

Reckoning with History

Confederate Monuments in American Cities

Practitioner Guide

CHRISTOPHER ROBICHAUD, JORRIT DE JONG, KIMBERLYN LEARY, AND GAYLEN MOORE

Overview

A case study is a story about how a person or group of people faced and dealt with challenges or opportunities. It is based on desk research and interviews with key actors but does not provide analysis or conclusions. Written from the perspective of the protagonist(s), it is designed to raise questions and generate discussion about the issues they faced. Cases are meant to help participants develop analytic reasoning, listening, and judgment skills to strengthen their decision-making ability in other contexts.

A case-based conversation is a way to anchor a conceptual discussion to concrete examples. It can bring a case to life and allow participants to place themselves in the shoes of the case protagonist(s), while also allowing a variety of perspectives to surface. This guide is designed to help you lead a conversation about the case, “Reckoning with History: Confederate Monuments in American Cities.”

Role of a Facilitator

The facilitator leads a conversation with a clear beginning and end, ensures that everyone is heard, and keeps the group focused. The conversation can be broken into three distinct segments: exploring the case, applying the central questions of the case to your organization’s challenges, and formulating takeaway lessons. Some facilitation tips and tricks to keep in mind are below.

BEFORE the discussion

Make sure everyone takes the time to read the case. Participants have the option to fill out the attached worksheet to prepare themselves for the case discussion. If you choose to use the worksheet, make sure you bring enough printouts for all. When setting up the room, think about situating participants where they can see you and each other. Designate a notetaker as well as a place where you can take notes on a flipchart or white board. Plan for at least sixty to seventy-five minutes to discuss the case and takeaways and have a clock in the room and/or an assigned timekeeper. Mention that you may interrupt participants in the interest of progressing the conversation.

DURING the discussion

Encourage participants to debate and share opinions. State very clearly that there is no right or wrong “answer” to the case—cases are written so that reasonable people can disagree and debate different ideas and approaches. Be careful not to allow yourself or others to dominate the discussion. If the

conversation is getting heated or bogged down on a particular issue, consider allowing participants to talk in pairs for a few minutes before returning to a full group discussion. Do not worry about reaching consensus, just make the most of this opportunity to practice thinking and learning together!

Case Synopsis

When the Reverend Clementa Pinckney and eight worshipers were massacred during Bible study at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015, a widely circulated photograph showed Dylann Roof, the white supremacist who carried out the attack, posing proudly with a Confederate flag. Many Americans responded with calls for the removal of Confederate symbols and monuments in public places. As mayors and city governments took steps to remove, contextualize, or relocate these relics, factions mobilized to defend them as essential markers of American history and heritage. In August 2017, white supremacists and other right-wing extremists gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia, where city council had recently voted to remove a monument to Robert E. Lee. Clashes between participants in the “Unite the Right” rally and counter-protesters quickly turned violent and then deadly, when a neo-Nazi drove his car into a crowd of people, killing counter-protester Heather Heyer. With white nationalists threatening to descend on other cities, mayors scrambled to respond.

This case study follows the stories of mayors in three cities—Baltimore, Maryland; Lexington, Kentucky; and Charleston, South Carolina—as they worked to acknowledge and address the legacy of violence, dehumanization, and injustice represented by the Confederate monuments in their public parks and plazas. They faced varying degrees of public pressure as well as practical and legal obstacles as they grappled with these objects’ moral implications.

The case is designed to help mayors, city leaders, other public executives, and students of public policy and public management think through adaptive leadership challenges with highly sensitive moral dimensions.

Conversation Plan

To prepare for discussions of this case, consider using and adapting these [“Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or High-Stakes Topics”](#) from the University of Michigan’s Center for Research on Learning and Teaching.

For users of this case who find the material and/or discussion distressing (especially those who identify as Black), supportive guidance and resources are available at these links:

- [“What Is Racial Trauma and How to Practice Radical Self-Care”](#) by Dr. Charles Muorah¹
- [“The Psychology of Radical Healing”](#) by the Psychology of Radical Healing Collective²
- [Family-Care, Community-Care and Self-Care Tool Kit: Healing in the Face of Cultural Trauma](#) by the Community Healing Network and the Association of Black Psychologists, Inc.³

For users of this case looking to understand what it means to be anti-racist and work to dismantle racist systems (especially those who identify as white) this [compendium of resources](#) organized by

Princeton doctoral students Anna Stamborski, Nikki Zimmerman, and Bailie Gregory links to a wide variety of materials. See also *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi.⁴

For additional historical and contemporary context, see:

- *Stamped from the Beginning* by Ibram X. Kendi
- [Data and background on the history of Confederate monuments in America from the Southern Poverty Law Center](#)⁵

Part 1: Exploring the Case (20–30 minutes)

The goal of this part of the conversation is to review the case from the point of view of the people involved. Suggested questions:

- *What were the advantages and disadvantages of Mayor Tecklenburg’s idea to use Calhoun’s own language on the plaque?*
- *What should have been his key considerations as he moved to address Calhoun and other Confederate monuments?*
- *What alternatives would you have considered in Tecklenburg’s place?*

Part 2a: Diagnosing Moral Leadership Challenges (20–30 minutes)

This part of the discussion allows participants to analyze Tecklenburg’s decision as a moral leadership problem. Suggested questions:

- *What role did Tecklenburg’s personal beliefs and morality play in his decision-making?*
- *What norms, rules, or expectations associated with his role as mayor constrained his actions?*
- *What larger cultural, social, and political forces in the community were at play in his decision?*
- *How well aligned were these three realms of his responsibility?*
- *How did he manage any misalignments?*

Part 2b: Application (20 minutes)

If time allows, participants may break into groups to apply the concepts discussed to their own moral leadership challenges, repurposing the questions posed in part 2a.

Part 3: Formulating Lessons (15–20 minutes)

This part of the conversation focuses on the lessons of the case that participants will continue to reflect on and apply to moral leadership challenges in their work. Some sample, high-level takeaways to review after a productive discussion:

- Sometimes public leaders facing a moral issue feel compelled to risk operating outside of the usual scope of their authority.
- Sometimes a public leader’s perceived scope of authority is significantly smaller than the actual scope.
- Public leaders must seek a path that
 - aligns their **personal morality** with the expectations and constraints associated with their **role**; and
 - affirms shared values within their **community**.

Endnotes

¹ Charles Muorah, "What Is Racial Trauma and How to Practice Radical Self-Care" Expert Voices (blog), Council for Relationships, June 18, 2020, <https://councilforrelationships.org/racial-trauma-mind-body-connection-treatment-recovery-wellness/>.

² Helen A. Neville, Hector Y. Adames, Nayeli Y. Chavez-Duenas, Grace A. Chen, Bryana H. French, Jioni A. Lewis, and Della V. Mosley, The Psychology of Radical Healing Collective, "The Psychology of Radical Healing," *Psychology Today*, March 5, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/healing-through-social-justice/201903/the-psychology-radical-healing>.

³ Community Healing Network, "Family-Care, Community-Care and Self-Care Tool Kit: Healing in the Face of Cultural Trauma," July 2016, <https://www.abpsi.org/pdf/FamilyCommunitySelfCareToolKit.pdf>.

⁴ Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019).

⁵ Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2016); "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy," Southern Poverty Law Center, February 1, 2019, accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>.