Critical Catalyst: The Origins of Twenty-first-Century Confederate Symbolism Removal

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"The hateful, racist associations with [the Confederate flag]

suddenly seemed obvious to almost everyone."[1]

[1] Herb Frazier, Bernard Edward Powers Jr., and Marjory Wentworth, *We Are Charleston: Tragedy and Triumph at Mother Emanuel* (Nashville, Tennessee: W Publishing Group, 2016), 33.

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
BLM	Black Lives Matter
CCC	Council of Conservative Citizens
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
LMAs	Ladies Memorial Associations
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
RRCE	Race-Related Crisis Event
SCV	Sons of Confederate Veterans
SPLC	Southern Poverty Law Center
UDC	United Daughters of the Confederacy

Introduction

On June 17th, 2015, a white supremacist named Dylann Roof shot and killed nine Black Americans in the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, also known as Mother Emanuel, in Charleston, South Carolina. Roof had been photographed with the Confederate Flag. It was uncovered that he had been posting on white supremacist and alt-right platforms.[2] Roof's link to Confederate ideology and Confederate symbols, most prevalent in the Southern United States, caused the American people to reflect on the dangers of the remnants of the Confederacy and its lasting memory and Southern heritage.

Public symbols of the Confederacy include the Confederate flag, statues, parks, roadways, army bases, and schools. They are named for men who had links to the Confederacy.[3] In 2024, countless reminders of the Civil War (1861-1865) from the Confederate side remain. Southern women felt strongly connected to the Confederacy and what it stood for after having lost the Civil War. These Southern women were part of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). This organization existed to ensure the Southern Confederate legacy would live on and influence future generations. The UDC not only reminded the Southern citizens of what their family and friends had fought for but also showed them by erecting monuments dedicated to the Confederacy and its heroes, such as Robert E. Lee, the commander of the Confederate States army, and Jefferson Davis, the first and last president of the Confederate States of America.[4]

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[2] Margaret Franz, "'The South Shall Rise Again.' Setting the Lost Cause Myth in Future Tense in Dylann Roof's Manifesto," in *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, ed. Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 9; Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn, "Introduction. Was Blind But Now I See," in *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, ed. Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 1.
[3] Seth Levi et al., "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy (Third Edition)" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2022), 9.
[4] Ibid., 36.

The mass shooting in 2015 was the first of three significant events that perpetuated the removal of Confederate symbols, such as Confederate statues, in the United States. Together with the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville on August 11th and 12th, 2017, and the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on May 25th, 2020, the AME shooting led to a rise in white supremacist and alt-right action and the further rise of Black Lives Matter (BLM). This thesis questions whether the shooting in 2015 was a catalyst for a massive wave of rebellions, rallies, and riots. Furthermore, the events that took place in 2015, 2017, and 2020 have influenced public attitudes and policy changes, leading to a reevaluation of Confederate symbols in the twenty-first century. This results in this topic, the 2015 Mother Emanuel shooting, relevant as new developments unfold.

This work researches the influence of the Mother Emanuel shooting on the Southern cultural landscape, more specifically, the Confederate cultural landscape that dominates the South. This work answers the question: "How did the 2015 Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church shooting in Charleston lead to a US Southern-wide removal of Confederate symbols and alter the Southern cultural landscape?" This thesis also answers the following sub-questions to understand why *this* event led to the first wave of mass removal of Confederate symbols: What was Roof's motivation for the shooting? How did the US public react to the shooting? What were the consequences of the shooting? Was the shooting *a* catalyst or *the* catalyst of the Southern-wide Confederate symbol removal?

The shock of the shooting at Mother Emanuel led to many strong reactions from citizens and scholars. As rhetoric scholars, Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn write in the introduction of their 2020 book *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings*:

> [Dylann Roof] left nine dead. Another mass killing in America. Another shooting. Another nine gun deaths. Another race-based murder. Another hate crime. Another lynching. Another attack

> on religion, this time on Christians. And another community traumatized. It was all of these things, of course, and as such joined what is all too rapidly becoming an American tradition.[5]

A quick Google search reveals that 9.916 people were killed by firearms in 2015, according to FBI statistics.[6] O'Rourke and Lehn argue that the aftermath of the Charleston shooting was different from other mass shootings due to the arguments and controversies that arose and the "unpredictable changes in public policy and practice."[7] While this thesis does not focus on the current gun laws within the United States, it should be observed that no fundamental changes took place after the shooting at Mother Emanuel. New Zealand's then-prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, banned all types of semi-automatic weapons and assault rifles after the shooting in Christchurch.[8] In Christchurch, New Zealand, a man opened fire in a mosque in 2019. The shooter, Brenton Tarrant, said Roof had been an inspiration to do this.[9]

In the aftermath of the shooting, several states, including South Carolina, altered their public policy and reevaluated the appropriateness of Confederate symbols on public grounds. As will be seen throughout this thesis, multiple groups were arguing for the significance of the symbols of Southern heritage, and groups arguing for their removal and linking the symbols to Black American oppression and racial inequality. The discourse surrounding Confederate symbols and their place in the South in 2015 was altered.

While the United States did not significantly alter gun laws, action was undertaken by officials such as Governor of South Carolina Nikki Haley and Mayor of New Orleans Mitch Landrieu to change how prevalent Confederate symbols were in public spaces. After Roof's

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[5] O'Rourke and Lehn, "Introduction," 2.
[6] "Expanded Homicide Data Table 8," FBI, accessed March 14, 2024, https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/tables/expanded_homicide_data_table_8_murder_victims_by_weapon_2011-2015.xls.
[7] O'Rourke and Lehn, "Introduction," 3.
[8] "Christchurch Shootings: New Zealand to Ban Military Style Weapons," *BBC News*, March 21, 2019, sec. Asia, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47648549.
[9] Jane Coaston, "The New Zealand Shooter's Manifesto Shows How White Nationalist Rhetoric Spreads," Vox, March 15, 2019, https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/3/15/18267163/new-zealand-shooting-christchurch-white-nationalism-racism-language.

online activities were discovered, the existence and presence on public grounds of Confederate heritage in the twenty-first century was questioned once again. For whom were these symbols still present in 2015? Historian Karen L. Cox argues in her 2021 book *No Common Ground* that "[s]ince June 2015, debates over Confederate monuments have come to symbolize competing visions not only of the South but also of the nation."[10] This thesis examines the competing visions when discussing the removal of the Confederate statues and flag in the Southern United States.

After the Charleston shooting, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley called for the South Carolinian General Assembly to come together to discuss the removal of the Confederate flag, not only from state grounds but also from public display. No action was undertaken for the Confederate statues.[11] There were also discussions about what to do with the Confederate Flag in Alabama and Mississippi.[12] In New Orleans, Louisiana, Mayor Mitch Landrieu called for a vote for the removal of the four Confederate statues that still dominated the landscape in 2015.[13] In 2017, they were removed, sparking controversy in the state, as well as in the other Southern states. This signaled that the removal of Confederate symbols would not be easy and instead would cause riots and rebellions.

Specific terms and concepts, such as (cultural) heritage and (cultural) memory, will be repeated throughout this thesis. The term "heritage" is used to denote what society (or a part of it) considers to represent their past. Societies attach immense value to objects and ideas representing their heritage. Heritage scholar Yahaya Ahmad explains that there is no standardized or streamlined definition of cultural heritage and that it constantly evolves. On

[10] Karen L. Cox, *No Common Ground. Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice* (University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 151.
[11] Vickie T. Carnegie, *Government Responsiveness in Race-Related Crisis Events*, Democratic Dilemmas and Policy Responsiveness (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2023), 7.
[12] Ibid., 61, 66.
[13] Mitch Landrieu, *In the Shadow of Statues. A White Southerner Confronts History* (Penguin Books, 2019), 1, 9; In this thesis, Confederate statues and Confederate monuments will be used interchangeably. These terms refer to either stone or metal statues, sometimes on a pedestal.

top of this, the scope of heritage is interpreted or defined differently worldwide. According to Ahmad, the world agrees that cultural heritage includes tangible and intangible aspects.[14] In the case of Confederate heritage, the Lost Cause myth and Confederate symbols are examples of intangible and tangible heritage, respectively. The Lost Cause myth is also seen as a part of cultural memory. Cultural historian Jan Assmann describes cultural memory as the following: "[c]ultural memory is a form of collective memory, in the sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is, cultural, identity."[15] In the same book, cultural memory scholar Astrid Erll writes that cultural memory in the broader sense of history versus memory is not about *how* it is remembered but rather *what* is being remembered.[16]

Other concepts that will be used as well are the following: white supremacist and alt-right. After finding his online presence, the media almost immediately labeled the Charleston church shooter, Dylann Roof, as a white supremacist. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) defines white supremacists, also known as white nationalists or white separatists, as follows: "focusing on the alleged inferiority of nonwhite persons. Their primary goal is to create a white ethnostate."[17] The alt-right (or alternative right) has, according to the SPLC, a heavy online presence and embraces white ethnonationalism. The center defines it as the following: "a set of far-right ideologies, groups and individuals whose core belief is that 'white

[14] Yahaya Ahmad, "The Scope and Definitions of Heritage: From Tangible to Intangible," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, no. 3 (March 15, 2006): 292.
[15] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Media and Cultural Memory*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook 8 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 110.
[16] Astrid Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction," in *Media and Cultural Memory*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook 8 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 7; emphasis is Erll's.
[17] "White Nationalist," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed March 15, 2024, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/white-nationalist.

identity' is under attack by multicultural forces using 'political correctness' and 'social justice' to undermine white people and 'their' civilization."[18]

The heightened public attention to Confederate symbols led to an increase in scholarship. The Civil War has been extensively written about, while its memory has also been discussed, for example, in *Race and Reunion* by David W. Blight in 2001.[19] Contemporary Confederate symbol literature has primarily focused on linking the removal of Confederate symbols and embedding them into a historical point of view. This embedding involves returning to the time they were erected and who erected them, often the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Historians such as Adam Domby and Karen L. Cox have recently written about the Lost Cause myth and its influence on Civil War memory and the current Confederate symbol debate. Domby, with his 2020 book *The False Cause,* and Cox, with her multiple books, most notably *No Common Ground* from 2021.[20] In 2003, Cox published a book about the United Daughters of the Confederacy and their legacy, *Dixie's Daughters*.[21] She argues that the UDC shaped the Southern narrative by erecting monuments and teaching children about this ideology. They shaped the legacy that is still prevalent in the Southern States. The UDC was passionate about erecting these monuments and keeping the memory of the South "alive." Most UDC-erected monuments were constructed in two waves: the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and during the Civil Rights Era.[22]

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[18] "Alt-Right," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed March 15, 2024, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alt-right.
[19] David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).
[20] Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020); Karen L. Cox, *No Common Ground. Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice* (University of North Carolina Press, 2021).
[21] Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).
[22] Emma C. Riquet, "Reparations After a Century of White Supremacy Set in Stone: Confederate Statues in the Transitional Justice Debate," *AHM Conference 2023: "Diasporic Heritage and Identity"* 2 (2023): 69.

Books and journal articles about the shooting in the AME church have focused on religion, gun violence, and the reaction of church leaders and politicians such as Barack Obama and Nikki Haley. A lot of the initial writing about the shooting was to honor the victims, to hear how the rest of the nation reacted, and to condemn the shooter. Besides this, much was written about Dylann Roof and his connection to the Confederate heritage (websites). An early connection to Roof's history and the Confederate statues still standing on public grounds was made, also in academic scholarship. Furthermore, scholars have written about the link between Roof's ideas and the Confederate symbol debate. This thesis mainly utilizes O'Rourke and Lehn's book *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings*.[23] This book draws from the fields of rhetoric, history, and memory. Throughout this thesis, it will also be made clear that news outlets play a significant role in chronologically explaining the shooting and its aftermath.

For this specific topic, the 2015 shooting, interdisciplinary research has been done. Since having occurred only nine years ago, the fields of journalism, law (e.g., criminal justice), cultural studies, sociology, and, of course, history, have written about this event while linking it to Confederate symbols. Explaining the church shooting to the Confederate symbols has not been consolidated into a single work yet with the sole focus being the shooting and the symbols.

This thesis uses the SPLC's "*Whose Heritage?*" report and newspapers as primary sources.[24] Establishing a data collection system of Confederate symbols has already greatly aided in researching these symbols. In addition, the reports that accompany this data give a firsthand look at the immediate information released shortly after the Charleston shooting and

[23] Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn, eds., *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, Rhetoric, Race, and Religion (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020).
[24] Seth Levi et al., "Whose Heritage?"; Southern Poverty Law Center, "Whose Heritage SF," accessed March 5, 2022, https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/3/d/1W4H2qa2THM1ni53QYZftGob_k_Bf9HreFAtCERfjCIU/htmlview?pli=1#;

how it evolved. When turning to the newspapers, the *New York Times*, a national newspaper, and the *Post and Courier*, Charleston's newspaper, will be used.

This thesis approaches the topic of the Mother Emanuel shooting from a race-related point of view. Another way of approaching this topic could be by focusing on gun violence and gun laws. The reason that this work explores the notions of racism and systemic oppression is because of its direct link to Confederate symbols. It focuses on how a race-related shooting can lead to a nationwide demand for the removal of symbols that have been present for over a century. By delving deeper into this initial catalyst, the modern history of the Confederate flag and statues is being explored and established. It will also help to understand the following events in 2017 (Charlottesville "Unite the Right" riot) and 2020 (murder of George Floyd). This thesis is divided into three chapters to explore this notion fully.

The first chapter discusses and analyses the shooting in Charleston while also looking at what exactly happened on the evening of the 17th of June, 2015. This chapter establishes Dylann Roof's history with Confederate memorialization and symbols. By connecting these two aspects, the link between the shooting in 2015 and Confederate symbols will become clearer and aid in understanding why question whether this shooting was the first event that opened a national discussion about whether Confederate symbolism fits into the current societal norms and values of the (Southern) United States. This chapter explores how the shooting received the following labels from scholars: a hate crime, a race-related crisis event, and domestic terrorism. Besides this, the chapter discusses a short history of the UDC and the Mother Emanuel church.

The second chapter explores the nationwide response to the shooting, including statements from church leaders and President Barack Obama. It contextualizes the meaning of this shooting in American society and culture and the immediate consequences. By focusing on the rhetoric of the speeches, this chapter and the next show the significance of specific word

choices when addressing the entire nation about such a controversial topic. This chapter focuses on the rhetorical space after the catastrophe and emphasizes one of the first times, in Obama's eulogy, that the shooting and the Confederate symbols were linked.

The third, and final chapter covers the removal of Confederate statues and the flag in Charleston, but also in the rest of the Southern United States. It focuses on the removal of the Confederate flag from South Carolina's state grounds, and the removal of the Confederate statues in New Orleans, Louisiana. This removal of symbols was a rare action undertaken by Nikki Haley, South Carolina's then-governor, and Mitch Landrieu, mayor of New Orleans between 2010 and 2018. This part focuses on the larger consequences and incorporates memory and heritage debate. Examining the reactions from both sides to the removal of Confederate symbols, this part argues that the shooting led to the removal of the symbols that have been a part of Southern culture for over a century. It adds to our understanding of what caused the 2017 and 2020 events to revive the demand for removal.

Chapter One: Say Their Names and His

> "When they bowed unsuspecting heads in prayer,
> he stood up, drew a Glock 41 .45-caliber
> handgun from his satchel, and coldly
> and mechanically gunned them down."[25]

Twenty-one-year-old Dylann Roof walked into the Mother Emanuel church located on Calhoun Street in Charleston, South Carolina, on Wednesday, June 17th, 2015. Wednesday night was Bible study night. Rhetoric scholars Sean O'Rourke and Melody Lehn explain that "[i]n fidelity with [the attendees'] Christian traditions and deeply held Southern convictions, they made him welcome, gave him food, and embraced his apparent desire for community and fellowship."[26] They add that the attendees were under the impression that Roof, an unknown individual, was there to study the Bible with them and pray. However, after over an hour of being there and having enjoyed their hospitality, Roof slaughtered them.[27]

This chapter forms the reference line for the next two chapters. It not only examines how to categorize the shooting but also traces Roof's trajectory of becoming a "lone wolf" who shot nine Black Americans. The first part of this chapter analyzes the shooting. The second part explores Roof's online presence and the white supremacist/nationalist influences online. The following part of this chapter focuses on the dual history of the South, looking at Mother Emanuel's history as well as the South's white nationalist history. The final section discusses how to categorize the shooting. Scholars have given many different labels to the shooting and how it can be categorized, such as lynching, hate crime, Race-Related Crisis Event (RRCE),

[25] O'Rourke and Lehn, "Introduction," 1.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

and domestic terrorism. It is important to clarify how to interpret this event to understand the profound consequences of the shooting. This thesis is set up chronologically, with this chapter focusing on the beginning of the Confederate symbols debate in the twenty-first century. It is a setup for the following chapters that examine the nation's reaction to the shooting and the removal of the Confederate flag in South Carolina and Confederate statues in New Orleans.

This chapter lays the stepping stones for a clear trajectory of causality. This trajectory starts with the UDC's myth-building, such as the Lost Cause myth, whose legacy ended up online via social media and Google, which led to the shooting. Finally, the shooting led to the removal of many Confederate symbols, which were erected mainly by the UDC.

1.1. Doing Something More Than Talking on the Internet

On Wednesday evening around eight, Dylann Roof entered Mother Emanuel. State Representative and pastor of Mother Emanuel Clementa Pinckney (41), Tywanza Sanders (26), Sharonda Coleman-Singleton (45), Cynthia Hurd (54), Reverend DePayne Middleton-Doctor (49), Ethel Lance (70), Susie Jackson (87), Myra Thompson (59), and Reverend Daniel Simmons Sr. (75) were in the middle of bible study when Roof murdered them.[28] They would become known as the Emanuel Nine. Some of the people present at the Bible study played dead and were not shot. After checking whether they were alive, Roof told the survivors, Polly Sheppard and Felicia Sanders, that he would let them live so that they could tell the story of

[28] Samuel P. Perry, "The Charleston Church Shooting and the Public Practice of Forgetting Lynching," in *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, ed. Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 85; The New York Times, "Charleston, S.C., Church Shooting: Live Updates," *The New York Times*, June 18, 2015, sec. national, https://www.nytimes.com/live/updates-on-charleston-church-shooting/; Nick Corasaniti, Richard Pérez-Peña, and Lizette Alvarez, "Church Massacre Suspect Held as Charleston Grieves," *The New York Times*, June 18, 2015, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/us/charleston-church-shooting.html.

what happened.[29] Roof had been in the church for over an hour before deciding to shoot the ones present at the Bible study. He had been welcomed and had caught the victims off guard when they closed their eyes to pray.

The journalists were some of the first ones on the scene, so they could describe the current state of affairs. The *New York Times* had a page with live updates the day after the shooting on June 18th.[30] Academic journals or books have not described the shooting in the way the media has. Secondary sources add to the existing newspaper articles by contextualizing the journalists' initial findings within a broader framework. Sections from O'Rourke and Lehn's *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings* are especially valuable for adding contextual information.

One of the biggest shocks of the shooting was, in part, the fact that it had taken place in a church. This is not to say that other shootings that do not take place at churches are less traumatic or shocking. The location of the shooting is crucial in understanding why the reaction of the nation included taking down Confederate symbols. One of the reasons why conservative groups and individuals did not agree with Roof's actions is first and foremost because of the role religion plays in the United States. According to sociologist Ryan Talbert, the Southern United States remains the most religious region in the country.[31] The Christian faith is especially a big part of one's identity. As communication scholars Sophia Brown and Jonathan Matusitz have written in their paper on analyzing church leaders' speeches with Speech Act Theory after the shooting: "[…] the fact that the murders occurred in a church during a Wednesday night Bible study led black and white southerners to collectively react in horror

[29] Corasaniti, Pérez-Peña, and Alvarez, "Church Massacre Suspect Held as Charleston Grieves."; Melody Lehn, "Challenging the Myth of Postracialism: Exhortation, Strategic Ambiguity, and Michelle Obama's Response to the Charleston Killings," in *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, ed. Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 127.
[30] The New York Times, "Charleston, S.C., Church Shooting."
[31] Ryan D. Talbert, "Culture and the Confederate Flag: Attitudes toward a Divisive Symbol," *Sociology Compass* 11, no. 2 (2017): e12454, 3.

due to the importance of religion to both communities."[32] They, together with other scholars, argue that the location of the shooting plays a large part in what happened to the Confederate flag and other Confederate symbols.

1.2. The Last Rhodesian Manifesto and White Supremacist Influence

The Last Rhodesian was the name of Roof's website. It was on that website that his selfies and pictures featuring guns and the Confederate flag were posted. It was also the location of his five-page manifesto. While the website no longer exists, many other sites saved and reposted his manifesto. Investigative journalist Chip Berlet explains the name of Roof's blog,

> Roof allied himself with the cause of Rhodesia because, according to the racist Right, the failed struggle in the 1960s to preserve African White nationalist societies, including Rhodesia and South Africa, was a warning about the communist conspiracy to use Black people to pave the way for totalitarian tyranny.[33]

Major news outlets like The *New York Times*, The *Washington Post*, and *CNN* have written articles about the manifesto's contents. The original document, however, is not on any legitimate websites. The document that will be quoted in this thesis is purported to be the actual manifesto that could be found on *The Last Rhodesian* website when it was still online.[34]

Multiple scholars and journalists have argued that Roof was a self-radicalized white supremacist. This was due to the power of technology today and the contents of the World Wide Web. Berlet argues that white nationalist conspiracy theories are easily accessible, just a click

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[32] Sophia Brown and Jonathan Matusitz, "U.S. Church Leaders' Responses to the Charleston Church Shooting: An Examination Based on Speech Act Theory," *Journal of Media and Religion* 18, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 33-34.
[33] Chip Berlet, "From the KKK to Dylann Roof: White Nationalism Infuses Our Political Ideology," in *Trumping Democracy: From Reagan to the Alt-Right*, ed. Chip Berlet, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2020), 170.
[34] Dylann Roof, "Purported to Be the Dylann Roof 'manifesto' -as Found on The Last Rhodesian Website," 2015, https://media.thestate.com/static/roofmanifesto.pdf.

away.[35] Rhetoric and public memory scholar Daniel Grano has said that Roof is a "lone wolf," arguing that "white actors such as Roof […] represent a universally disavowed ideology".[36] On top of this, the organization Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), which was explicitly mentioned in Roof's manifesto, "'unequivocally' condemned Roof's 'murderous actions'."[37] The CCC's spokesperson did say, however, that "Roof had 'legitimate grievances' against African Americans and emphasized that the CCC 'stands unshakably behind the facts of its website' and the 'dangers of denying the extent of black-on-white crime'."[38] Later, the CCC referred to the protests around the Confederate symbols following the Mother Emanuel shooting as a "Southern Kristallnacht."[39]

It is on the CCC's website that Roof found statistics of black-on-white crime. In his manifesto, he writes that

> The first website I came to was the Council of Conservative Citizens. There were pages upon pages of these brutal black on White murders. I was in disbelief. At this moment I realized that something was very wrong. How could the news be blowing up the Trayvon Martin case while hundreds of these black on White murders got ignored?[40]

Trayvon Martin's case caught Roof's attention. Wondering why the case was such a big deal, he searched for the crime on Wikipedia. Roof decided that George Zimmerman had the right to "stand his ground." From there on, Roof fell into a rabbit hole of information.

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[35] Berlet, "From the KKK to Dylann Roof," 170.
[36] Daniel A. Grano, "Charleston and the Postracial Logics of 'Race War,'" in *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, ed. Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 40.
[37] Ibid., 38.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Camille K. Lewis, "'Remove Not the Ancient Landmarks': Making the Confederate Distortions of Religion Apparent," in *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, ed. Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 214; The "original" Kristallnacht took place on the night of the 9th to the 10th of November 1938 when the Nazis looted Jewish houses, businesses, and synagogues.
[40] Roof, "Dylann Roof Manifesto."

According to Heidi Beirich from the SPLC, Google's algorithm plays a large role in how Roof came to find the CCC's website first. Google is seen as "the world's library." However, the information that appears at the top of the page after a search is tied to a specific algorithm. This is because it is based on previous searches. In the SPLC's video Beirich explains the "miseducation" of Roof.[41] In his manifesto, Roof explains that "[he] was not raised in a racist home or environment."[42] So how or when did he decide to kill nine Black Americans? White supremacist and alt-right websites such as Stormfront.org and The Daily Stormer were accessed by Roof, and he even posted on them according to the SPLC.[43]

The self-radicalization of individuals occurs due to the abundance of information available on alt-right and white supremacist sites. Perry argues that "[…] new media and technologies provided a means for individuals and communities to steep themselves in racism to the extent that they thought lynching played an integral part in the formation of their identities," he continues by saying that, "Roof followed in the footsteps of many people who consumed media concerning racially motivated violence and then used that media to self-radicalize."[44]

While Roof's interests started by looking for crime statistics on Black Americans, his manifesto also includes his thoughts on Jews, Hispanics, East Asians, and patriotism. Most of his manifesto, however, centers around Black Americans. Roof writes that "[s]egregation was not a bad thing. It was a defensive measure. Segregation did not exist to hold back negroes. It existed to protect us from them."[45] He follows this up with "[i]ntegration has done nothing but bring Whites down to level of brute animals. [*sic*]"[46] Discussing more of the United States

[41] Heidi Beirich, "The Miseducation of Dylann Roof," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed March 17, 2024, https://www.splcenter.org/files/miseducation-dylann-roof.
[42] Roof, "Dylann Roof Manifesto."
[43] Beirich, "The Miseducation of Dylann Roof."
[44] Perry, "The Charleston Church Shooting and the Public Practice of Forgetting Lynching," 93.
[45] Roof, "Dylann Roof Manifesto."
[46] Ibid.

history, Roof argues that "every White person is treated as if they had a slave owning ancestor."[47]

Just like the CCC's spokesperson argued, some conservative Americans were outspoken about not wanting to be put into a corner and generalized. Conservative political commentator Heather MacDonald argues that "Roof was not expressing the will of anyone beyond his own narcissistic, twisted self. White-supremacist killings are not a common aspect of black life today; their very rarity is what made this atrocity so newsworthy," she continues her argument and writes that "[d]emocratic elites […] opportunistically turned Roof into a stand-in for white America".[48] Americans on the right side of the spectrum do not wish to be associated with a perpetrator. White nationalism infuses the United States' political ideology, and, according to Berlet, this can be seen in political parties but goes as far as the armed ultra-right militants.[49]

It is essential to recognize that white supremacist actions such as lynchings have been occurring long before the invention of the internet. The ideas Roof shares in his manifesto are not new they have existed for quite a while. Herb Frazier, Bernard Powers, and Marjorie Wentworth contend that the white supremacist ideas that motivated Roof are the same that motivated the KKK and other groups and individuals who participated in the lynchings of the previous centuries.[50] As historian Nancy Isenberg explains in her book *White Trash*, "Confederate ideology converted the Civil War into a class war. The South was fighting against degenerate mudsills and everything they stood for: class mixing, race mixing, and the redistribution of wealth," she adds that, "[Confederates] were invested in upholding a hierarchy rooted in the ownership of slaves."[51] In this situation, Roof connects the past and the present.

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Grano, "Charleston and the Postracial Logics of 'Race War,'" 34.
[49] Berlet, "From the KKK to Dylann Roof," 171.
[50] Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 170.
[51] Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America* (Faber and Faber, 2017), 158; a mudsill is a person in the lowest social level.

Century-old ideals and ideologies were put online and could reach more individuals. After the shooting, alt-right and white supremacist groups were alarmed at the possibility of the removal of Confederate symbols.

As previously mentioned, patriotism was also part of the manifesto. Roof wrote "I hate the sight of the American flag. Modern American patriotism is an absolute joke. People pretending like they have something to be proud while White people are being murdered daily in the streets. [*sic*]"[52] He adds "[s]o I dont blame the veterans of any wars up until after Vietnam, because at least they had an American to be proud of and fight for. [*sic*]"[53] This begs the question of what it means to be a proud American in 2015.

Roof ends his manifesto with an explanation, stating:

> I have no choice. I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight. I chose Charleston because it is most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country. We have no skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me. [*sic*][54]

Roof "took it to the real world" and killed nine Black Americans. This event was added to the long list of struggles Mother Emanuel and its congregants have endured over the past few centuries.

[52] Roof, "Dylann Roof Manifesto."
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

1.3. The Resistance and Liberation Against White Power Myth-Building

Not only Charleston but also Mother Emanuel was a premeditated location.[55] When the shooting took place, the church's history began to resurface in newspapers and other media. According to the National Park Service, Mother Emanuel is the oldest African Methodist Episcopal church in the South.[56] Charleston is known as "The Holy City" because of its many churches. Mother Emanuel is one of the oldest AME churches, which means it has a long history of Black struggle, victory, and liberation. It has been questioned whether Roof was aware of Mother Emanuel's turbulent history.[57] One of the founders, Denmark Vesey, a lay minister, was a formerly enslaved person and was determined to build a house of prayer for Black Americans in the city. While being a carpenter, he taught congregants to read and write, which was illegal at the time. This ensued a war declared on the church by the city. After a failed rebellion, Vesey died in 1882.[58]

Almost a century later, in 1963, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. was present at some peaceful protests for civil rights because Mother Emanuel's congregants wanted to honor Vesey's commitment to civil rights. Reverend Clementa Pinckney also worked to honor and memorialize Vesey. This is because, according to historian Douglas Egerton, Pinckney played a large part in erecting the statue of Denmark Vesey in February 2014. He also argues that Charleston is crammed with many monuments dedicated to white Carolinians, of which most were slaveholders. Egerton therefore explains that there was nothing to adequately mark the

[55] Blinder and Sack, "Dylann Roof Found Guilty in Charleston Church Massacre."
[56] Corasaniti, Pérez-Peña, and Alvarez, "Church Massacre Suspect Held as Charleston Grieves."
[57] Andrew Buncombe, "Remembering Obama's 2015 Speech at the Charleston Shooting Service, Where He Sang 'Amazing Grace,'" *The Independent*, August 16, 2017, sec. News, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/barack-obama-charleston-church-shooting-speech-in-full-victoms-funeral-2015-amazing-grace-dylann-roof-a7529641.html.
[58] Douglas R. Egerton, "Before Charleston's Church Shooting, a Long History of Attacks," *The New York Times*, June 19, 2015, sec. Magazine, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/magazine/before-charlestons-church-shooting-a-long-history-of-attacks.html.

struggle for freedom and equality Black people went through. [59] Charleston's newspaper, *The Post and Courier*, was filled with complaints from many white Charlestonians because they opposed the erection of the statue.[60]

The events of June 17th will be remembered with a memorial built to honor the Emanuel Nine. The architects' website states this memorial is "[…] dedicated to reversing the spread of hate with a message of unyielding love and forgiveness."[61] Forgiveness plays a significant role in how the community has dealt with what Roof did to them. Brown and Matusitz examined seven themes in their analysis of church leaders' speeches: race, anger, threats, forgiveness, God/faith, justice, and prayer.[62] This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

On the other side of this history, the UDC spread the leading narrative of the "Old South" and the "real reason" for the Civil War. This myth, the Lost Cause, has three key tenets, (1) enslaved people were happy and had good masters, (2) the Confederate army fought for a just cause and their fight was heroic, and (3) the Civil War was fought because of states' rights and not slavery.[63] This myth-building was paired with the building of physical reminders of the Confederacy: monuments. While initially being erected in cemeteries, they quickly grew to occupy space on public grounds.[64] Today, 713 monuments remain standing, while 173 have been taken down after the events of 2015, 2017, and 2020.[65] In the previous century, when these statues were being put up, they were extremely important to white Southerners. Cox argues that,

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] "Emanuel Nine Memorial," Handel Architects, accessed March 23, 2024, https://handelarchitects.com/project/emanuel-nine-memorial.
[62] Brown and Matusitz, "U.S. Church Leaders' Responses to the Charleston Church Shooting," 27.
[63] Coleman Lowndes, "How Southern Socialites Rewrote Civil War History," Vox, October 25, 2017, https://www.vox.com/videos/2017/10/25/16545362/southern-socialites-civil-war-history.
[64] Anthony J. Stanonis, "Dead but Delightful: Tourism and Memory in New Orleans Cemeteries," in Destination Dixie: Tourism and Southern History, ed. Karen L. Cox (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2012), 254; Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 49.
[65] Southern Poverty Law Center, "Whose Heritage SF."

> In time, Confederate monuments also became permanent symbols of devotion to patriotic principles as southerners understood them. They helped to illustrate the part of the Lost Cause narrative which maintained that the South had fought the Civil War to defend the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution, which protected the rights of states. Thus monuments recognized Confederate heroes as American heroes. This was a critical point to be made if these men were to be redeemed from their national reputation as traitors.[66]

While the focus of this thesis is not the origins of the UDC or the monuments they built, their influence must be stressed. This group of women singlehandedly ensured the entire white South would know this myth, and its legacy still influences white supremacist groups to this day.

The Confederate battle flag, more commonly referred to as simply the Confederate flag did not cease to fly after the end of the Civil War. This flag became a point of controversy after the shooting due to Roof's photographs with the flag. The Confederate flag was predominantly used to remind the Southerners of the Civil War and why their family and friends had died and to establish Southern pride. Besides using the flag on private property, it was also flown on public grounds. This was not just a reminder of the War but a clear symbol of white power in the South.

The flag in South Carolina was hoisted for the Civil War centennial on April 11th, 1961, in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement. According to journalist Justin Worland, however, "[t]he decision in South Carolina didn't attract much attention at the time. Civil-rights activists were more concerned with securing voting rights and ending legal segregation than a flag".[67] Herb Frazier, Bernard Powers, and Marjorie Wentworth point out that Black American leaders and others called for the removal of the Confederate flag. Six years before the flag was taken down from the capitol dome, in 1994, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored

[66] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 67.
[67] Justin Worland, "This Is Why South Carolina Raised the Confederate Flag in the First Place," *TIME*, June 22, 2015, https://time.com/3930464/south-carolina-confederate-flag-1962/; Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 28.

People's (NAACP) chairman threatened a boycott with other Black American ministers.[68] This shows that the fight to remove the flag had been going on for approximately fifty years before it was removed in 2015. Activists have been working on removing these symbols of oppression from public grounds for at least half a century.

In 2000, when laws were being passed to prohibit the removal of Confederate monuments, there was also a discussion of moving the Confederate flag from the state capitol dome to a Confederate soldiers' monument and using a smaller flag. This monument was still on the statehouse grounds.[69] Numerous marches and rallies took place at the South Carolina Statehouse. On January 1st, 2000, the NAACP started its South Carolina boycott. On the weekend of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday that same year, a protest march of approximately 45.000 people took place.[70] It was also in that year that the South Carolina Heritage Act was passed aimed at protecting Confederate symbols such as the flag and monuments from being removed, altered, or relocated.[71]

1.4. The Question of Sentencing and Lynching

Before explaining the nation's reaction, this section examines the different concepts attributed to the shooting in the aftermath. This section includes scholars who have a critical look at the Mother Emanuel shooting and want to highlight the importance of correctly labeling this event. This part also discusses what happened to Roof after he was arrested. The public and political reactions can be understood when exploring the different terminologies used to describe the Mother Emanuel shooting. Concepts such as hate crime, lynching, and domestic terrorism all

[68] Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 28.
[69] Worland, "This Is Why South Carolina Raised the Confederate Flag in the First Place."
[70] Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 28.
[71] "1999-2000 Bill 4895: Heritage Act of 2000, Flags, Confederate; Confederacy, Buildings, State House, General Assembly," South Carolina General Assembly, accessed April 3, 2024, https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess113_1999-2000/bills/4895.htm.

carry distinct implications and connotations. These concepts help frame the shooting and influence how the nation interprets the shooting.

As previously mentioned, rhetoric scholar Samuel P. Perry argues in his chapter *The Charleston Church Shooting and the Public Practice of Forgetting Lynching* in O'Rourke and Lehn's book that "'domestic terrorism' is an accurate, if vague, description, while 'lynching' brings focus to the racially motivated nature of the crime."[72] This raises the question of the relevance of the term lynching in twenty-first-century events.

Perry adds to his argument by asking the question of whether "mass shooting" is the correct terminology to use. Perry argues for referring to the shooting as a lynching because, according to him, calling the shooting a mass shooting "actually plays into the public forgetting of lynching because it equates that this act with shootings motivated for reasons other than race."[73] He also writes that "the progress made in [the 1950s and 1960s] nonetheless begat a legacy of violence that carries through to the present. The threads of memory that tie past to present have entwined in them the cultural practices of representing racial violence that emerged during the age of lynching."[74] The need to establish white supremacy in the Southern United States is still not over. Modern-day alt-right and white supremacist groups want to ensure the white heritage and memory of the South remain as vital as it was during the previous centuries.

Perry emphasizes that he wants to prevent the term lynching from becoming a forgotten problematic term in history. He continues his argument with his reasoning why for calling the shooting a mass lynching, "(1) Dylann Roof declared ideologies premises in keeping with lynching (2) it was a public spectacle, and (3) discussion of race was elided by political figures in the aftermath in favor of reverting back to talking points on related political issues."[75]

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[72] Perry, "The Charleston Church Shooting and the Public Practice of Forgetting Lynching," 103.
[73] Ibid., 86, 87.
[74] Ibid., 86.
[75] Ibid., 87.

It is difficult to argue that the shooting was a public spectacle. The shooting took place in a church, i.e., a "closed" space. The aftermath of the shooting, however, can be labeled a public spectacle. All mass killings result in some reaction from the nation, this could vary between riots, protests, marches, and vigils. The shooting at Mother Emanuel was no different. While Perry wants to recover the term "lynching," however it is not evident whether it fits this context.

Perry also argues that the term "domestic terrorism" is not sufficient. Criminal Justice scholar Jesse Norris argues that Dylann Roof is a domestic terrorist under federal law. While Roof was not convicted of being a domestic terrorist, Norris argues that it seems that the FBI and other instances are hesitant to call the shooting a domestic terrorist action, even though it fits the definition of the USA Patriot Act:

> 'Activities that (A) involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State;' and which '(B) appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping;' and which '(C) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States.'[76]

This definition is used by the FBI and is seen as the leading definition of domestic terrorism.

While the question of whether Roof can be seen as a domestic terrorist, some experts join Perry in arguing the seriousness or heaviness of terms used to refer to the shooting. Terrorism expert Michael German argues that rhetoric is essential and that calling the shooting a hate crime instead of terrorism "suggests it's less serious."[77] Attorney General Lynch, however, argues that "even if 'since 9/11 there has been a great focus' on terrorism that 'should

[76] Jesse J. Norris, "Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters," *Harvard Journal of Legislation* 54 (January 1, 2017): 515-516.
[77] Ibid., 508.

in no way signify that this particular murder or any federal crime is of lesser significance.'"[78] Academics agree, according to Norris, that an attack can qualify as terrorism *and* a hate crime.[79] When taking these opinions into account, it can be argued that Roof can be labeled as a domestic terrorist and the shooting domestic terrorism. However, Roof was not convicted as such. Later in this part, his conviction and sentencing will be explained in greater detail.

The importance of analyzing the event and the aftermath of such an event is crucial because it can help reveal changes needed in policy and reevaluate the meaning of Confederate heritage in the South in 2015. According to public administration scholar Vicky T. Carnegie, race-related crisis events (RRCEs) "are violent disturbances that occur due to actual or perceived injustice(s) based on race." She continues, "RCCEs are steeped in the historic context of race in the United States."[80] Carnegie's 2023 book *Government Responsiveness in Race-Related Crisis Events* focuses mainly on the consequences stemming from the Charleston Shooting and RRCEs. The Confederate Flag in the South, specifically Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina is discussed in detail in her book.

Carnegie's second premise in her book is relevant to this thesis because it will help to understand the crisis event and reactions to the shooting in the next chapter. The book is meant to be a guide for public officials and decision-makers to better understand how to deal with such events and how to potentially predict these RRCEs:

> Although deeply troubling, racially sensitive crisis events are not independent problems but symptoms of an underlying condition. The primary complication is the unresolved, festering issue of race being a defining pillar in the structure of the nation's institutions and policies. Each race-related eruption indicates the country remains unwell. Effective solutions will

[78] Ibid., 509.
[79] Ibid., 510.
[80] Carnegie, *Government Responsiveness in Race-Related Crisis Events*, xiv.

> necessitate placing the events in a historical context and examining incidents through the lens in which the problem originated – race's social construction.[81]

The shooting at Mother Emanuel not only emphasized the persistent racial divide and tensions but also sparked a renewed public scrutiny of Confederate symbols, leading to their removal from many public spaces. As much as the country wants to progress to a post-racial society, it is not there yet—much needs to happen before this can occur. As Carnegie states, this second premise is a symptom, not the origin. The question of open and transparent conversation will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Carnegie emphasizes that an RRCE is not a peaceful demonstration, protest, vigil, or march responding to racial injustices. The notion of "escalation" plays a part in defining certain events as RRCEs. While the Charleston church shooting is considered an RRCE, so are the 1992 riots that took place after the exoneration of the four white police officers who beat Rodney King.[82] In short, RRCEs are events that "can prompt significant public policy changes. […] [they] grant unique opportunities to reexamine policies, procedures, and mindsets to build societal equity."[83]

It is for this reason that the shooting at Mother Emanuel is an RRCE. Policies, procedures, and mindsets were reexamined. Especially the "Confederate question" reemerged and became central to the aftermath of the shooting. As Carnegie argues "[t]his RRCE sparked the smoldering embers of debate regarding the Confederate Flag, a centuries-long symbol of racial divide."[84] This thesis focuses on this specific spark of smoldering embers: the removal of the Confederate flag in the twenty-first century.

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[81] Ibid., xv.
[82] Ibid., xix-xx.
[83] Ibid., xix.
[84] Ibid., xx.

While Perry and Carnegie label the shooting with a specific term, this was done from a point of view of social and rhetoric studies. What is the historical term for what happened at Mother Emanuel on June 17th? Speaking purely factual, the shooting can be labeled a mass shooting. Roof killed nine Black Americans with his firearm. When looking at the other components at play, one could argue that Roof (the perpetrator) attacked people who shared the same citizenship as him. Can the shooting therefore be seen as domestic terrorism? Roof's goal was to start a "race war".[85] What is known is that Dylann Roof, a white supremacist, went into a church and shot nine Black Americans. Additionally, due to the aftermath of the shooting, it can be labeled as a Race-Related Crisis Event. Because of his manifesto and the killing of Black Americans, it is also labeled as a hate crime.

Roof was convicted of thirty-three counts of "federal hate crimes, obstruction of religious exercise, and firearms charges, for killing and attempting to kill African-American worshipers" in 2016.[86] In 2017, he was given nine consecutive life sentences after having pleaded guilty to state murder charges.[87] In that same year, Roof was sentenced to the death penalty. He is the first hate crime defendant on a federal level to be sentenced to the death penalty in American history.[88] Several years later, in 2021, Roof attempted to appeal his sentencing. However, the United States Supreme Court declined this attempt to overturn the conviction. As reporter Nate Raymond argues, Roof, then twenty-eight, "had asked the justices to consider how to address instances in death penalty cases in which defense lawyers and

[85] Ibid., 2.
[86] "Federal Jury Sentences Dylann Storm Roof to Death," United States Department of Justice, District of South Carolina, January 10, 2017, https://www.justice.gov/usao-sc/pr/federal-jury-sentences-dylann-storm-roof-death.
[87] Ibid.
[88] "Federal Jury Sentences Dylann Storm Roof to Death."; Khushbu Shah and Elliot C. McLaughlin, "Victim's Dad Warns Dylann Roof: 'Your Creator … He's Coming for You,'" CNN, January 11, 2017, https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/11/us/dylann-roof-sentencing/index.html; The Associated Press, "Judges Uphold The Death Sentence For Dylann Roof Who Killed 9 Black Churchgoers," *NPR*, August 25, 2021, sec. The Two-Way, https://www.npr.org/2021/08/25/1031086866/dylann-roof-death-sentence-upheld-charleston.

defendants disagree, as they did in this trial, on whether to present mitigating evidence depicting a defendant as mentally ill."[89]

1.5. Conclusion

This chapter formed the basis of this thesis. It explored the dual history of the South, how to label the shooting at Mother Emanuel, Roof's manifesto and white supremacist influence, and the shooting itself. This part of the thesis has provided crucial insights into the motivations behind the shooting and the immediate aftermath. Roof's motivations and ideologies revealed that extremist influences are still present in the twenty-first century. The responses discussed in the following part explore the shift in the public consciousness of addressing racial violence in the United States. The Confederate flag, a symbol of hate and division in South Carolina and the rest of the Southern United States, was reevaluated due to Roof's actions.

Establishing a location where safety was a key pillar was essential for Black Americans in a South where the UDC and its legacy were upholding white power. It was the oldest Black AME church in the South that became the victim of a hate crime. Mother Emanuel stood the test of time. It was made clear that the shooting of 2015 would not replace love for hate. Roof tried to spread hate and start a race war, which did not work. His published manifesto was read and analyzed by many. His actions afterward, however, were not received well, even by other white supremacist and alt-right groups. This is argued to be due to the location of the shooting. Faith remains one of the key pillars of American culture. The need for conservative groups and individuals to separate Roof and label him as a "lone wolf" because they do not want to be associated with him is critical to remember going forward in this thesis.

[89] Nate Raymond, "U.S. Supreme Court Rejects Charleston Church Gunman Dylann Roof's Appeal," *Reuters*, October 11, 2022, sec. Legal, https://www.reuters.com/legal/us-supreme-court-rejects-charleston-church-gunman-dylann-roofs-appeal-2022-10-11/.

How to exactly label the shooting was and still is a point of discussion. While Roof was the first to be convicted of a hate crime on the federal level, he was convicted of other counts as well. In conclusion, Roof, a self-radicalized white supremacist, carried out a mass shooting in a place of worship. Due to the aftermath of changes in policies and procedures, it can also be labeled as an RRCE. The question of whether Roof can be seen as a domestic terrorist is valid, and according to Norris' arguments, it fits into the definition of the USA Patriot Act. It is key to remember that some labels do not weigh heavier than others.

Chapter Two: The Darkness of Hatred and the Light of Forgiveness

"[…] what do I do the next time there's a mass shooting?
Do I go give another eulogy after this?" [90] – Barack Obama

While some Americans forgave Dylann Roof for his actions, others would and could not. Roof's uncovered photographs with the Confederate flag widened differences in responses in the aftermath of the shooting. While groups and individuals were processing the shooting, another aspect was added to the discussions and conversations: the Confederate flag. After June 17th, 2015, the flag had been linked to another hate crime, and this time, it would be more challenging to argue that this was not the case. This chapter examines the reactions on a personal, local, state, and national level to the Mother Emanuel church shooting. While Roof meant to start a race war, this chapter shows the opposite happened, and forgiveness was the primary feeling needed to move forward for the victims' families and friends.

This chapter examines the way rhetoric is used after tragic events such as the Mother Emanuel shooting. The framework for this chapter is the following quote from literary scholar Bess Myers, who defines human-perpetrated catastrophes as "violent events so cataclysmic that they rendered the rhetorical arena unsafe and thus impeded productive communication."[91] This chapter expands upon this quote and shows the different types of rhetoric used in the speeches and writings of Reverend Anthony Thompson and President Barack Obama. The following chapter analyzes the rhetoric of the speeches given by Nikki Haley, Governor of South Carolina, and Mitch Landrieu, Mayor of New Orleans.

[90] Bess H. Myers, "Speaking after Silence: Presidential Rhetoric in the Wake of Catastrophe" (PhD, Eugene, University of Oregon, 2019), 89.
[91] Ibid., iv.

This section of the thesis discusses the helplessness, forgiveness, anger, and sorrow felt after June 17th, 2015. Besides discussing these reactions, this chapter also opens the possibility of an open-minded and transparent conversation between activists on both sides instead of falling back into a comfortable silence. This debate is also meant to acknowledge the pain and suffering and to be able to give closure to those involved. Most importantly, it poses the question of whether Southern US citizens can arrive at a space of dialogue. It also begs the question of what it takes to seek forgiveness and cultivate reconciliation.

This chapter is divided into multiple parts. The first part discusses the different emotions felt and expressed by individuals and larger groups. The second part analyzes the eulogy of Clementa Pinckney by Barack Obama at his funeral. Focusing on a personal, local, and national approach will help understand how and why people reacted the way they did. The final part looks into the possibility of fostering reconciliation and opening up discussion about topics such as the discussion of Southern legacy and preserving the physical markers of that heritage.

This portion of the thesis analyzes the emotions and reactions of the nation after the shooting. It acts as a setup for the third chapter, which explores the removal of Confederate symbols after the Mother Emanuel shooting. The people close to the victims focused on their faith and trying to forgive Roof. The people who were not close to the victims but were shaken by the tragedy of the shooting redirected their anger toward Roof's white supremacist beliefs. Those beliefs are linked to the countless symbols of the Confederacy that dot the (Southern) American landscape. These individuals continued the fight for Black Americans by making sure Confederate symbols would be removed throughout the United States. This respect was for the victims but also for all those who have felt oppressed by these symbols of white supremacy and a white South. Race and politics will always be intertwined in the United States.

2.1. May God Bless Your Soul

How did the families of the nine victims deal with the shooting? Did they come to terms with what happened? According to Reverent Anthony Thompson, biblical forgiveness is the answer. The husband of the late Myrna Thompson, one of the Emanuel Nine, preaches that it is a liberating feeling. This part discusses Reverent Thompson's book *Called to Forgive* and *We Are Charleston* by Herb Frazier, Bernard Edward Powers Jr., and Marjory Wentworth. Aiming to portray the reactions of the victim's families and the reactions in Charleston, this section of the chapter touches upon biblical forgiveness and how the city dealt with and tried to move on after this tragedy.

After the shooting, a call for unity and peace went out. The city of Charleston established the Mother Emanuel Hope Fund to help the victims' families. People also gathered at various squares and churches for prayer vigils. Charleston's newspaper, the *Post and Courier*, even featured a daily listing of all community events.[92] On Sunday, June 21st, the first Sunday after the shooting, Frazier, Powers, and Wentworth emphasize the constant stream of prayers. That first Sunday consisted of nine minutes of silence, singing, and prayers.[93] This shows that Charleston stays true to its name, "the Holy City."

In the introduction of his book, Thompson explains that a deeper understanding of biblical forgiveness will be given.[94] He argues that "the natural human response to receiving hurt from others is to hurt them back, to avenge their ghastly crimes. But that's not the way to deal with barbarity."[95] Instead, according to Thompson

[92] Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 8.
[93] Ibid., 9.
[94] Anthony B. Thompson and Denise George, *Called to Forgive: The Charleston Church Shooting, A Victim's Husband, and the Path to Healing and Peace* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2019), 14.
[95] Ibid., 32.

> Biblical forgiveness is a determined decision, a hard choice made with God's help and by the strength of our own will. It doesn't come in levels, baby steps, or stages. It must be all-encompassing, all-forgiving, completely erasing the terrible debt owed to us by a vicious other, no matter how horrible the crime.[96]

Two days after the shooting at Emanuel, the bond hearing was held for Dylann Roof. It was at that moment that Thompson publicly forgave Roof.[97]

The presiding judge asked if the victim's families wanted to speak directly to Dylann Roof. Of the nine victims' families, six chose to talk. Ethel Lance's daughter forgave Roof, as did DePayne Middleton-Doctor's sister and Myra Thompson's husband. One of the survivors, Felicia Sanders, who was Tywanza's mother and Susie Jackson's niece, did not explicitly forgive but hoped that God would have mercy on Roof's soul. Reverend Simmons' daughter emphasized that hate would not win. DePayne Middleton-Doctor's sister argued the same. Because there is no room for hate, the only possible option is forgiveness.[98] Frazier, Powers, and Wentworth say there is no precedent for what happened at the bond hearing in the United States.[99]

It was clear that hate could not dent the foundation of the AME community. Thompson was the only person who implored Roof to turn to God during the bond hearing:

> I forgive you. […] And my family forgives you. […] But we would like you to take this opportunity to repent. Repent. Confess. Give your life to the One who matters the most: *Jesus Christ*, so that He can change it and change your attitude. And no matter what happens to you, then you'll be okay. Do that and you'll be better off than you are right now.[100]

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[96] Ibid., 44.
[97] Ibid., 63, 64.
[98] *Watch the Full Bond Hearing for Suspect in Charleston Church Shooting*, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaPQJb97L60.
[99] Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 164.
[100] Thompson and George, *Called to Forgive*, 64.

These few sentences during the bond hearing left people shocked and amazed. This was due to multiple reasons. The first reason is the overwhelming love for God and the community. Thompson recalls a reporter observing after his small speech at the bond hearing: "Thompson's wife is not yet buried, and he [Thompson] was actually offering Roof a way to salvation."[101] Others were also confused because Thompson decided to forgive a person who violently slaughtered nine people, including his wife.

It must be noted that while this is Thompson's point of view, forgiveness is not the same for everybody. Frazier, Powers, and Wentworth explain that "forgiveness itself is as complex as any human action."[102] Choosing to forgive also occurs for different reasons. Thompson argues that it enabled him to move forward with his life and gave him a sense of healing and peace.[103] Sharonda Coleman-Singleton's daughter Camryn understood that families and individuals forgave Roof. She realized that being consumed with hatred was worse.[104] Ethel Lance's daughter Sharon was not ready to forgive. She believes her God is telling her to take her time and argues that "forgiveness is a journey, and for everyone affected by the tragedy, this journey is indeterminate and unique."[105] Others choose not to forgive at all. Writer Roxane Gay wrote in her *New York Times* op-ed

> I DO NOT forgive Dylann Roof, a racist terrorist whose name I hate saying or knowing. I have no immediate connection to what happened in Charleston, S.C., last week beyond my humanity and my blackness, but I do not foresee ever forgiving his crimes, and I am wholly at ease with that choice. […] We forgive and forgive and those who trespass against us continue to trespass against us.[106]

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[101] Ibid., 65.
[102] Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 165.
[103] Thompson and George, *Called to Forgive*, 34.
[104] Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 165.
[105] Ibid., 166.
[106] Roxane Gay, "Opinion | Why I Can't Forgive Dylann Roof," *The New York Times*, June 23, 2015, sec. Opinion, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/24/opinion/why-i-cant-forgive-dylann-roof.html.

She also questions whether God has limits to forgiveness, especially for sins that are outside "of our own behavior."[107]

Thompson asks himself and his readers multiple questions in his book, such as can Roof be forgiven and can Roof be forgiven without understanding why he committed the shooting? While these questions cannot be answered within the scope of this thesis, it is essential to recognize that even though Thompson decided to forgive Roof, these questions still linger in his mind. It must also be acknowledged that the loss experienced and the emotions felt did not lessen after forgiving Roof. The morning of the bond hearing, Thompson remembers shock and despair. In addition, he felt his life had no more purpose.[108]

Returning to the questions above, Thompson argues that Roof can be forgiven without understanding why he did it. Even Roof's family does not know or understand. Without understanding, forgiveness still needs to occur. That is a part of biblical forgiveness.[109] Thompson's answer to the question of how he could forgive Roof for killing nine people, of which one was his wife, does not change. Thompson answers as follows: "I chose to forgive the racist killer because I believe and trust God's Word when He tells me that vengeance is His to repay, not mine (Deuteronomy 32:35). I need not avenge the vile deeds of Dylann Roof myself. Scripture promises me, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay.'"[110]

Called to Forgive emphasizes the importance of religion in everyday life and after a tragedy. Faith and the AME and Charlestonian community helped restore not only Mother Emanuel but also helped Thompson and the other victims' families continue living their lives. *We Are Charleston* successfully explains Charleston's and Mother Emanuel's history while linking it to the tragic events of June 17th, 2015, and the aftermath. It is also in this book that

[107] Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 172.
[108] Thompson and George, *Called to Forgive*, 59.
[109] Ibid., 43, 57.
[110] Ibid., 29.

faith and religion play a significant role. These two books have aided in understanding the importance of the presence of a community.

While this has shortly been touched upon in the previous chapter, the importance of religion in the Southern United States must be emphasized in this section. The fact that the shooting occurred in a church shocked Americans. Brown and Matusitz argue that "[w]hile the overall climate of racism was not drastically changed as a result of the tragedy, the response of Christians to the event was still unique." They add that "the call to forgive Roof and pursue justice with love was echoed across the country during a time when many non-believers would simply have argued to fight back."[111] Without such a relationship with God, most people feel confusion, anger, and sorrow instead of forgiveness. Because of these feelings, they were able to continue the fight for the removal of Confederate symbols. The lack of religion results in a different reaction to a hate crime.

2.2. "Good people. Decent people. God-fearing people."[112]

Then-President Barack Obama gave the eulogy at Reverend Clementa Pinckney's funeral. Pinckney was Mother Emanuel's pastor, one of South Carolina's State Representatives, and one of the Emanuel Nine. He told the audience that the shooting at Mother Emanuel on June 17th had been the wrong church, the wrong people, and the wrong day. The memory of the Emanuel Nine would live on forever.[113] This part discusses Barack Obama's eulogy for Reverend Clementa R. Pinckney on June 26th, 2015. The eulogy discusses the importance of religion in the United States and argues that Obama spoke to the nation first and foremost as a

[111] Brown and Matusitz, "U.S. Church Leaders' Responses to the Charleston Church Shooting," 34.
[112] "Remarks by the President in Eulogy for the Honorable Reverend Clementa Pinckney," whitehouse.gov, June 26, 2015, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/26/remarks-president-eulogy-honorable-reverend-clementa-pinckney.
[113] Ibid.

Black American and not only as the President of the United States. In addition, the eulogy is one of the first times where the link between the shooting at Mother Emanuel and the Confederate symbols was explicitly mentioned.

While it is not known whether Roof was aware of Mother Emanuel's history, the fact that it occurred at a church made the tragedy worse. Church has always been the center of Black American life; it has functioned as a sanctuary, according to literary scholar Bess Myers.[114] This haven, this refuge, was no longer. But, Obama explained, Mother Emanuel is a phoenix. Time and time again, this church, the oldest American Methodist Episcopal church in the South, rose from its ashes. And this time, it would happen again. With the help of the community, other AME churches, and faith in God, Mother Emanuel would be rebuilt and come back stronger. Hate would not prevail. A race war would not occur. Instead, love triumphed, and forgiveness for Roof's actions was granted.[115]

Obama chose not to name Roof during the eulogy, only using "he" and "the (alleged) killer." Doing this allowed him to pay attention to all the lost lives—the loss of people such as Clementa Pinckney, a community pillar. While Roof's motivations, besides wanting to start a race war, remain unclear, Obama argued that Roof knew what he was doing: controlling, terrorizing, and oppressing.[116]

Myers analyzed Obama's eulogy in her dissertation *Speaking After Silence: Presidential Rhetoric in the Wake of Catastrophe*. As previously explained, Myers defines human-perpetrated catastrophes as "violent events so cataclysmic that they rendered the rhetorical arena unsafe and thus impeded productive communication."[117] Carnegie also uses these notions when discussing Race-Related Crisis Events. Creating the possibility to produce an open conversation is tough after events such as a shooting. It is even more complex when

[114] Myers, "Speaking after Silence," 75.
[115] "Remarks by the President in Eulogy for the Honorable Reverend Clementa Pinckney."
[116] Ibid.
[117] Myers, "Speaking after Silence," iv.

these are race-related. With racism being the most prominent reason for the shooting, a clear and transparent form of communication must be created.

Myers argues that the eulogy came across as a sermon for those present.[118] Besides preaching, it was important for Obama to maintain his position as President of the United States. According to Myers, Obama fulfilled the criteria of Black preaching, as "he intertwined the sacred and the secular to imagine a future when violence against the African American community would not exist, and expressed himself with both emotion and authority."[119] This eulogy was also a political speech in a way. Considering how Reverend Pinckney had died, it was impossible not to consider politics and race when speaking. The Reverend had been a victim of a hate crime. Brown and Matusitz also highlight that speakers such as Obama, Haley, and Landrieu choose their environment carefully when speaking, depending on the goals of their remarks.[120] In Obama's case, the goal was to honor Pinckney and the other victims.

Myers focuses on Obama's rhetoric during the eulogy. She highlights Obama's use of pronouns such as "we" and "our" when discussing the Black Church. Obama affirmed his position as president but, more importantly, as a part of the Black American community.[121] When opening his eulogy with "Giving all praise and honor to God," Obama affirmed his position as a preacher.[122] While usually speaking for all United States citizens, this eulogy was meant for the Black American community.

One of the first times the nation could link the shooting to the Confederate flag was during Obama's eulogy. The president chose to speak out during a speech that had, up until then, focused on the victims and the suffering experienced. He argued that Americans had been "blind to the pain that the Confederate flag stirred in too many of our citizens."[123] Obama

[118] Ibid., 51.
[119] Ibid., 58-59.
[120] Brown and Matusitz, "U.S. Church Leaders' Responses to the Charleston Church Shooting," 36.
[121] Myers, "Speaking after Silence," 75.
[122] "Remarks by the President in Eulogy for the Honorable Reverend Clementa Pinckney."
[123] Ibid.

contended that while the flag did not cause these people to get murdered, the flag has always "represented more than just ancestral pride." He added that "for many, black and white, that flag was a reminder of systemic oppression and racial subjugation."[124] Obama even shared his opinion on what should happen to the flag on state capitol grounds in South Carolina. According to him, the removal of the Confederate flag from the capitol would not be an insult to Confederate soldiers or an act of political correctness. "it would simply be an acknowledgment that the cause for which [the Confederate soldiers] fought – the cause of slavery – was wrong – the imposition of Jim Crow after the Civil War, the resistance to civil rights for all people was wrong."[125] Myers argues that this part was meant for his white audience.[126]

Obama linked two agendas in his eulogy. On the one hand, he focused on the pain and suffering of the victim's families and the AME community. On the other, the national agenda of Confederate symbols and their future. Addressing this national issue during the eulogy made it apparent that this discussion would not go away. As will be seen in the following chapter, Obama addressed problems within the territory of the Governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley. This led to Haley making a thought-provoking speech about the removal of the Confederate flag.

By switching between audiences, Obama shows the duality of the United States. The different cultures present in the South. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the entire nation was shocked when it became known that a shooting had occurred in a church. Obama highlighted the importance of the church for Black Americans. The notion of a sacred and safe space is crucial for Black churches in the South. A critical aspect of this difference in churches for Black and white Americans is the right to express oneself. While Obama preached the

[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Myers, "Speaking after Silence," 79.

sermon, he did this as President of the United States, but more importantly as a Black man in a racially divided United States of America.

2.3. The Possibility of an Open Conversation

There are two sides to the story and countless subdivisions of that same story and its aftermath. How to deal with the murder of nine innocent Black Americans on a Wednesday evening dedicated to studying the Bible. Reconciliation or even recognition after such an event is challenging. The parties outside of the direct circle of victims could not share the same pain or fear of the future. Instead, they focused their anger on the revealed photographs of Dylann Roof posing with the Confederate Flag and the manifesto he posted on his website. Individuals such as Roxane Gay mentioned previously do not forgive Roof for what he did. There is no dialogue when approaching that subject. There is no open-minded conversation, dialogue, or even a monologue. The entire debate that followed the Charleston shooting resulted in opening up the dormant discussion of Confederate symbols. It must be noted that dormant does not refer to the discussion not occurring at all. Instead, the debate was not as significant as it became post-shooting. After June 17th, 2015, the debate left the southern United States and became a nationwide discussion. How would the Southern states feel to be, once again, held accountable for their upheld Confederate norms and values? The Confederate symbols have outstayed their welcome in the twenty-first century, and the shooting heightened this belief.

The previous sections have analyzed the reactions of people close to the murders, Black Americans who did not know the victims but felt the need to voice their opinions and a head of state. This final part of chapter two questions the possibility of having an open-minded and transparent conversation about the effects of a church shooting and its link to white supremacy, the Confederate flag, and Confederate statues in the Southern United States. Drawing

inspiration from the field of transitional justice, this part seeks to analyze the future path of the Confederate symbols debate.

There have already been attempts to use aspects of transitional justice, such as reconciliation and reparation, in the United States. These attempts occurred during Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Movement. While these were solid attempts, they proved inadequate. Removing the Confederate symbols in the twenty-first century can be seen as a form of transitional justice and reconciliation.[127] It is safe to say that in the twenty-first century, more monuments have been taken down than erected. Does this mean that white supremacist groups such as the UDC and SCV have lost their foothold in the South? While these organizations still exist, they are not as important as they used to be. They, for example, no longer choose the curriculum in schools or part of it like they used to, and they no longer put up monuments dedicated to the Confederacy. While they still exist, they are focusing on retaining some part of the Confederate heritage in the South.

What about the role and aesthetic of apologies by Roof and officials such as Haley and Landrieu? As will be seen in the following part, they are done in different ways. As for Roof, he did not apologize. Public figures such as Nikki Haley, then-Governor of South Carolina, and Mitch Landrieu, then-Mayor of New Orleans, did not apologize for the monuments or the flag. They could not change what happened. They did, however, acknowledge the suffering and pain these symbols brought, not only through words but also through acts. The acts of removing the Confederate flag from the state grounds in South Carolina and the removal of the four New Orleanian Confederate statues. The next chapter explores these removals and their justification, underscoring the importance of recognizing and addressing the harm caused by these symbols.

The "Heritage Americans," or "Heritage Preservationists," sensed their cause was not as popular as before, especially considering public opinion after June 17th. As will be seen in

[127] Riquet, "Reparations After a Century of White Supremacy Set in Stone," 70, 71.

the next chapter, groups such as the UDC and SCV do not agree with the use of the flag by white supremacist groups or individuals.[128] Communications scholar Luke Christie quotes a representative of the heritage preservationists, Tommy Pope. Pope asks for grace for him and his fellow preservationists:

> But now we've decided is the right place and the right time to deal with this flag. … I can recognize the pain that many of you and your constituents feel when you see that battle flag. I am asking you now to show some grace. I'm asking you to see the history and the heritage that many of us, many of our constituency, see in that monument, in that flagpole, in that Confederate Relic Room.[129]

This quote argues that the Mother Emanuel shooting was *the* catalyst for the removal of Confederate symbols in the twenty-first century. As Pope states, it was only after the shooting that they decided to reevaluate these symbols on such a large scale. For the heritage preservationists, officials had never reacted so severely that they chose to remove a symbol that, for these preservationists, signified honor, liberty, and courage.

While a discussion is meant to be able to openly speak about the flag, the statues, and the lives lost at the hands of a self-radicalized white supremacist, this is not the case. Christie argues that the pro-flag advocates did not account for the changes the twenty-first century would bring. The significant change in the social landscape in South Carolina turned the "Old South," described in the Lost Cause Myth, and literature and films such as *Gone With the Wind* (1939), into a myth that can not hold up in the face of tragedies such as the Mother Emanuel shooting.[130] This past's legacy changed forever after the shooting and, with it, the future of the

[128] Luke D. Christie, "In the Aftermath: The Rhetoric of Heritage and the Limits of the Mythical Past," in *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, ed. Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 161.
[129] Ibid.,160.
[130] Ibid.,162, 163.

Confederate symbols. This raises the question of what these heritage preservationists are trying to preserve.

While they will claim that they are protecting South Carolina's heritage, they are trying to save a legacy that can no longer exist in the public discourse. The South's memory and heritage are being altered in the twenty-first century. As the introduction mentions, cultural memory represents a collective identity many people share. It is this shared collective identity of the Confederacy that is being questioned. After the shooting, this legacy, heritage, and memory have no more space in the public discourse than it had before. According to rhetoric scholar Camille Lewis, even suggesting change is an act of war for Confederate preservationists. She predicts reconciliation and open hostility will continue to clash across the South for a while.[131]

The Confederate legacy is so deeply ingrained in South Carolina's history and culture that it will not be possible to include everybody in the conversation. Haley removed the Confederate flag from the state house grounds in less than a month. Christie writes that the rising Republican star "shone even brighter in the national political spotlight."[132] While Haley chose to remove the flag, other Southerners decided to fight to publicly preserve "the past" even if "the cost of doing so is someone else's continued personal pain and social subjugation."[133]

[131] Lewis, "'Remove Not the Ancient Landmarks,'"203.
[132] Christie, "In the Aftermath," 155.
[133] Ibid., 169.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has shown the importance of religion and community after such a tragedy. Those closest to the victims turned to their faith to deal with their grief, anger, and other emotions. While Reverend Thompson used biblical forgiveness to move forward with his life, different families of the victims prayed for Roof's soul. Many other individuals chose not to forgive Roof for his actions. The brutal murder of nine individuals shocked the nation. Mother Emanuel, the phoenix, would rise from its ashes once again, but at what cost? The AME community and the city of Charleston supported the church and its congregants. It is also here that the importance of faith is emphasized. This chapter makes evident that forgiveness was one-sided. Roof showed no remorse for what he did.

While Obama was preaching to his Black citizens, he was explaining to his white ones that taking down the Confederate flag was needed. This was the only time he paid attention to the topic. His eulogy for Clementa Pinckney was focused on grace and the Emanuel Nine. It was important for Obama's Black citizens to hear from him after this event.

While one group works toward forgiveness, the other works toward hatred. The Heritage or Confederate Preservationists will not change their ways even though they are slowly realizing that the old ways of promoting the Confederate heritage do not work anymore. Instead of working toward a consensus, they are steadfast in their need to preserve the flag and monuments in their original places. As explained in this thesis, this did not happen for at least one flag and four monuments. South Carolina and New Orleans removed their most prominent symbols successfully. Reconciliation will be difficult since heritage preservationists want to keep their foothold of white power in the South. What is disguised as Confederate heritage is, in reality, a system of oppression that has no place in the South in the twenty-first century. After

the shooting, it has become increasingly difficult to argue that Confederate heritage has no relation to Roof's actions.

Trying to uphold the positivity and hope the victims' families spoke about is becoming more challenging. Especially after the "Unite the Right" rally in 2017 in Charlottesville and the murder of George Floyd in 2020, it is difficult to remember this positivity and hope because of the pro-flag and pro-monument protesters. An important question to pose is whether Roof takes the credit for the removal of the Confederate flag while it is activists who have tirelessly worked to remove these symbols for decades. In that same train of thought, this raises the question of whether Haley and Landrieu take away from the activists in that same way.

Chapter Three: Take 'Em Down

"But we are not going to allow [the Confederate flag] to divide us any longer. The fact that people are choosing to use it as a sign of hate is something we cannot stand. The fact that it causes pain to so many is enough to move it from the Capitol grounds. It is, after all, a Capitol that belongs to all of us."[134]

– Nikki Haley, June 22nd, 2015

"We can't walk away from this truth. And I knew that taking down monuments was going to be tough, but you elected me to do the right thing, not the easy thing, and this is what that looks like. […] Centuries-old wounds are still raw because they never healed right in the first place. Here is the essential truth: We are better together than we are apart."[135]

– Mitch Landrieu, May 19th, 2017

This chapter builds on the previous two chapters and the chronological aspect by turning to the most prominent consequences of the Mother Emanuel shooting from a memory studies point of view. It departs from analyzing speeches from Nikki Haley and Mitch Landrieu and further explores Southern heritage and legacy. By focusing on the decision to take down the

[134] "Transcript: Gov. Nikki Haley of South Carolina on Removing the Confederate Flag," *The New York Times*, June 22, 2015, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/22/us/Transcript-Gov-Nikki-R-Haley-of-South-Carolina-Addresses-Removing-the-Confederate-Battle-Flag.html, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/22/us/Transcript-Gov-Nikki-R-Haley-of-South-Carolina-Addresses-Removing-the-Confederate-Battle-Flag.html.
[135] Landrieu, *In the Shadow of Statues*, 222, 223.

Confederate flag from Capitol grounds in Charleston, South Carolina, and taking down four statues in New Orleans, Louisiana, the last chapter of this thesis takes elements from the United Daughters of the Confederacy's long-lasting influence in the South and the present-day alt-right groups of "heritage Americans." The then-governor of South Carolina, Republican Nikki Haley, called upon the South Carolina House of Representatives and the Senate because she was determined to have the flag removed from public grounds shortly after the shooting took place. Haley vowed to call upon the General Assembly if the House and Senate were unavailable. Then-mayor of New Orleans, Democrat Mitch Landrieu, called a vote in December 2015 to decide what to do with the four Confederate statues dominating the New Orleanian landscape.[136]

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part analyzes Haley's speech from June 22nd, a few days after the shooting. It also examines the way South Carolina deals with Confederate memory and heritage in the wake of the shooting. Besides this, the 2000 Heritage Act and whether it was altered post-shooting will be explored. The second part focuses on Landrieu's speech from May 19th, 2017, when the four statues were finally removed; it also studies the removal process – from the vote in 2015 to the removal in 2017. This part analyzes the Confederate memory and heritage of New Orleans. It will explore the protests and rhetoric surrounding the Confederate monument removal, which ties into the more extensive debate of this thesis that asks the question of whether the Mother Emanuel shooting was *a* catalyst or *the* catalyst.

[136] "Gov. Nikki Haley of South Carolina on Removing the Confederate Flag."; Ben Brumfield and Ralph Ellis, "New Orleans Votes to Remove Confederate Monuments," CNN, accessed April 22, 2024, https://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/17/us/new-orleans-confederate-monuments-vote/index.html.

3.1. Changing for the Times

Because of the UDC, the Confederacy's legacy became a staple in the houses and schools of white Americans, and this was no different in South Carolina. Outside of the houses, this legacy became a constant in the lives of all Americans. While white Americans could walk around with the feeling of pride and nostalgia, Black Americans walked around with a sense of oppression while desperately trying to obtain rights. As the Southern Poverty Law Center shows in their report "*Whose's Heritage?*," the Confederacy left its fair share of symbols across the country. This report does not cover the Confederate flag due to its high presence on public and private grounds.

After the Mother Emanuel shooting, protesters demonstrated the removal of the flag in front of the South Carolina State House. Frazier, Powers, and Wentworth argue that "six days after the church shooting, almost every major South Carolina political figure, including Governor Nikki Haley, called for the removal of the flag."[137] They also add that "the prevailing sentiment was that if the flag didn't come down under these dire circumstances, then there was something deeply, deeply wrong with South Carolina."[138] There was a particular time crunch to remove the flag. Senator and Reverent Clementa Pinckney, one of the Emanuel Nine, would be lying in state under the capital dome on June 25th, a week after the shooting had occurred. The thought that Pinckney would have to pass by the Confederate flag was unimaginable to the protestors.[139] Unfortunately, the flag was not removed in time. The urgency to remove the Confederate flag from state grounds was out of respect for the victims. As this thesis shows, the Southern cultural landscape was altered after the Mother Emanuel shooting. The shooting

[137] Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 27.
[138] Ibid., 27.
[139] Ibid., 28.

emphasized that the flag was a symbol of racial divide, and its immediate removal was meant out of respect for the victims and to take a stance against this symbol of hate.

On June 27th, on the day of the funerals of Cynthia Graham Hurd, Susie Jackson, and Tywanza Sanders, Bree Newsome, an activist, felt like she could not wait for the official removal of the Confederate flag. She climbed up the flagpole and removed it herself. She was arrested and charged with defacing a monument. A replacement flag was raised within an hour.[140] O'Rourke argues that Newsome and Roof "came to represent rhetorically the strong passions of what had become two vehemently divided flag cultures."[141] After the shooting, this divided flag culture could not be justified anymore. It was now directly linked to hate, oppression, and racial divide. White supremacist groups, the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), and United Daughters of the Confederacy could no longer argue this was not the case.

The meaning of the Confederate flag has changed over the past few decades and even the past few years. What does the Confederate flag stand for? Who does it belong to? According to groups such as the UDC and the SCV, the flag's symbolism is the following: independence, honor, valor, and liberty. Besides the meaning of the flag and what it stands for, the UDC and SCV also argue that there is a difference between approving racist attitudes, such as Roof's, and recognizing that the Confederacy holds a place in Southern culture and memory.[142] Randy Burbage, a Charleston leader of the SCV, told Charleston's newspaper that "the flag didn't cause Dylann Roof to do what he did."[143] This is a sentence often repeated by other white supremacists to argue that the flag has nothing to do with the Mother Emanuel shooting.

[140] Ibid., 31-32.
[141] Sean Patrick O'Rourke, "The Rebel Flag and the Rhetoric of Protest: A Case Study in Public Will Building," in *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, ed. Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 183.
[142] Carnegie, *Government Responsiveness in Race-Related Crisis Events*, 8.
[143] Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 31.

In her speech, Haley also argues that for some, the flag is seen as a symbol of duty, integrity, and respect, which stands for "traditions that are noble."[144] She also claims that the flag is seen as a memorial to honor ancestors who fought for their state during a conflict.[145] It must be noted here that Haley and her speechwriters carefully chose the last few words of that sentence by using "state" instead of "country." She also emphasizes that removing the flag is South Carolina's decision. Not naming the Confederacy in this section of her speech is telling the watchers and listeners that her loyalty is to her state, not to the history of the flag. The side of history where the flag highlights the pro-slavery side of South Carolina during the Civil War. The other side of history and the flag that Haley has brought up, the side of pride and respect, is not hate or racism, she argues.[146]

Haley contends that for others, the flag is seen as an offensive symbol that comes from a "brutally oppressive past."[147] Furthermore, Haley argues that no winner or loser needs to be declared but that freedom of expression must be respected.[148] It is here that alt-right groups often say that the freedom of expression is not being respected because the flag is being removed. Haley has a double agenda during her speech. While being the Governor means that she has to consider all of her constituents, she is a Republican and needs to be mindful of how she addresses this controversial issue. She still has to give meaning and a voice to her conservative voters. According to Haley, "[f]or those who wish to show their respect for the flag on their private property, no one will stand in your way."[149] Besides this, she ensures that the flag will always remain an essential part of South Carolinian history and will always be a part of South Carolina's soil. So, while it is seen as a large part of the past, according to Haley,

[144] "Gov. Nikki Haley of South Carolina on Removing the Confederate Flag."
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.

it does not represent the state's future.[150] In the meantime, O'Rourke argues that the sale of the Confederate flag skyrocketed after Haley's speech. He adds that "when Walmart, Amazon, Sears, and eBay all announced that they would not longer sell the Confederate flag, pro-flag advocates staged 'park-ins' in Walmart parking lots and mounted gigantic rebel flags on the back of pickup trucks."[151] In 2017, after the rally in Charlottesville, sales of the Confederate flag spiked again.[152] This shows the perseverance of the heritage conservationists in the United States. As mentioned in the previous chapter, they did not give up.

Haley reflects on the moment when, in 2000, the Confederate flag was moved from the Capitol dome to a statue honoring the fallen Confederates on State Capitol grounds. Now, she argues, it is time to remove the symbol that causes a divide between South Carolinians. Haley hopes the citizens "can move forward as a state of harmony and […] can honor the nine blessed souls who are now in heaven."[153] She emphasizes that the focus of her speech is the removal of a symbol that divides, but first and foremost, the victims of Mother Emanuel.

The fact that the Confederate flag is used as a symbol of hate is unacceptable for Haley. As mentioned above, this is also true for the USC and SCV. After the riots in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, the commander-in-chief of the SCV, Thos V. Strain Jr., denounced any connection between Southern heritage, SCV, and white supremacy. He stated that

> [t]he SCV condemns all acts of hatred and the improper use of our ancestors' battle flag which they nobly carried into battle for their own political independence. The Battle Flag was not and is not a symbol of racism; it is a soldier's battle flag given to the SCV by the Confederate Veterans. The KKK, nor any other group has legitimate use of our Confederate Symbols.[154]

[150] Ibid.
[151] O'Rourke, "The Rebel Flag and the Rhetoric of Protest," 186.
[152] Ibid.,187.
[153] "Gov. Nikki Haley of South Carolina on Removing the Confederate Flag."
[154] Carnegie, *Government Responsiveness in Race-Related Crisis Events*, 9.

At the time, the UDC's President General, Patricia Bryson, agreed with Strain's statement. Bryson also argued that the groups using the Confederate symbols and are part of white supremacist and hate groups should discontinue the use of them. The practices of these groups are seen as reprehensible and abhorrent. Bryson contends that these groups and their use of the symbols are an "ill reflection of the organization's 123-year history of 'promoting patriotism and good citizenship.'"[155]

This "promotion of patriotism and good citizenship" means erecting statues on public grounds and promoting white power. This promotion of citizenship, Bryson mentions in her 2017 statement, raises the question of whom this patriotism is directed to. Is it directed to the United States of America or the Confederate States of America? How is this patriotism being shown exactly? The majority of Americans associate the Confederate flag with racial attitudes and Southern heritage. The second part of Bryson's statement, the "good citizenship," is not being questioned; as Cox argues, the UDC felt it was their duty to honor the fallen Confederates and establish a legacy that would go on for generations by instilling the values of the Confederate generation.[156] The devotion and allegiance to the United States of America are being questioned.

The flag is a direct connection between the past and the present. As sociologist Ryan Talbert explains, the Confederate flag was removed from the State Capitol grounds after a period of troubled times. This resulted in a shift in cultural attitudes and social change. When researching the removal of the flag in Charleston, a few notions need to be taken into account: politics, religion, and race.[157] Talbert also argues that historical political realignment directly influences modern perceptions of the flag.[158] This aligns with Carnegie's argument that RRCEs

[155] Ibid.
[156] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 32.
[157] Ryan D. Talbert, "Culture and the Confederate Flag: Attitudes toward a Divisive Symbol," *Sociology Compass* 11, no. 2 (2017): e12454, 2.
[158] Ibid., 3.

lead to changes in public policy and an opportunity to reexamine laws, procedures, policies, and mindsets.[159] When keeping this and the flag's history in mind (being a rebel flag), it is understandable that white supremacists and hate groups have chosen to use it.[160]

While the UDC and SCV believe that the flag is theirs, this 'rule' is not being followed. Many aspects need to be taken into account when researching the sentiment of the Confederate flag in the South, and more specifically, South Carolina: location, political affiliation, and growing up in the South. The following survey outcomes show the link between the shooting and the eventual removal of Confederate symbols. In 2000, a national telephone survey was carried out; forty-nine percent said they wanted the flag removed. After the shooting, fifty-five percent that responded to the survey believed that the flag should be removed from public grounds, such as government property. The data presented here highlights the nation's reaction and opinion of the Confederate flag. There was a rise in the demand for the removal of the Confederate flag in 2015 after the shooting. The Pew Research Center held national surveys in 2011 and 2015. In 2011, the survey indicated that thirty percent had a negative reaction as opposed to nine percent having a positive response when seeing the flag displayed. Four years later, in 2015, twenty-eight percent had a negative response, and thirteen percent had a positive response.[161] The Pew Research Center's responses to the survey are interesting because the adverse reaction to the flag declined, and the positive response to the flag rose. This begs the question of whether the location (private property or state grounds) of the Confederate flag matters in these surveys.

When considering political affiliation, a 1997 vote in South Carolina's congress resulted in ninety-four percent of Republicans taking a pro-flag stance compared to eighteen percent of Democrats taking a pro-flag stance. Americans who identify as Southerners are more

[159] Carnegie, *Government Responsiveness in Race-Related Crisis Events*, xix.
[160] Talbert, "Culture and the Confederate Flag," 4.
[161] Ibid., 4.

likely to react positively when seeing the flag than Americans who do not. Talbert also argues that inhabitants of rural areas are commonly more supportive of the Confederate flag than those in suburban or urban areas.[162]

As has been discussed previously, a vote took place in 2000 to relocate the Confederate flag from the top of the Capitol dome to a statue remembering Confederate soldiers on the same grounds. According to O'Rourke, the change in location from the dome to a statue on the state capitol grounds resulted in the flag obtaining a more prominent position. This is because it was flown at the intersection of Charleston's busiest streets. The location change did not please the pro-flag advocates or those protesting the flag.[163]

The 2000 Heritage Act was meant to update the 1996 Heritage Act. The 1996 Act enacted that:

> In addition to the flag of the United States of America and the State Flag of South Carolina, **the South Carolina Infantry Battle Flag of the Confederate States of America [the Battle Flag of the Army of Northern Virginia (General Robert E. Lee's Army)] shall be flown on the flagpole atop the State House** and shall be displayed above the rostrum in the chambers of the House of Representatives and the Senate of this State and in the front ground floor foyer of the State House.[164]

In 2000, however, this was amended, and the following became the new law:

> **Only the United States flag and the South Carolina state flag may fly atop the dome of the state house** and be displayed within the state house, which stipulates on this date where certain flags of the confederacy shall be flown or be displayed on the grounds of the state capitol complex, and which **prohibits the removal of these confederate flags on the state house grounds and the removal, changing, or renaming of any local or state monument, marker,**

[162] Ibid., 6, 7.
[163] O'Rourke, "The Rebel Flag and the Rhetoric of Protest," 182.
[164] General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, "1995-96 Bill 1: Heritage Act of 1996," accessed April 3, 2024, https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess111_1995-1996/bills/1.htm; emphasis from the author.

> **memorial, school, or street erected or named in honor of the confederacy or the civil rights movement** without the enactment of a joint resolution of the general assembly approving same adopted by a two-thirds vote of the membership of each house.[165]

It is worth noting that the Heritage Act was not amended again after the flag was removed from the State Capitol grounds in 2015. This removal, a significant event in the flag's history, was not in line with the Heritage Act of 2000 provisions. According to this Act, the South Carolina legislature would require a two-thirds vote to remove the flag from the State Capitol. However, in a unique turn of events, Haley removed the flag with a separate legislature, bypassing the Heritage Act's requirements.

While the House of Representatives tried to pass two acts, H4365 and H4366, concerning flags and the Clementa C. Pinckney Act, respectively, the Senate passed the bill S0879, SC Infantry Battle Flag of the Confederate States of America.[166] The passed bill stated the following:

> An act to amend section 1-10-10, code of laws of South Carolina, 1976, relating to the flags authorized to be flown atop the state house and on the capitol complex, so as to **remove references to the South Carolina infantry battle flag of the Confederate States of America**, to provide for the permanent removal of the South Carolina infantry battle flag of the Confederate States of America from its location adjacent to the confederate soldier monument, and to provide that **upon its removal, the South Carolina infantry battle flag of the Confederate States of America shall be transported to the Confederate relic room for appropriate display**.[167]

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[165] General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, 1999-2000 Bill 4895: Heritage Act of 2000, Flags, Confederate; Confederacy, Buildings, State House, General Assembly.; emphasis from the author.
[166] "H 4365 (Flags)," accessed April 23, 2024, https://www.scstatehouse.gov/billsearch.php; "H 4366 (Clementa C. Pinckney Act)," accessed April 23, 2024, https://www.scstatehouse.gov/billsearch.php?billnumbers=4366&session=121&summary=B&headerfooter=1; "S 0897 (SC Infantry Battle Flag of the Confederate States of America)" (2015), https://www.scstatehouse.gov/billsearch.php?billnumbers=897&session=121&summary=B&headerfooter=1.
[167] S 0897 (SC Infantry Battle Flag of the Confederate States of America).

The debate lasted hours, and people throughout the state stayed up all night to watch it unfold. On July 9th, the first approval vote came in at ninety-three Yeas and twenty-seven Nays. A second approval vote came in, and the bill was passed with ninety-four Yeas and twenty Nays on July 14th, 2015. Four days earlier, however, on July 10th, Haley removed the flag from state grounds.[168]

3.2. No Longer Living in the Shadows

After the removal of the Confederate flag from South Carolina's state capitol grounds, a movement was slowly but surely put into motion. New Orleans was the first city to undertake Confederate statue removal on such a scale. The second part of this chapter explores New Orleanian history and the removal of Confederate statues in the city. It analyzes Mitch Landrieu's speech from May 19th, 2017, after the removal of the four Confederate statues of General Robert E. Lee, President of the Confederate States of America Jefferson Davis, General P.G.T. Beauregard, and the obelisk honoring the Battle of Liberty Place. Ku Klux Klan (KKK) Grandwizard David Duke referred to the obelisk as a "symbol of white power." As previously mentioned, a bill was passed to remove these statues in 2015.

It was not until two years later that Landrieu succeeded in removing the statues due to protests and boycotts.[169] CJ Hunt, a comedian and documentary maker, followed the debate over Confederate monuments from the vote in 2015 until their removal in 2017. Hunt made a documentary called "The Neutral Ground" (2021). In his own words, the documentary is about "memory, monuments, and how to break up with the Confederacy."[170] With Landrieu's speech

[168] S 0897 (SC Infantry Battle Flag of the Confederate States of America).; Carnegie, *Government Responsiveness in Race-Related Crisis Events*, 71; Frazier, Powers Jr., and Wentworth, *We Are Charleston*, 32.
[169] Landrieu, *In the Shadow of Statues*, 2; Cox, *No Common Ground*, 158.
[170] CJ Hunt, "The Neutral Ground Film," The Neutral Ground Film, accessed April 28, 2024, https://www.neutralgroundfilm.com.

and Hunt's documentary, this part establishes a straightforward course of events for removing the four Confederate statues that stood in New Orleans. This section is the concluding part of the timeframe this thesis has explored. It shows the consequences of Nikki Haley's decision to remove the Confederate flag from state grounds after the Mother Emanuel shooting.

On Friday, May 19th, 2017, then-mayor Mitch Landrieu held a speech about his remarks on the removal of the Confederate monuments in the city. Landrieu starts by explaining the diversity of New Orleansians and the role of New Orleans in slavery. He concludes that even though there is such diversity, "separate but equal" was upheld during Jim Crow segregation.[171] Even after Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement, Black Americans could not feel safe in the city. While the physical aspect of "separate but equal" was abolished and spaces were open to all, Black Americans did not feel welcome or encouraged in their endeavors because of the constant looming of Confederate statues. The painful reminders of slavery and segregation were constant and everywhere.

While not specifying who he was talking about in his speech, Landrieu referenced "self-appointed defenders of history."[172] There are multiple groups to whom he could be referring. These could be groups such as the UDC and SCV, but also the self-proclaimed "heritage Americans." The latter surrounded the statues that were planned to be removed in Charlottesville in 2017 during the riots on August 11th and 12th. What Landrieu says afterward, however, insinuates that he is referring to the former two groups: "[…] they are eerily silent on what amounts to this historical malfeasance, a lie by omission. There is a difference between remembrance of history and reverence of it."[173] In addition, Landrieu argues that the UDC and other groups rewrote history to hide the truth. Landrieu adds that the Confederacy was on the

[171] Landrieu, *In the Shadow of Statues*, 217, 218.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.

wrong side of humanity and that they cannot be seen as patriots because they fought against the United States of America.[174]

In addition to debunking the UDC's myth of the "Lost Cause," Landrieu underscores the significance of unity and understanding. Like Haley, he strives to bring healing and mutual comprehension to the forefront. He asserts that the past is unchangeable. Instead, New Orleansians should focus on the future. "History cannot be changed. It cannot be moved like a statue. What is done is done. The Civil War is over, and the Confederacy lost and we are better for it."[175] Additionally, Landrieu creates a vivid image for the audience to understand the gravity of these monuments fully:

> Another friend asked me to consider these four monuments from the perspective of an African American mother of father trying to explain to their fifth-grade daughter who Robert E. Lee is and why he stands atop of our beautiful city. Can you do it? Can you look into that young girl's eyes and encourage her? Do you think she will feel inspired and hopeful by that story?[176]

These instances are intended to raise awareness among white Southerners about the diverse perspectives on these monuments. Many may overlook these monuments because they are part of the permanent landscape. Landrieu's speech and the removal of the monuments were aimed at shifting this perspective.

Erecting these statues, Landrieu argues, can be seen as a form of terrorism, just as burning a cross on someone's front lawn. These statues were erected to send a message across the Southern United States. Now, a new message needs to be sent. As Landrieu says: "[w]e have not erased history; we are becoming part of the city's history by righting the wrong image these monuments represent and crafting better, more complete future for all our children and

[174] Ibid., 219.
[175] Ibid., 222.
[176] Ibid., 221.

for future generations."[177] Landrieu's goal when calling for a vote for removal was creating a city where everyone feels welcome. New Orleans no longer adheres to one side of history with its statues.

Just like Haley, Landrieu had to go through the official channels to have these symbols of the Confederacy removed. There were three community-led commissions, two public hearings, a 6-1 vote by the New Orleans city council, and reviews by thirteen different state and federal judges.[178] It took decades before a vote even took place. According to journalists Ben Brumfield and Ralph Ellis, New Orleans' action to remove the four monuments is "one of the strongest gestures yet."[179] The vote that resulted in the removal of the statues was meant to determine whether the statues were seen as "nuisances."

Michael Henderson and Belinda Davis surveyed removing the statues in New Orleans. They concluded that "73 percent of *state* residents 'opposed removing monuments to people who fought on the side of the Confederacy during the Civil War from public spaces,' with white residents in particular, more heavily resistant at 88 percent." In addition to this, Henderson and Davis also concluded that "more black residents opposed the removal (47 percent) than supported it (40 percent)."[180] This is interesting, considering the majority will assume Black Americans oppose the Confederate symbols. Due to this thesis's scope, it is impossible to analyze these statistics further, but they must be mentioned.

As Hunt also shows in the opening images of "The Neutral Ground," much frustration was shared. More importantly, there were more questions than answers.[181] This is not peculiar

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[177] Ibid., 225.
[178] Ibid., 226.
[179] Brumfield and Ellis, "New Orleans Votes to Remove Confederate Monuments."
[180] Patricia G. Davis, "In the Aftermath: Memorials of the Neo-Confederacy, Symbols of Oppression, and the Rhetoric of Removal," in *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, ed. Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 234.
[181] Mid-City Messenger, "City Council Votes to Remove Four Confederate Monuments with 6-1 Vote; Council Members Share Their Reasons," *Mid-City Messenger* (blog), December 18, 2015, https://midcitymessenger.com/2015/12/17/city-council-votes-to-remove-four-confederate-monuments-with-6-1-vote-council-members-share-their-reasons/; *The Neutral Ground*, Documentary (Journeyman Pictures, 2021).

since New Orleans' effort to remove these statues was one of the first in the nation. How would other former Confederate states interpret this vote? For Landrieu and Hunt, one thing was clear: history had to be confronted and not ignored.

As has been argued throughout this thesis, the Mother Emanuel shooting did not only influence the Confederate flag in South Carolina. Instead, it shifted the entire Southern heritage landscape. From the initial removal of a single Confederate flag in Charleston to the removal of multiple Confederate statues, the shooting led to a meaningful reevaluation of Southern heritage and legacy. The vote to remove the Confederate statues was passed precisely six months after the shooting in Mother Emanuel on December 17th.[182] In his book's prologue titled *Can Someone Get Me a Crane?* Landrieu discusses why it was nearly impossible to get equipment. After equipment and workforce were acquired, Landrieu revealed that the contractor's car was firebombed. Getting access to a crane was impossible, and he concluded that they were blacklisted. While the decision had been made on a legal level, acquiring the money and tools to remove the four Confederate statues proved more difficult than thought. Eventually, a crane was found, and the statues were removed. Protesters were present for every one of them. Landrieu explains that the workers were kept anonymous, and extreme security measures were implemented to ensure the equipment and the workers were safe.[183]

CJ Hunt followed the commotion caused by the planned removal of the statues. In the introduction of his documentary, Hunt lets both sides be heard and shows excerpts from the public hearings and committee meetings. At one point, a Black American woman exclaims, "[i]t is amazing in 2015 I'm fighting Robert E. Lee! […] It's almost hilarious."[184] How long would removing Robert E. Lee's statue in New Orleans take? Ideally, Landrieu would have liked it to take three to four months.[185] However, this was not the case because lawsuits started

[182] Cox, *No Common Ground*, 158.
[183] Landrieu, *In the Shadow of Statues*, 2, 3.
[184] *The Neutral Ground*, Documentary (Journeyman Pictures, 2021), 01:05-01-09.
[185] Ibid., 12:45-12:47.

the day after the six-to-one vote. There was a high level of white American resistance. White supremacist groups from all over the country went down south to help their fellow white nationalists protest the removal of these symbols of the Confederacy.

Were there other possibilities instead of entirely removing these statues? How about a plaque explaining why the statue of, for example, Robert E. Lee was still standing and overseeing the city in the twenty-first century? Hunt proposes a possible text for a plaque in "The Neutral Ground": "Hi, I'm Robert E. Lee. A long time ago, I turned on my country and let over 200.000 Southern sons to their graves so that we can keep our basic rights to own human beings as property #sorryi'mnotsorry"[186] While this was read humorously, a plaque is being considered as an alternative to removal or relocation to keep the statues in their exact spot.

Another possibility besides removal or a plaque is relocation. In the 1990s, activists were already fighting for the removal of Confederate symbols, such as the obelisk promoting white power. A group that included KKK grand wizard David Duke protested this removal. Instead, the obelisk was moved and "hidden."[187] Was it possible to have the statues removed permanently? In March 2017, a federal appeals court finally ruled that New Orleans could remove three statues: Lee, Beauregard, and Davis.[188] As mentioned, Landrieu explained in his prologue that access to equipment and workers was nearly impossible.

How would a city that was built on nostalgia part with its white nationalist history and look toward the future? According to Hunt, "preserving Southern liberty and preserving white supremacy have historically been the same thing."[189] Having jumped through the legal hoops and acquired a crane and workers, the deconstruction of New Orleans' Confederate statues could begin. 493 days after the vote, the hidden obelisk was removed in the nighttime by

[186] Ibid., 05:15-05:27.
[187] Ibid., 45:51-46:11.
[188] Ibid., 44:52-45:00.
[189] Ibid., 46:45-46:52.

workers whose faces were covered to preserve anonymity.[190] Angela Kinlaw of the organization "Take 'em Down NOLA" argued in front of the Robert E. Lee statue that the Confederate statues were not erected at night and should, therefore, not be taken down at night. Instead, they should be removed in broad daylight.[191]

What about the remaining three statues? 507 days after the vote, Jefferson Davis' statue and P.G.T. Beauregard's statue were removed at night. Only Robert E. Lee's statue was removed during the day. The day Lee's statue was taken down, Landrieu held the speech discussed and analyzed at the beginning of this section at Gallier Hall. 511 days after the vote, the four New Orleanian statues honoring the Confederacy were no longer part of the city's landscape.[192]

After the removal of the obelisk, vast amounts of white nationalists and people against the removal of the Confederate statues came to New Orleans to protect the remaining statues. Armed protesters and militias were present, as was the New Orleanian police. Other cities did not follow Landrieu's and New Orleans' example of taking down Confederate monuments. It would take until the events in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017 for statues to come down faster *and* easier. Not only in the Southern United States, but statues were also removed internationally.[193]

[190] Ibid., 47:07-48:00.
[191] *The Neutral Ground*, 54:11-54:24; NOLA stands for New Orleans, Louisiana.
[192] *The Neutral Ground*, Documentary (Journeyman Pictures, 2021), 58:40, 59:35, 59:59, 01:01:57.
[193] Ibid., 47:07-48:00, 01:10:55.

3.3. Conclusion

Nikki Haley and Mitch Landrieu approach the topic of Confederate memorialization differently. This is also clear in their rhetoric. While Haley emphasizes Roof's actions and how *they* altered the way the Confederate flag is viewed, Landrieu emphasizes the UDC and how *their* Confederate legacy influenced the Southern United States. He adds that the monuments should have been removed a long time ago. There are no two sides to how Confederate monuments are perceived. According to Landrieu, they do not represent New Orleansians, and this is not how New Orleans wants to be known worldwide. On the other hand, Haley argues that there are two sides to how the Confederate flag is perceived. One side shows the memory, pride, and memorialization of the fallen Confederate soldiers and the Confederacy. The other side shows the oppression of Black Americans and the fact that they were not seen as citizens of the United States.

Another point of discussion is patriotism and loyalty to the United States flag. Roof wrote that he disagreed with the American flag and argued that modern-day patriotism was a joke. Landrieu explains in his speech that Lee, Davis, and Beauregard cannot be counted as patriots because they fought against the United States of America. While this thesis does not explore the meaning of modern-day patriotism, it does look at memory and heritage. This is what the latter two tell us: even after seceding, Ladies Memorial Associations (LMAs) and the UDC ensured that the memory and legacy of the Confederacy were upheld. This begs the question of whether these groups can be seen as patriots.

The UDC, the SCV, and other groups that want to secure the future of the Confederate flag, Confederate statues, and other Confederate symbols are still loyal to Confederate history and uphold *their* version of the events. The Confederacy fought for states' rights, the states' rights to hold enslaved people. These statues and the flag uphold this heritage and memory.

To conclude, the heritage and legacy of Confederate symbols consist of multiple narratives. It is the state's or city's choice to do something about it. As explained in this chapter, Southern states have protected themselves in the twenty-first century with legislation and heritage acts. It will take a while to undo what has taken a long time to form: the white supremacists, UDCs, and SCVs foothold in the South through clear emblems of white power.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the influence of the shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17th, 2015, in shifting public rhetoric around confederate symbols and reevaluating the Southern cultural landscape. The perpetrator, Dylann Roof, was a self-radicalized white supremacist and is currently on death row for his actions. This work has answered the question: "How did the 2015 Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church shooting in Charleston lead to a US Southern-wide removal of Confederate symbols and alter the Southern cultural landscape?" By researching this question through various research methods, it can be argued that a multidisciplinary approach has been taken. This thesis explored the concepts of heritage and memory, history, and rhetoric. The changes in policy and procedure concerning the Confederate symbols must be highlighted. Without these reevaluations, removing the symbols might have been much more challenging. It must not be forgotten that many Southern states still have "Heritage Acts" that are meant to preserve Confederate symbols.

This work follows a path of causality from point A to point B. It answers the question of how the shooting (A) led to the removal of Confederate symbols (B). The removal of these symbols did not happen instantaneously. Instead, it took quite a while to remove them. It is because Nikki Haley decided to remove the Confederate flag from state grounds that Mitch Landrieu removed the four statues in New Orleans, and other states followed. The decision to remove the Confederate flag led to riots and rebellions from pro-flag activists. This thesis focuses on the catalyst of Confederate symbol removal. The aftermath of the initial removal of Confederate symbols led to the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. After the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the demands for the removal of these

symbols intensified once more. The 2015 shooting at Mother Emanual was *the* catalyst for the removal of Confederate symbols. It is essential to recognize the work of the activists who have been fighting for the removal of Confederate symbols for more than fifty years.

The South's history is essential knowledge when approaching such a topic. The lasting legacy of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, including its tangible and intangible heritage, must be considered. As discussed in the introduction, (cultural) memory and heritage play an active role in the research surrounding Confederate memorialization. Its importance can be seen in events that occurred after the Mother Emanuel shooting, such as the "Unite the Right" rally. It can also be seen in the spikes of Confederate flag sales O'Rourke discussed after Haley's speech, where she removed the flag from state grounds. This can be seen because the Confederate flag has different meanings for different people.

For the Sons of Confederate Veterans, this flag signifies independence, honor, valor, and liberty. They argue that other white supremacists and alt-right groups are improperly using the flag. Instead of using the flag as a symbol of honor, they are using it to promote hate. Undeniably, the Confederate flag has never only represented the four abovementioned characteristics. Instead, hate and oppression of Black Americans have always played a large part. It is this hate and oppression that anti-flag activists focus on. For them, the Confederate flag can never be seen as just a flag that honors the Confederate veterans and fallen soldiers. The same can be said for the Confederate statues. They were erected in times when white Southerners wanted to ensure white supremacy. The presence of the Confederate flag from the Capitol Dome in South Carolina during the Civil Rights Movement and afterward showed these anti-flag activists that white supremacy and white power were still present.

This thesis established the nation's reaction by discussing local, state, and national responses. While the sense of community was powerful in Charleston, it is essential to highlight the extreme importance of religion in the Southern United States for both white and Black

Americans. Among those closest to the event, some forgave the person who had killed their loved one, while others could not. Meanwhile, others joined the fight to remove Confederate symbols instead.

The pro-flag and anti-flag activists were forced to communicate after the Mother Emanuel shooting. According to critical/cultural studies scholar Patricia Davis, Charleston altered "the landscape of rhetorical strategies for removal by adding the 'crucial element' of reconciliation to more 'traditional discourses of race, memory, space, and place.'"[194] While there was an attempt to add reconciliation, this didn't prove easy. Especially when taking into account the need for heritage preservationists to keep the Confederate symbols the same. Even the thought or suggestion of removing these symbols is unthinkable for them. In the meantime, the activists who fight and favor removing the symbols will also not make any concessions. This results in the inability of an open-minded and transparent conversation to take place.

In conclusion, the Mother Emanuel shooting led to the Southern-wide removal of Confederate symbols. In 2015, the entire nation and the world saw the Confederate flag for what it is: a symbol of racism and oppression. The shooting was linked to white supremacy through Roof's ideologies. Once the image of the flag had been corrupted for the entirety of the nation, even heritage preservationists could not maintain their argument that it was solely a symbol of honor and respect for the fallen soldiers of the Confederacy.

It was evident in Haley's speech that her constituents, the House of Representatives and the Senate, pressured her to remove the flag. When these speeches occur, rhetoric's importance is made clear. It would not have looked good if she had kept the flag proudly flying on state grounds. It is not likely she would have removed the flag if the shooting had not occurred. In the case of Landrieu, his speech seemed more sincere. The "Take 'em Down" activist group

[194] Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn, eds., *Rhetoric, Race, Religion, and the Charleston Shootings: Was Blind but Now I See*, Rhetoric, Race, and Religion (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 200.

wanted to ensure that at least one statue was removed in daylight. After all, they had successfully been put up in daylight.

The Confederate flag and the events in Charleston started the domino effect of Confederate removal, and New Orleans was one of the first to participate. As Landrieu has illustrated, removing the statues initially was nearly impossible. It took almost two entire years to remove these symbols from the Confederacy. While other cities and states followed after the rally in 2017, New Orleans was, in a way, a trendsetter. The Louisianian capital could follow because of Charleston's initiative and perseverance. It was not easy and will not be easy to continue the further removal of Confederate symbols.

Much is left to write about because this is a relatively new field of research. This thesis discusses a part of Confederate heritage within the broader cultural and memory studies debates. As is mentioned in the introduction, it is not about *how* it is remembered but *what* is being remembered. What is being remembered in this case is the fact that white supremacist groups still proudly fly the flag of a nation long dissolved and that supported slavery. What else is being remembered is the hate crime that occurred in Charleston and the demand for Confederate symbol removal afterward. Charleston can be understood as a pivot in memory studies because it led to a reevaluation of policy concerning Confederate symbols that had been a part of the Southern cultural landscape for over a century. This white supremacy set in stone was finally being taken apart.

What happened in Mother Emanuel on June 17th, 2015, has become part of a larger historical narrative of instigating the removal of Confederate symbols. The shooting joins the efforts of the NAACP during the Civil Rights movement and the late 1990s and early 2000s to remove Confederate symbols and the events after the Mother Emanuel shooting in 2015 that led to a rise in Confederate symbol removal from public display in the Southern United States: the "Unite the Right" rally in 2017, and the murder of George Floyd in 2020. The shooting

will be memorialized as follows: *the* catalyst of the twenty-first century that led to successfully removing Confederate symbols from public display. It inspired other states to do the same thing and reevaluate the symbols in their towns.

What is supposed to happen now? Recognizing that rebuilding or restoring solidarity will take a while is essential. For this to occur, acknowledgment of suffering and pain, arriving at a space or dialogue, and ensuring a dialogue is formed is needed. Besides this, letting the victim's families and friends grieve is paramount. The importance of religion cannot be ignored in this situation. It is, therefore, that two groups formed after the shooting. The first group is made out of the close circle of the victims at Mother Emanuel, and the second group consists of all the other people who disagree with the fact that the Confederate flag or other symbols are still present in the twenty-first century. While there have been activists for decades trying to have the Confederate flag and statues taken down, it was not until after the shooting in 2015 that it took off. The cause took off and became "popular" after the pictures of Roof and the flag were found and linked to the church shooting.

Furthermore, it is the time to let Black Americans and activists speak on monuments. And more importantly, let them be heard. As has been argued throughout this thesis, these monuments and the flag stand for certain norms and values that no longer represent the South. There is another narrative present than the one presented of "heroic acts." Do these monuments leave room to face what happened through commemorative events? The answer to this question is no. There is no notion of addressing multiple sides of Southern history, especially not when the monuments were erected in the twentieth century. The only commemoration was that of the Southern sons who had fought for the Confederacy and what they had fought for. These monuments helped to rewrite history with the help of the UDC and the Lost Cause myth.

This thesis has added to the literature surrounding the Confederate symbol debate by focusing on the first event that led to the removal of the Confederate symbol. Other research

can include the position of Confederate symbols during the Civil Rights Movement and the late 1990s and early 2000s. The heritage preservationists have not yet given up on the fight to preserve the Confederacy and its legacy. The groups and individuals who are fighting for the removal of these Confederate symbols will keep fighting for an open-minded South that accepts that these symbols of the Confederacy represent oppression and no longer belong in the twenty-first century. While the removal of these symbols may take a while, the activists will continue to fight for their removal—all remaining 2097 Confederate symbols.

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