times-Dispatch’s Michael Paul Williams, and from conservative papers, such as The Washington Times. As the city government weighed proposals and decided how to move forward, The Times ratcheted up criticism through its coverage and opinion pieces.

The day after city council decided in principle to place the Ashe memorial on Monument Avenue, The Times ran a front page story that, through careful language and selective use of quotations, described the choice as a revolutionary plan to create an unseemly revisionist depiction of the past. Describing the new statue in context, Andrew Cain wrote that “while Lee, Jackson and Stuart grace Monument Avenue astride their mounts, resplendent in uniform, sword
and battle boots, Mr. Ashe will be depicted in a sweat suit, with three books in his right hand and a tennis racket in his left.” The use of words such as “grace” and “resplendent” creates a positive depiction of the martial elements of the Confederate monuments. In this formula, the Ashe memorial’s casual and modern elements are, through juxtaposition, depicted as less masculine and fitting for civic celebration. Quoting many of the citizens, but not the council members, Cain presents an image of Richmond’s electorate pushing for the memorial to be placed in a predominantly African American neighborhood. This emphasis on the Ashe memorial’s deviation from previous themes of martial power and the depiction of a public that wanted Ashe to be placed in an African American neighborhood created an impression of incongruity. This theme of incongruity was continued the next day in an editorial, in which The Times equated the plans with negative stereotypes of Affirmative Action as “racial bean-counting” and motivated by spite and pettiness among African American leaders. They even suggested that this assumed spite and pettiness could tarnish Ashe’s legacy because “the juxtaposition of Mr. Ashe with Confederate war heroes is so incongruous as to make him look ridiculous.”

Two days later the position of The Washington Times’ editors was echoed and greatly expanded upon by their columnist Samuel Francis, whose editorial “Virginia’s Integrated Statuary” contains some of the most aggressive comments on record. Francis perpetuates the trend of equating the Ashe memorial with stereotypes of Affirmative Action and as motivated by spite and pettiness on the part of African American leaders. Deriding Richmond Times-Dispatch columnist Michael Paul Williams, who had long called for new statuary on Monument Avenue, Francis writes:

64 Andrew Cain, “Ashe to Join Lee and Jackson; Statue Approved for Richmond’s Monument Avenue,” WT, 6-20-95, A1.
65 “Arthur Ashe Joins the Confederacy?” Editorial, WT, 6-21-95, A20.
in the fantasies of racial obsessives like Mr. Williams, Virginia is the creation of blacks and now belongs to blacks, and therefore its old monuments and myths must be reconstructed with new meanings, if the old ones are allowed to survive at all. The Ashe statue is indeed a fitting symbol of the unpleasant truth that racial equality is no less a myth than the happy days of banjo-strumming slaves on Ole Massa’s plantation. And if Southern whites no longer run the plantation, they are now learning they can’t even keep the myths and monuments of the days when they did. How much longer will their new masters let them live in the suburbs?66

Francis links stereotypes of Affirmative Action to notions of white victimhood as a means to undermining without directly addressing the logics of the Ashe memorial. Repeating the arguments Coffey had criticized, Francis uses the Ashe Memorial as part of a larger attack on Affirmative Action, making broad assumptions about race and power, and positions himself and others as victims of new found African American power.

As the Monument Avenue plan went to the citizens of Richmond, a structure appeared within debates over race and memory. Proponents of the plan, largely found within city council, the business figures leading fundraising, and in center-left newspapers such as the Times-Dispatch, Washington Post, and New York Times, saw the plan as a difficult, yet necessary, step as Richmond moved past the stranglehold of spatial and symbolic racial segregation. The end product was not as important as the process, which the Post described eloquently in an editorial:

We doubt community healing comes quite so promptly or symbolically, but deciding what to put on display is undoubtedly part of how a community decides

66 Samuel Francis, “Virginia’s Integrated Statuary,” WT, 6-23-95, A23.
who and what it wants to be. Richmond’s work is far from over on this front, but these are the kinds of necessary battles everyone faces in dealing with the past.  Remembering the struggles of the Civil Rights era, supporters of the Monument Avenue plan saw the Ashe Memorial as a way to celebrate that work while moving the city symbolically past the ideologies that fueled segregation and anti-integration efforts.

National cultural and racial politics enabled this argument in part because Ashe was seen as achieving the highest ideals of masculinity in fatherhood and was a model of self-sufficiency. However, these same values ostensibly supported attacks on multiculturalism and programs such as Affirmative Action which were seen by some as anathema to the legacy Ashe left behind. Critics attacked the Monument Avenue plan through association with those programs or, more simply, argued for the preservation of symbolically segregated neighborhoods. These arguments were made through the inclusive language of multiculturalism in which all heritages are treated equally but are not subject to overt privilege. However, as Coffey points out in regards to Republican rhetoric, those arguments tacitly endorse the continuation of assumed white privilege.

The appropriateness of the Ashe memorial was questioned by and debated within African American communities in Richmond, though these discussions differed in logic and motivation from the arguments of conservative and Confederate heritage groups,. According to very informal polls conducted by the mayor’s office, eighty percent of African Americans were opposed to placing the Ashe memorial on Monument Avenue. Vocal criticism arose as soon as the city council announced its plans, with many citizens questioning the location as an inappropriate reminder of Ashe’s relationship with the Richmond of his youth and Richmond in

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67 “Race and Memory in Richmond,” Editorial, WP, 7-21-95, A20.
68 Mike Allen, “Mayor Offers Compromise; Ashe at Byrd Park, Monument Memorial,” RTD, 7-17-95, A1.
1995. Interestingly, the congregation at Fourth Baptist Church, where Mayor Young was pastor, were particularly against the plan. Among the most blunt and succinct was Arrelius D. Pleasant, who stated that “Arthur Ashe doesn’t belong with those racists. What Monument Avenue needs is a bulldozer.”

There were, of course, African Americans who were supportive of the monument. For example, Thelma Brooks noted that if Ashe were kept off Monument Avenue it would mean a subtle continuation of segregation and that “they’re still keeping you back, where they want to keep you.”

And, well aware of the symbolic power of statuary, Maurice Sydnor suggested that “they should move Bojangles there, too.”

As the public debate heated up, the city council began to waver. These varied positions among African Americans resonated with and, perhaps, influenced shifting positions and disagreement among Richmond’s African American political leadership. However, that political leadership was arguably also influenced by other populations, especially business leaders, the national community and the power structure within Richmond. Although Richmond’s city council was almost wholly African American and was headed by an African American mayor, Leonidas Young, who was also the pastor of a large Baptist congregation, the city’s business establishment was predominantly white and somewhat more conservative. The business community and the larger national community provided the impetus for the political leadership to consider the reputation of the city and how a nasty public fight might influence it. Young, in particular, wanted to avoid a costly and painful public dispute. On the eve of the planned public hearings, he announced that he would prefer the original plan of renaming The Boulevard and placing the Ashe memorial in Byrd Park. In announcing this plan, Young suggested that he had “been very clear about [his] reluctance to use Arthur’s statue on Monument Avenue” but that he

69 Allen Ibid.
70 Allen Ibid.
71 Allen Ibid.
was “firm in [his] belief that we have to do something immediately about Monument Avenue. African Americans feel that all racial barriers have not been broken down in the city, and Monument Avenue is definitely representative of those.”72 Although he never directly stated why he was opposed to the Ashe memorial on Monument Avenue, Young did hint that he pushed for his alternative proposal because the national coverage of the Ashe imbroglio had earned Richmonders a reputation as “a bunch of yokels who are getting ready to fight each other over the Civil War.”73

Young was clearly concerned with public perception of the state and the council of which he was the head. Discussing the public hearing, he called for a quick decision because “Virginia has been cast in a very negative light over this issue, and we don’t feel it’s going to be good from a PR perspective any longer. Furthermore, we would like for the heaviest coverage to be on the decision, more so than on any of the comments that are made. I don’t want negative comments to reflect Virginia.”74 Alongside pressures from within the city and concerns for the city and state’s national reputations, the city government also had to consider the power structures within the state. Although Republican governor George Allen did not get involved in what was a city affair, his predecessor, Doug Wilder, continued to use his considerable influence and access to the media to influence the process. Wilder had promoted the statue for some time and, now out of office, he frequently used his weekly radio and television programs to advocate for it. The day of Young’s open public hearing, Wilder was interviewed on ABC’s Good Morning America live from Monument Avenue, where he taped his local radio program. Wilder carefully expressed his position by dismissing the salient features of the debate and diluting it down to whether or not Ashe should be honored by Richmond. On Good Morning America he

72 Allen Ibid.
73 Allen Ibid.
74 Allen Ibid.
questioned arguments for racial justice from both sides, stating that “some say ‘oh, race isn’t involved.’ I tell you, it’s involved on both sides, and we need to get away from that.” By disavowing the importance of race, Wilder was able to use his wide reach in national and regional media outlets to promote a conciliatory position that argued for the Ashe memorial because of Ashe’s individual importance.75

These disagreements were funneled into the July 17 public hearings. As it happened, Tony Horwitz’s long journey across the landscapes of Civil War memory brought him to Richmond in July, 1995, and his brief account of the city council’s public hearing concisely describes the spectacle of a five hour town hall-style meeting at which the city council sat facing 400 of their constituents. With Young’s recent proposal for a compromise, the memorial’s future uncertain, 140 residents signed up to make statements. As the participants and spectators filed into City Hall they were greeted by an African American protester who held “a sign saying ‘White Racism Lives’ and a red flag tied around his leg representing ‘blood from centuries of oppression.’”76 Inside, the crowd of 400 sat facing council, “ranging from blacks in African dashikis to whites in blue jeans and rebel flag ties.”77 The scene gave way, however, to a largely “thoughtful discourse on public art, the potency of historic symbols, racial healing, and affirmative action.”78 As the city council listened, speaker after speaker stood up and presented arguments that fell along the lines of those quoted above.79 Horwitz noted the ambivalence among white and African American speakers, and recognized that the only speaker to truly embrace racial segregation was Wayne Byrd, of the Heritage Preservation Society, who

75 Allen Ibid.
76 Horwitz 249.
77 Horwitz Ibid.
78 Horwitz Ibid.
79 Peter Baker, “Richmond to Honor Ashe Alongside Rebel Heroes; City was Split over Memorial to Tennis Great,” WP, 7-18-95, A1. Horwitz 1998, pages 249-52.
reiterated earlier calls for a monument to African American Confederate soldiers. “In effect,” Horwitz writes, “the Heritage Preservation Association, one of America’s most politically incorrect groups, was trying to claim politically correct motives while making a gesture that was precisely the opposite. By honoring blacks who took up arms in defense of their white masters, the group had found a sly way to disassociate the Cause from slavery.”

However, approximately half of the commentators spoke in favor of the Monument Avenue site, while the other half dissented for a variety of reasons. At the end of the meeting, the council voted to place the Ashe memorial on Monument Avenue. Of the seven members of the council, six voted yes and one abstained. Reflecting on the meeting and commenting on his own change in positions, Young suggested that meeting was Richmond’s “finest hour … because it shows that we have grown. It is painful to grow, but if you do not grow, if you do not experience the pain, you will not become everything you can become.”

The city council set July 10, 1996, the date that would have been Ashe’s fifty-third birthday, as the date for the unveiling of the monument.

For the next five and half months the construction of the statue and the erection of monument went forth with only a few minor problems. In September, as the local Mosque of the Nation of Islam reached out to Richmond’s African Community, asking for men to make the short trip up the highway to take part in the Million Man March, the Ku Klux Klan quietly tried to recruit disaffected Richmonders. Late one night they leafleted the quiet streets surrounding Monument Avenue. Their actions were roundly criticized in the local press, a sign that the overtly white supremacist politics of previous generations had passed. The Ashe memorial was finally coming to completion and the heated debates seemed to be something the city had

80 Horwitz, 251.
81 Baker Ibid.
82 Maishah Asante, “‘Creatures of the Night’ Target Ashe with Hate Fliers,” The Richmond Afro-American, 8-31-95 -- 9-6-95, A1.
overcome. However, there was still deep resistance and, as the calendars turned, the memorial faced its last, greatest challenge.

Family Wishes and Aesthetics

Since her husband’s death, Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe had made almost no public appearances or comments regarding the heated debates that surrounded his legacy. Ashe’s brother Johnnie had represented the family in the proceedings and he had largely supported the project. However, on January 1, 1996, the *Times-Dispatch* ran an open letter to the City of Richmond in which Moutoussamy-Ashe asked the city to scrap the Monument Avenue plans in favor of reinvigorating the long dormant project of the African American sports hall of fame. In no uncertain terms she felt that the hall of fame was the appropriate venue to honor Ashe and what she saw as his legacy and hopes for Richmond. She also clearly spoke out against the Monument Avenue memorial in very direct and telling language that cuts to the heart of the entire debate:

I am not in agreement with the decision to place the “Arthur Ashe monument” on Monument Avenue. My reasons are not politically driven; nor are they artistically or racially motivated. I have always felt that in all this controversy, the spirit that Arthur gave to Richmond has been overlooked. I am afraid that a statue of Arthur Ashe on Monument Avenue honors Richmond, Virginia, more than it does its son, his legacy, or his life’s work.\(^3\)

Moutoussamy-Ashe’s very forthright articulation and accusation regarding the true motives of the Ashe memorial called into question the entire debate. Her position as a long quiet widow and her direct questioning enabled her to push forward her goal of reinvigorating the campaign for the sports hall of fame. And, by bringing the monument into question, she opened the door for yet another round of debates and helped the entry of a well organized and well funded group that called itself Citizens for Excellence in Public Art (CEPA).

On December 14 of the previous year CEPA had quietly submitted a petition to the City Council asking that plans for the Ashe memorial be delayed until an international competition could be held to find a different statue. Led by local gallery owner Beverly Reynolds, CEPA’s members included local art collectors and patrons along with a number of prominent business leaders such as the Ethyl Corporation’s Chairman Bruce Gottwald and Crestar CEO Richard Tilghman. It should be noted that Tilghman also headed Richmond Renaissance, the group whose late 1994 plans for a national Civil War and Emancipation Museum was dropped in the face of severe criticism. With its deep pockets, CEPA was able to start begin raising the funds to host the competition they called for. Arguing that DiPasquale’s statue was lifeless, simplistic and dull, CEPA did not argue against the Monument Avenue site; rather they wanted a different statue. However, despite their strong financial situation, they were unable to influence the city council until Moutoussamy-Ashe’s letter. After her letter, Young encouraged the city council to reconsider the whole process and to look into the prospects of the hall of fame. By January 4, the city planning commission had decided to halt plans and to wait six months to make a decision while CEPA worked towards a competition and while Moutoussamy-Ashe and her associates worked on the proposed Hall of Fame. Young used this cessation to push through a new plan: the DiPasquale statue would be unveiled on Monument Avenue as planned. However,

it would remain there only until the Hall of Fame opened and a new statue was found through CEPA’s competition. At that point, Di Pasquale’s statue would be moved to the Hall of Fame and the new statue would take its place.85

This decision set off a very fiery though brief set of debates in which concerned parties rearticulated their position. In at least two cases, previously stated positions were nuanced by the changes brought on by Moutoussamy-Ashe’s letter and the new debates. Wilder quickly entered into the discussion and made clear that despite his previous work for the hall of fame, he felt that without Ashe’s personal involvement “it would not work” and that he continued to support placing the statue on Monument Avenue.86 In this case, though he was out of office, Wilder used his political influence and took a position of steadfastness that allowed him to question others motivations and their proposals. Similar, the editors of The Washington Times returned to the fray and argued against not only the Monument Avenue memorial but also the hall of fame. Reapplying their previous neoliberal logic, the editors argued that a hall of fame for African Americans was inappropriate because race was a thing of the past and figures should be remembered for the athletic achievements, not their race. They ended by saying that “Arthur Ashe should not be remembered as a black champion any more than Babe Ruth should be remembered as a white champion. In the end, they are all just champions.”87 For both Wilder and the editors of The Washington Times, the ideal memorial is one that incorporates representative African Americans into existing memorial complexes. And, as we have seen throughout, both parties were willing to argue against the primacy of race. However, for Wilder, the bridging of time periods, the linking of Civil War and civil rights, was a means to altering the

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historical perspective of race and race relations. Contrarily, throughout the debate the editors of *The Washington Times* argued that historical specificity mattered and that Ashe did not belong on Monument Avenue was a center for the Civil War.

These arguments swirled as the city government moved slowly forward. On January second, the CPC agreed to give CEPA sixty days to develop a proposal. Mayor Young called the decision an important step forward for the city.  On February 26, the city council agreed to let CPC and CEPA proceed. Citing the weariness of the city, Mayor Young called for a quick, binding resolution, stating that the issue “is not something we wish to have resurface.” However, their decision did throw into doubt the future of the hall of fame. One member, Shirley Harvey, questioned the city’s proposed donation, city manager Bobb had suggested city council contribute one million dollars to the estimated twenty million dollar budget for building the museum, and the $87,500 salary of the museum’s director Harrison B. Wilson III. However, the city government had given CEPA and the Ashe family time to develop financial plans and progress continued. In March CEPA presented their plans to the CPC, which had reasserted control over the process. CEPA estimated that the movement of the Di Pasquale statue, the international competition, and the commissioning of a new statue would cost between $500,000 and one million dollars. When they addressed the CPC on March 4, 1996, CEPA had raised over $200,000 and felt confident that they could collect the rest through private donations.

However, although they had ceded to the CPC as the body which would listen to CEPA’s proposals, city council clearly understood that it had the power to act or not act on proposals the planning commission advanced. At the March 11 meeting, city council decided that, perhaps, plans to replace Di Pasquale’s statue with a separate Ashe memorial was too costly and

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redundant. There is also the potential that the majority-African American council saw this as an opportunity to make a truly revolutionary change to Monument Avenue. Recognizing that if the CPC’s plans went ahead the Richmond would have four monuments to Ashe, the athletic center, the sports hall of fame, Di Pasquale’s statue, and the new Monument Avenue memorial, the city council called for plans to replace Di Pasquale’s statue with a monument to African American heroes in general. The largest critic of the CPC-CEPA proposal, Anthony Jones, also criticized the fact that CEPA’s membership of twenty-nine included only one African American.\textsuperscript{90} Two weeks later, city council agreed that if CEPA would continue they would need to include more African American voices and develop a memorial to the breadth of African American history within Richmond and Virginia. Admitting that they did not doubt CEPA’s good intentions, Council member Larry Chavis and Mayor Young called their membership “the tip of the iceberg, especially in the African-American community. The appearance of your group is that it’s not inclusive.”\textsuperscript{91} Council then agreed that if the $20 million could not be raised for the hall of fame, Di Pasquale’s statue would remain on Monument Avenue.

CEPA members quickly responded, but their efforts did not go far. Edward J. Willis III filed suit in Richmond Circuit Court that city council had illegally overstepped jurisdiction that more appropriately belonged to the CPC and the Commission of Architectural Review.\textsuperscript{92} That strategy failed, as city council had a sound legal basis for their work and had investigated the legality of their actions prior to acting upon them. And, as the door slammed shut on their efforts, Reynolds wrote a final opinion piece in the \textit{Richmond Times-Dispatch} in which she defended her group’s altruistic efforts and deflected criticisms of the racial make up of their

\textsuperscript{92} Gordon Hickey, “Ashe Statue Fight Moves to Court; Suit Contends Council Overstepped its Role,” \textit{RTD}, 3-28-96, B3.
board. Reynolds alleged that CEPA had tried to work with Richmond’s African American leadership but was rebuffed.  As Richmond’s philanthropic and arts community’s efforts were cut off, there was a last, final call for color-blind celebration through aesthetic unity. And, as Spring became Summer, fundraising plans for the hall of fame withered away and pledge monies were not collected. With the decline of these efforts, Richmond was left, where it had begun, one year prior, with Di Pasquale’s statue poised to be placed on Monument Avenue.

Arthur Ashe Comes Home

On July 10 the Ashe memorial was unveiled before 2,000 spectators evenly divided between African Americans and whites, adults and children. The Boys Choir of Harlem sang “Change,” “Heroes,” and “Amazing Grace.” A dozen figures who had played a role in Ashe’s life and the struggle for the Monument spoke, among them members of Ashe’s Virginia Heroes foundation and local politicians who had worked hard for the Monument Avenue site such as the new Vice Mayor, Viola Baskerville, the new mayor, Larry Chavis, and City manger Robert Bobb. Ashe’s brother Johnnie Ashe and his nieces La Chandra Harris and Luchia Ashe gave brief, tear-choked remarks. Surprisingly absent were Moutoussamy-Ashe and her and Ashe’s daughter Camera. Also absent were former mayor Leonidas Young, whose term had just ended, and Virginia governor George Allen. Despite these absences, the speakers extolled the virtues Ashe epitomized and called the day a triumph for the city of Richmond. But throughout the day,

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94 Gordon Hickey, “Arthur Ashe and the Quest for Cash; Numerous Projects are Trying to Raise Money in the Name of the City Native,” RTD, 6-16-96, B1.
95 See appendices 18 through 22 for images of the Ashe Memorial.
the unveiling saw the reiteration of the same debates that had roared with ferocity over the past year and throughout the history of Monument Avenue.\(^{96}\)

From the speaker’s platform, Doug Wilder maintained his central role in the debates and the spectacle surrounding the Ashe memorial. From this privileged vantage point he continued to speak of the specialness of Ashe and the importance of the monument in honoring Richmond. Commenting on the day’s events, Wilder said that “today is not just any day in Richmond. Monument Avenue is now an avenue for all people.”\(^{97}\) As he had for months and years, Wilder argued for a monument that honored an exemplary man as a means to uplifting and bringing together a community. He distanced concerns of race or equality in a grand spectacle of neoliberal individualism as community exemplification; thereby Wilder continued his centralized calls for a deracialized memory that, by linking Civil War and civil rights, reaffirmed the racial divisions that define historical periods.

While Wilder stayed at the center of the spectacle of the unveiling, Confederate heritage groups continued to agitate from the margins. Placards and signs reading “STATUE LOCATION A HATE CRIME,” “HERITAGE DESECRATION IS NOT A CIVIL RIGHT,” and “CULTURAL BIGOTS DESTROY SOUTHERN HERITAGE” waved on the outside of the crowds while some attendees willfully vocalized their dislike of the monument’s location.\(^{98}\)

While described as only a fraction of the crowd, these protestors and their marginal location at the unveiling makes clear the salience and deep entrenchment of notions of white victimhood

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\(^{97}\) Hickey 7-11-96.

\(^{98}\) Williams Ibid.
and the appropriation of rhetorics associated with Civil Rights movements by racially tainted Confederate heritage groups.

However, newspaper accounts of the unveiling and most academic descriptions of the Ashe memorial pass over these protests and welcome Ashe’s presence as an important step forward for Richmond. Savage’s assertion that it points to the future for memory in the South is indicative of the larger descriptions. But the unveiling did not simply end these debates. Rather, it became the physical embodiment of a debate that had raged for over a year and that was the manifestation of memory and memorials that went back to the original development of the Lee Monument in the 1880s and 1890s. And when the day ended and the crowds went home, the debates did not cease. A few weeks later, a new series of salvos were fired in the opinion pages of The Washington Post as Denis O’Brien and Richard Hines continued the same arguments, over and again.

That the point was beyond debate, that O’Brien and Hines were arguing over the construction of an already unveiled monument, speaks to the deep roots and wide reach of the logics and ideologies that fracture and crack at moments of high tension. Like a tectonic fault, Monument Avenue has, since its inception, continued to lie dormant only periodically erupting into shaking and reverberating debates over race, memory, and contemporary identity. These debates, as we have seen, reflect the realities of shifting constructions of racial identities and hierarchies and community belonging. However, as this study demonstrates, while racial barriers to full political and cultural citizenship fall, new structures arise within public discourse and public memory that reinscribe the values that have historically been used to create systems

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99 Savage, 212.
of racial exclusion. The Ashe memorial, the debates that encircled it, and long histories of political struggle that enabled it, remind us that the racial horrors of the past have loosened their grips on our present. However, the imprints of slavery and Jim Crow segregation still define the contours of our communities and their imagined pasts. Savage reminds us that the Ashe memorial is a shrine to exactly the figure Lee, Jackson, and Davis fought against: a well spoken, educated, principled African American man who achieved success by taking racism head on.

The Ashe memorial is a useful symbol of a man whose struggles to define himself despite the challenges of racism and global systems of oppression associated with gender and disease. And, as a role model, Ashe’s very public struggles are indicative of the emotional, psychological, and spiritual threats that all African Americans face. However, Ashe stands as a role model largely because of the conservative values he evoked in facing those challenges; the family, heteronormativity, and self-sufficiency become the standards of success.

Symbolic celebrations of idealized role models only serve to distance the traumas that lay at the heart of our collective memories and our communities. Richmond and Virginia have made strides, larger strides than almost any other state, to address the realities of their racist past. Recent efforts to erect a new, social history informed museums in Richmond and Fredericksburg, the APVA and Colonial Williamsburg’s new found commitment to Native American history and heritage, and the Virginia General Assembly’s recent symbolic apology for slavery are all crucial indicators that this bellweather state has begun to celebrate a communal identity which prevents inequality based on strict racial exclusion.101 As a community, we need to be vigilant in our examination of these new imaginations, and examine the values espoused. The Ashe memorial is, sadly, indicative of the permanence of the socially conservative values which undergirded

white supremacist rule and which are fundamental to the degradation of civil liberties and
economic mobility under neoliberalism. While the racial inclusiveness it points to is
commendable, the values it reinscribes run contrary to realization of a community that has
overcome its own troubled past. While a striking example of the challenges that face African
American men, Ashe, and the values attached to him, only serve to further the divisiveness of
neoliberalism.
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Appendix: The Memorials of Monument Avenue

Image 1 The Lee Monument
Image 2 The Lee Monument and Lee Circle
Image 3 The Stuart Monument
Image 4 The Stuart Monument, Detail of Figure
Image 5 The Davis Monument
Image 6 The Davis Monument and Davis Circle
Image 7 The Davis Monument, Detail of Figure
Image 8 The Davis Monument, Detail of Inscription
Image 9 The Jackson Monument and Jackson Circle
Image 10 The Jackson Monument, Detail of Figure
Image 11 The Maury Monument
Image 12 The Maury Monument and Maury Circle
Image 13 The Maury Monument, Detail of Figure
Image 14 The Maury Monument, Detail of Globe
Image 16 “Confederate” Cannon on Monument Avenue, Front
Image 17 “Confederate” Cannon on Monument Avenue, Side
Image 18 Model of Ashe Memorial
Image 19 Model of Ashe Memorial, Detail of Face
Image 20 The Ashe Memorial
Image 21 The Ashe Memorial, Reverse
Image 22 The Ashe Memorial, Detail of Figures

All Photographs Taken by the Author.
Image 1: The Lee Monument
Image 2: The Lee Monument and Lee Circle
Image 3: The Stuart Monument
Image 4: The Stuart Monument, Detail of Figure
Image 5: The Davis Monument
Image 6: The Davis Monument and Davis Circle
JEFFERSON DAVIS

EXONENT OF
CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES

DEFENDER OF
THE RIGHTS OF STATES

CRESCIT OCCULTO VELUT
ARBOR AEO FAMA

Image 8: The Davis Monument, Detail Inscription
Image 9: The Jackson Monument and Jackson Circle
Image 10: The Jackson Monument, Detail of Figure
Image 12: The Maury Monument and Maury Circle
Image 14: The Maury Monument, Detail of Globe
Image 15: “Confederate” Cannon on Monument Avenue, Front
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Image 17: Model of Ashe Memorial
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Image 21: The Ashe Memorial, Detail of Figures