

Symbols and Public Spaces amid Division: Practical Ideas for Community and University Leaders

The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law Divided Community
Project and Mershon Center for International Securities Studies



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Creating accessible public spaces that feel welcoming to residents and visitors can bring people together to interact across societal fault lines. Improving the symbolic nature of that space can contribute to their sense of belonging, inspire them, advance their understanding, and more. By moving proactively, leaders might also avert divisive, and sometimes violent, conflicts over flags, statues, building names, mascots, rituals, marches, holidays, commemorations, enactments, webpages and media, and other symbols and public spaces. Beyond these potential benefits of a proactive planning approach to enhancing the public environment, a collaborative process can contribute to mutual understanding and appreciation. A planning process can be most effective before conflicts over symbols divide people into opposing camps. By working proactively, leaders and others within a campus, city, region, or state – what we call here for simplicity a “community” – will also respond more constructively and collaboratively when conflicts over symbols or other divisive incidents occur. They will be able to draw on enhanced relationships and detailed plans created beforehand for responding quickly in a volatile situation.

In the midst of conflicts over symbols and public spaces, leaders can help keep people safe. If they have prepared ahead of these conflicts erupting, they can also simultaneously listen and engage community members in examining the interests underlying their reactions to symbols. That engagement might spur a deeper investment in advancing a resilient and just community.

This guide offers promising ideas, explained in more detail in the body of the guide, for pursuing these potential benefits both before and during conflicts over symbols and public spaces. [Leaders’ Checklists](#) for community/university leaders are included at the end for quick reference.

Click on the [underlined titles](#) of any of these specific planning considerations for quick and focused guidance.

When planning proactively (in the absence of conflicts over symbols):

1. **[RESEARCH](#)**: Assess the community’s history, politics, law, concerns, identities, divisions, and aspirations as these relate to goals, process, timing, stakeholders, and policies going forward (Points 2-9) for improving symbols and public spaces (p.5).
2. **[GOALS](#)**: Make explicit the goals for improving the community or campus environment (e.g., promoting understanding, making all feel valued and safe, inspiring, commemorating) as a means to focus the initiative on the most pertinent symbols and public spaces. Combine these with a deeper approach to reaching these goals (p.9).
3. **[PROCESS DESIGN](#)**: Plan, staff, create policies, and provide resources for a collaborative and/or decision-making process or use existing processes. To the extent feasible, engage stakeholders and other community members in constructive discussions, such that the symbols and interactions with them reflect the array of community members’ experience, and the process secures the support of those key to implementation and contributes to public understanding. Clarify where the decision-making power resides (p.12).
4. **[TIMING](#)**: Time the process to coincide with a confluence of interests that might contribute to its success (p.15).

5. **SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF A PLANNING GROUP:** Select and prepare a planning group to work constructively together, represent the breadth of the community, have the power to make decisions or lend credibility with decision-makers, and add expertise and bridge-building (p.16).
6. **SYMBOLS EXPERTS:** Consider engaging experts who can offer new ideas, clarify the historical record, and anticipate the ramifications of new or changed symbols and counteract false rumors about the history connected to existing symbols and public spaces (p.18).
7. **OPTIONS:** Develop a range of options for adding to, removing, combining, transforming, and explaining the contested symbols, as well as creative ways to establish interactive spaces, possibly including plans for changes unrelated to symbols (p.22).
8. **IMPLEMENTATION:** Implement the plan with attention to building understanding and relationships among members of the public and dealing with broader concerns that became apparent during the focus on symbols and public spaces. Put in place a process to assess and modify what has been created (p.27).
9. **PLAN AHEAD FOR CONFLICTS:** Develop a plan for addressing likely future conflict situations (p.28).

When symbols conflicts emerge:

10. **LISTEN AND OFFER SAFE EXPRESSION AVENUES:** Listen to staff and others who have relationships with those who care or might later care about the resolution of the symbols conflict and to symbols experts. Determine the root causes, underlying interests, political and legal issues, relevance to history and group identities, emotional investment, and potential for violence regarding each stakeholder group. **Develop safe avenues for expression regarding contested symbols** (p.30).
11. **PROCESS PLANNING:** Weigh a range of resolution processes for both the symbols/public spaces conflict and the underlying concerns, with options ranging from a quick decision to a long-range collaborative process, including multiple options in between, such as a mediation, commission, and arts council. Decide on a process or a range of processes. Appoint members. Prepare those involved in the processes so that they will work constructively. Offer emotional support for those involved, should they become a focus of hate or controversy. Make clear who has ultimate decision-making power. Coordinate with other public bodies that have authority regarding these matters (p.33).
12. **OPTIONS:** Develop a range of options for dealing with the underlying non-symbols issues as well as options for adding to, removing, combining, transforming, and explaining the contested symbols. Consider new approaches, such as creation of a new common space (p.37).
13. **COMMUNICATIONS:** Expand communications capabilities so that people hear consistent messages frequently, residents know where to go for information, and the staff is prepared to field questions from national as well as local media (p.39).
14. **PLAN AHEAD OF THE NEXT CONFLICT:** Follow the resolution with proactive planning, as described in Points 1-9 above (p.40).

PLANNING PROACTIVELY

Creating accessible public spaces that feel welcoming to residents and visitors can bring people together to interact across societal fault lines. Improving the symbolic nature of that space can contribute to their sense of belonging, inspire them, advance their understanding, and more. By moving proactively, leaders might also avert divisive, and sometimes violent, conflicts over flags, statues, building names, mascots, rituals, marches, holidays, commemorations, enactments, webpages and media, and other symbols and public spaces. Beyond these potential benefits of a proactive planning approach to enhancing the public environment, a collaborative process can contribute to mutual understanding and appreciation. A planning process can be most effective before conflicts over symbols divide people into opposing camps. By working proactively, leaders and others within a campus, city, region, or state – what we call here for simplicity a “community” – will also respond more constructively and collaboratively when conflicts over symbols or other divisive incidents occur. They will be able to draw on enhanced relationships and detailed plans created beforehand for responding quickly in a volatile situation.

1. RESEARCH

Assess the community’s history, politics, law, concerns, identities, divisions, and aspirations as these relate to goals, process, timing, stakeholders, and policies going forward (Points 2-9) for improving symbols and public spaces.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Assemble or consult with people who together can take stock of your community, especially members of the community who can affect the changes that would improve the environment and help to design the process for making those changes.

Consider the community’s and nation’s history as that provides a basis for identifying a common identity, shared aspirations, and inspiration. Examine as well the reasons that painful memories may continue to trouble or harm some in the community or may yield lessons that ought to be taught through relocation of symbols, provision of context, creation of new spaces, and more. “Understand that different perceptions and interpretations exist,” the latter a principle developed for remembering in Northern Ireland.¹

Assess community members' concerns, interests, identities, and divisions to provide a foundation for setting the goals for improving the environment and for appreciating the realities of how a proactive process can achieve those goals. Consider divisions that might be bridged through changes in the environment that promote mutual understanding, demonstrate respect, and bring people together across these fault lines. Take account of inequalities in resources and communication. Be aware that some groups might feel intimidated.

Look for instances in which community members disagree on the facts that might form a rationale for changing the environment. Recognize that historical research can provide an opportunity to establish and communicate accurate facts.

Search for matters of cultural importance to groups within the community, as a basis for finding ways to honor these topics in the environment and improve their sense of belonging of these groups.

Watch for national or local events that galvanize interest in change such that in the aftermath of these events more public officials and community members may find the time and resources required to improve symbols and public spaces (see Point 4, p. 15 regarding timing).

Research legal requirements that might affect the process and the likelihood of implementing change. Pertinent laws might include Heritage Acts that sometimes require super majorities of public bodies before changing public monuments, laws authorizing university boards of trustees to act, the Visual Artists Rights Act, various copyright laws, and legal enforcement of donors' agreements. The research might open the possibility of developing laws or university policies regarding symbols and public spaces going forward that are more closely attuned to current goals.



A group in Columbus, Ohio noted racial justice concerns and sought to add inspiring public artwork focused on a social justice and unity theme from Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in 1963: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." The resulting sculpture, "Our Single Garment of Destiny," created by Julian and Adriana Voss-Andreae, was dedicated on Martin Luther King Day, 2021 in the Washington Gladden Social Justice Park and is visible from a major downtown street and arts complex (with permission from the Greater Columbus Arts Council).¹³

Consider the political landscape as it relates to implementation of change in symbols and public spaces and the reactions to the changes. The research might, for example, indicate political differences between cities and the counties or states in which they reside. These political differences may translate into backlash and new roadblocks related to changes in symbols and public spaces.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Creating standing processes to consider ideas for change

In 2019 Providence, Rhode Island passed an ordinance that established an advisory committee, the Special Committee to Review Commemorative Works, that was designed to review and advise the city council on the “thousands of commemorative monuments and memorials that are displayed through the city” as well as on proposals for new commemorative works.² In 2021, the committee issued a draft for comment that lists what it heard, its vision for 2031, and its top strategies.³

New discoveries that propel busy people to devote time and resources to a process for improving symbols and public spaces

Sometimes the assessment will surface or provide focus on an event that galvanizes interest, suggesting that this is the right time to begin a proactive symbols/public spaces process. For example, a recently discovered burial site contained remains of indigenous children at what was Canada’s largest boarding school. The Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada described what occurred in these boarding schools in an interim report: “Removed from their families and home communities, seven generations of Aboriginal children were denied their identity through a systematic and concerted effort to extinguish their culture, language, and spirit.”⁴ The discovery sparked a deeper discussion of similar practices in the United States. The focus on appropriately memorializing the tragedies involved led to broader discussions. In 2021 U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced a staff investigation with a report to “uncover the truth about the loss of human life and lasting consequences” of the forced residential education of Native American children. Secretary Haaland acknowledged that the process of telling the truth about their families’ heartbreak and loss will be a painful process but may yield positive benefits.⁵

Careful preparation on legal limitations that may open avenues for changing the environment

During the Reconstruction Era after the Civil War, white citizens within the former Confederate states resisted the changes and established a number of memorials to the Confederacy. During that time, Virginia residents erected in Richmond, the former capital of the Confederacy, a 60-foot-tall pedestal and statue of Confederate military commander Robert E. Lee. In 1890 the Virginia legislature and governor accepted the deed to the land and statue and agreed to a deed covenant stipulating that the statue should not be removed – in perpetuity. But legal research recently offered an avenue for arguing that the state should not be required to enforce the restrictive covenants. The deed provisions did not prevent the Governor from removing the Robert E. Lee statue in 2021, the Supreme Court of Virginia ruled unanimously. The justices held, “[T]hose restrictive covenants are unenforceable as contrary to public policy and for being unreasonable because their effect is to

compel government speech, by forcing the Commonwealth to express, in perpetuity, a message with which it now disagrees.”⁶ Unlike governments that removed monuments without public notice to avert violence, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam announced the date of removal about two days ahead. On September 8, 2021, Governor Northam and a peaceful crowd watched as the state removed the statue and the attendees began singing, “Hey, hey, hey, goodbye.”⁷ The Virginia legislature asked the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts to solicit public and expert opinion to recommend a new approach to the corridor formerly displaying Confederate monuments.⁸



A collaborative process can bring about broader support for change. After such a process at the University of California at Berkeley Law School, the letters for its building, “Boalt Hall,” were removed in January, 2020, reprinted with permission from UC/Berkeley Law School Communications (photo by Alex A.G. Shapiro).

Anticipating resistance to change and adjusting the deliberative process to allow more discussion

In 2017, a University of California-Berkeley School of Law professor noticed and announced that namesake of the law building, Boalt Hall, had written articles supporting the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and promoting hate of persons of Chinese descent. UC’s Chancellor appointed a Building Name Review Committee, which in 2019 recommended removing the name from the school but also that the law school “present the relevant history.” A new law school committee then began educating the community. By 2020, when the university removed the name from the law school, the decision was broadly supported. The professor who noticed the history said that he “never sought to erase history. To the contrary. I did everything I could to broadcast it.”⁹ In 2021, the law school community worked on a mural to celebrate its current values.

Proactive planning

The Smithsonian American Art Museum conducted an art inventory in 2011 that concluded women were depicted in only 8 percent of the 5,193 U.S. public outdoor sculptures. The relatively small number of statues of women included Alice in Wonderland, Shakespeare's Juliet, and Mother Goose. A group formed to honor women suffragists. Over years and with multiple concepts debated, the sculpture unveiled in New York City's Central Park in 2020 depicted Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton talking together. The controversies continue, though commentators acknowledge that a monument with "real women" matters in terms of making women feel valued. The design has led to discussions that help people better understand the fraught positioning on race and gender among those gaining passage of the 15th and 19th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.¹⁰



Planners can expect that even symbols erected for a positive purpose may evoke negative reactions. San Francisco's "Comfort Women: Pillar of Strength" by sculptor Steven Whyte, was erected to educate and trigger reflection on the brutal realities of the sexual enslavement of girls and women in Japanese-occupied nations before and during World II, but also stimulated controversy. Photo by mliu92.

An illustration of complex, competing political consequences

About seven years ago, a campaign emerged to use symbols to educate and trigger reflection on the brutal realities of the sexual enslavement of girls and women in Japanese-occupied nations before and during World II. As a result, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 2015 decided to create a memorial to these women. The unveiling of the statue, "Comfort Women: Pillar of Strength," in 2017 led to a protest from the mayor of San Francisco's sister city in Japan and in 2018 to that city terminating the sister city status. The Japanese government maintained that it apologized for wartime acts and paid reparations to the Korean government several decades ago. The Korean government received compensation from Japan but did not distribute them to the original victims. Activists in the U.S. and Korea continue to demand individual compensation, and that group has funded comfort women statues in other locations. Locally, most Japanese Americans supported the memorial, though some Japanese Americans, particularly recent immigrants, opposed it.¹¹

2. GOALS

Make explicit the goals for improving the community or campus environment (e.g., promoting understanding, making all feel valued and safe, inspiring, commemorating) as a means to focus the initiative on the most pertinent symbols and public spaces. Combine these with a deeper approach to reaching these goals.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Consider a wide array of potential community goals including, for example: make all feel welcomed and affirmed, announce or remind all members of their community's aspirations, bring people together, increase mutual respect, help people remember, develop deeper conversations, advance social equity and correct other injustices, avoid sowing hate that might lead to targeting of individuals, demonstrate accountability for past harms (potentially including reparations), facilitate safe expression of emotions, teach history, promote free speech and assembly, assist people in understanding each other, inspire, and, especially on campuses, give people confidence that they can succeed.

Identify, preliminarily, the highest priority goals, so that these will help to guide the process design.

Use the decision-making process developed later (see Point 3, p.12) **to adjust and further prioritize goals.**

Communicate frequently with the community about the goals, as community members will trust the process and be more receptive to the results if they perceive that the planners have been transparent and embraced their own values and aspirations. Further, community members may offer ideas consistent with the goals. The goal setting may also spur community discussion about changes beyond environmental ones that might advance these goals.

IN MORE DETAIL

People are not always conscious of the effects of symbols and public spaces on themselves and even less so on others within their community or university. The goal-setting process can include listening and reflection that facilitates conscious and proactive planning of symbols and environment. It makes sense to return to discussions and adjustment of the goals throughout the process.

Planners are likely to focus first on a goal of removing public symbols and spaces that offend, such as statues and reenactments associated with the Confederacy that remain in spaces frequented by the public. As the Supreme Court of Virginia recently recognized, a statue on public land "is a form of public speech." The justices added, "This means that any symbolism associated with the [Robert E.] Lee Monument, whether its

Symbols recognize who we are as Americans.

Rev. Nelson B. Rivers, III, Pastor, Charity Missionary Baptist Church; Vice President, Religious Affairs and External Relations, National Action Network, who advocated for removal of the Confederate battle flag from the South Carolina statehouse for four decades.

historical and social significance changes over time, is a message endorsed by the government."¹²

Much can be gained if planners expand the focus to include other goals as well, as illustrated just below by the goal setting at the University of Virginia, South Africa, and a city in Northern Ireland. Of course, this discussion assumes for simplicity that the community goals will be positive in nature, but this has not always been the case historically. Planners need to be attentive to groups that may seek to aggrandize one group of people or to intimidate.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Goal-setting as a basis for the proactive planning process

The University of Virginia's proactive initiative preceded the demonstrations in 2017 both in the city and on campus over removal of a statue of Confederate military commander Robert E. Lee from a park in Charlottesville. The formal campus planning began in 2013 with the appointment of the President's Commission on Slavery and the University (PCSU), following six years of advocacy by a community-university coalition. The PCSU identified multiple goals including: create space that would allow for appreciation of a more complete history, promote learning about slavery and its legacy, host expression of emotions, bring people together, and allow for conversations that might lead to advancements in racial equity. The PCSU joined a student advocacy group in promoting a new memorial to the enslaved laborers. The design team lead a lengthy and widespread community engagement process that developed six designs on three sites. Ultimately, the collaborative process led to the favorite site and favorite design. The Memorial to Enslaved Laborers opened in 2020.

Recognizing the breadth and internal tensions among goals for change

The City of Derry-Londonderry in Northern Ireland has been developing projects to create more shared spaces in circumstances of substantial and sometimes violent divisions between groups defined as Catholic/Irish and Protestant/British. Policies creating shared spaces have identified the symbolic importance of parts of the city to different communities and have included the building of the Peace Bridge over the River Foyle (2011) and the repurposing of the historic Ebrington Barracks. Much of this work was based upon principles identified by the ILEX consultancy group:

"A physical space where people of all backgrounds can live, work, learn and play together.

A 'shared public space' free from symbols or displays of aggression, threat or intimidation, whether real or perceived.

Balancing the right to freedom of expression and assembly with rights to security, freedom of movement and to live free from fear and intimidation.

A 'shared public space' fosters interactions that move beyond joint access to or use of a particular space that create sustained connection and relationships between groups and individuals.



A symbolic space can offer opportunities for meaningful commemoration. This photo shows a University of Virginia gathering to honor George Floyd at the University's Memorial to Enslaved Laborers, opened in 2020. Reprinted with permission from the University of Virginia Office of Communications.

A public space where diversity, cultural expression and difference can be expressed, tolerated and celebrated.

A place marked by tolerance of genuine cultural diversity, where what have previously been antagonistic communal expressions become a non-antagonistic spectrum of individual identities which evolve through their interaction.”¹⁴

The planners acknowledged that they would sometimes have to weigh competing goals, such as to gather people across societal fault lines; offer freedom of expression, safety, and a welcoming experience; and celebrate cultural identities.

3. PROCESS DESIGN

Plan, staff, create policies, and provide resources for a collaborative and/or decision-making process or use existing processes. To the extent feasible, engage stakeholders and other community members in constructive discussions, such that the symbols and interactions with them reflect the array of community members’ experience, and the process secures the support of those key to implementation and contributes to public understanding. Clarify where the decision-making power resides.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Keeping in mind the assessment (Point 1, p.5) and planning goals (Point 2, p.9):

Determine who will make the decision and design the consultative or collaborative process leading to that decision.

Weigh the values of maximizing input, storytelling, and community-wide discussions against indications favoring a quick decision.

When a quick decision seems warranted, consider engaging people after the decision in a process that builds relationships and understanding.

Develop policies and processes for proactive symbols/public space planning over time.

Consult with community members (for example, through focus groups) to identify different voices, secure new ideas, build relationships, and provide an opportunity to hear and be heard.

Work deliberately to hear from those who would not usually become involved, such as persons who: feel targeted by aspects of the environment, might oppose the proposed changes, could help implement changes, and might develop relationships across typical fault lines within the community.

Consider using facilitators/mediators, who: can involve those who would not typically attend a public meeting, are experienced in building relationships and understanding, might generate more trust among those who associate public officials with the status quo, and can create (working with the community) an appropriate collaborative process.

IN MORE DETAIL

Collaborative processes, if well-planned, may contribute even more than the changes themselves. People may not notice things that are objectionable to other people. This is a chance to educate them not only about the symbols but also to promote mutual understanding.

Engagement may also help people understand that there are competing points of view, not solely their own point of view, that will be weighed in decision-making. Those involved will be better prepared for change; some community members will predictably resist change otherwise. Co-design of space where everyone can lay claim to and have a role in creating the design may give broad ownership and therefore stronger support for the resources and efforts required to implement and sustain the plans. Early engagement of artists and other experts helps them understand community issues (Point 6, p.18).

Carefully planned consultation and collaboration can help bring about an environment that more closely meets the community's or campus's goals. In addition, that process, especially if expertly facilitated, can promote trust in the outcome of the process. Social science research also suggests that the group working over a period of time with equal status, enjoyment, and common goals, can advance understanding across bitter divides within the community.¹⁵ That promise is sometimes so powerful that it is achieved not only among members of the deliberative group but also positively influences those who know them.¹⁶

Bringing community members into the process may also make the decision's reversal less likely – significant because backlash to these decisions occurs with some frequency.

In some situations, delays carry more significance. In the South Carolina illustration described below, the Confederate battle flag over the statehouse deeply offended many people. Time mattered. Another key circumstance was that the time was ripe for doing something to show the state's support for its Black residents. That circumstance might not recur for a while. Further, suggesting that there was something to talk about before removing the flag might itself add insult. These factors weigh in favor of a quick decision.

Collaborative process often take time and thus poses challenges in another setting as well – for universities where new students arrive each year with enthusiasm about being a part of positive change, while those who have been working on the issues over time suffer from fatigue and impatience at bringing new students up to speed.

Bad process guarantees failure even though good process doesn't guarantee success

*E. Frank Dukes, University of Virginia
Institute for Engagement and Negotiation*

ILLUSTRATIONS

A collaborative process leading to broad support for change

In 2020 the National Trust for Historic Preservation contracted with two mediators, Selena Cozart and Frank Dukes of the University of Virginia Institute for Engagement and Negotiation, to help with a 27-year-long controversy. The parties were the governing body (board of directors for the Montpelier Foundation) for the Virginia plantation home of James Madison, the fourth President and a drafter of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, and the descendants of the other 300 Montpelier's enslaved residents, the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC). In 2021, those involved in the mediation reached agreement. Under the mediated agreement, half of the foundation's board members will be members nominated by the MDC. The site will host a history of Montpelier that includes the stories of those who were enslaved there.¹⁷

The process of a community engaging with each other and deciding what to do is the real transformation, the real reckoning with systemic injustice,

Dominic Bryan, an anthropologist at Queens, University of Belfast, Northern Ireland

Circumstances favoring a quick decision

For decades, people marched to the South Carolina Capitol to ask that Confederate battle flag flying there be removed. They said that the flag conveyed that racism, hate, and white supremacy were alive and well in America. State officials retained the flag, nonetheless. Then in 2015 – three weeks after a white gunman who had posed with Confederate flags was charged with the shooting of Bible Study attendees at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston that left nine African Americans dead – the South Carolina legislature approved, and the Governor signed, a bill removing the flag. Should there have been a collaborative process first? Rev. Nelson B. Rivers, III, Pastor, Charity Missionary Baptist Church in North Charleston, who had advocated that change for decades, said that an offer to talk before removing the flag would be insulting. “There’s nothing to talk about. Every day it stays up, it says, ‘Your life does not matter as much as our debate.’”

Competing timing and process considerations

The statues in the U.S. Capitol's National Statuary Hall Collection offer an illustration of weighing the advantages of using existing deliberative processes against the time that significant numbers of people would feel that they were enduring a toxic environment. State leaders decide what statue represents their state, under current Congressional rules. Using that process, Virginia recently removed the statue of Robert E. Lee, the Confederacy's military commander, and replaced it with the statue of civil rights advocate Mary McLeod Bethune – without national political controversy. In contrast, a great deal of controversy arose when the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill to change the usual state-initiative process to a Congressional one and remove statues of the president and vice president of the Confederacy, among others, which the states submitting the

statues had made no decision to withdraw.¹⁸ A former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus explained that the Caucus was impatient with waiting for the states to remove the statues of persons who betrayed the nation in order to keep their ancestors enslaved. “Imagine how I feel and other African Americans and people of color feel walking through Statuary Hall ...” she said, as quoted by The Hill.¹⁹

4. TIMING

Time the process to coincide with a confluence of interests that might contribute to its success.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Know the community and its readiness for focusing on and implementing change (see Point 1, p.5). Recognize that the climate will change (changes following the George Floyd killing and video, for example) so keep watching.

Consider, regarding timing, its effects on: the level of anger and potential for violence, politics, power imbalances, and the willingness of public officials to engage in and support the work, especially noting their potential concerns, such as whether the process might undermine public support for their re-election and might be costly to implement and maintain.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Influence of an event

NPR reports that governments, institutions, and protestors removed 16 Confederate symbols in the entire year 2019. In contrast, these actors removed 59 symbols in the three months following George Floyd’s murder in 2020²⁰ and 160 were gone before the end of 2020.²¹

Choosing a prime time

In Philadelphia, Mississippi, where civil rights workers were murdered in 1964, some community members had been honoring the murdered people with marches and commemoration for years, but the media and local government largely ignored the murders and focused instead on the history related to white residents. The public attention surrounding a 1989 commemoration was not enough to counter the suppressed collective memory. But a community decision in 2004 to hold a commemoration created a sustained conversation and a commitment to continued commemorative work among local coalition members. The convergence of changes that produced a greater impact on public understanding of the murders in 2004 included lessons learned from the 1989 commemoration, state support, and a growing number of civil rights-era “cold cases” across the region.²²

Prompting a public focus

In late 2021 the nonprofit Monument Lab published an audit of monuments, and its report received national media coverage.²³ They identified the 50 people most frequently depicted through public statues, noting that half enslaved others and that all but six were white men. Such news can sometimes change the public focus and prompt a desire for change.



One issue for planners is whether public symbols convey that community members from all backgrounds are valued. The Monument Lab created this composite of the 50 people most frequently depicted in the U.S. through public statues. Research such as this can provide a basis for an assessment by planners. Reprinted with permission from Monument Lab. From Monument Lab, National Monument Audit (2021), <https://monumentlab.com/audit>. Credits for individual pictures are listed on page 35 of the Audit Report, <https://monumentlab.com/monumentlab-nationalmonumentaudit.pdf>

5. SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF A PLANNING GROUP

Select and prepare the planning group to: work constructively together, represent the breadth of the community, have the power to make decisions or lend credibility with decision-makers, and add expertise and bridge-building.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Engage a group of deliberators/planners who together:

- Understand community viewpoints that need to be weighed,
- Have the authority to decide or provide a connection to key decision-makers, such as city council, arts council, state-level officials, members of university board of trustees, donors, and nonprofit and foundation leaders,

- Have the trust of the community and can help prepare the community for change, understanding, and involvement,
- Bring needed expertise or have access to it,
- Will work well together,
- Are bridgebuilders among various identity groups,
- As a group demonstrate that leaders take seriously improving the environment of the community, and
- Have a sense of urgency about improving the environment.

Offer preparation for the group members. The training, resources, and staff support may improve the effectiveness of a group that includes members who may not be acquainted with all of the issues or accustomed to working on a similar group or in a public arena.

Provide staff assistance to the deliberative planning group, so that these volunteers can carry out their duties effectively in a few hours per month.

IN MORE DETAIL

Public leaders may be tempted to appoint to a planning group those individuals who put themselves forward as movement leaders. But these persons may not have the respect of those whose viewpoints they would represent and may not be ready to exercise the skills required for a collaborative process conducted in open meetings and supported by a staff. The thoughtful choice and preparation of the chair as well as the individuals who will plan together can facilitate a more effective process.

Respected and thoughtful leaders of various parts of the community are asked to do many things in addition to serving on a planning committee. With careful design and provision for staff, members of the planning group will have to give only a few hours per month. The result may be that those most valuable to the planning may be willing to participate.

Sometimes a planning group already exists in the community and is willing to devote its time to symbols and public spaces, as illustrated below. If so, and members have already developed relationships and ways of doing business that generated public trust, this approach might speed the planning.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Using an ongoing group

Oregon's Kitchen Table, based at Portland State University, is a platform for communities to use an array of approaches, including deliberation and examining the trade-offs inherent in public decisions. By engaging with members from all different walks of the community, Oregon's Kitchen Table can surface areas where community members hold different values, often tied to symbols, and then convey that information to political leaders. Through deliberative democracy, some of Oregon's Kitchen Table's projects have looked at how school boundaries, political boundaries, transportation centers, and housing developments may not only raise practical questions but also highly emotional ones as well.²⁴

6. SYMBOLS EXPERTS

Consider engaging experts who can offer new ideas, anticipate the ramifications of new or changed symbols, and counteract false rumors about the history connected to existing symbols and public spaces.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Take into account the goals, context, and likely results in selecting experts, who might come from disciplines such as: architecture, anthropology, history, art, psychology, sociology, dispute resolution, political science, and more.

IN MORE DETAIL

In general, planners can expect certain competing viewpoints to emerge at the prospect of changing the environment. Proponents of change will be optimistic about the goals that can be achieved by changing the environment and earnest about the need to remove offensive and hurtful reminders from the public landscape. Opponents will have emotional attachments to places of memory and cultural icons. They will cite the slippery slope ("If we change this, what else do we have to change? Are we renaming our cities?"). They will downplay the positive effects of change ("Wouldn't it accomplish more to invest these resources in education?"). But consulting with experts can help planners to anticipate and prepare for these and other potential reasons for opposition and offer imaginative ideas for making progress, even during conflicts.

Historians

Historians can give context for older symbols and for the current feelings of some members in the community.

IN MORE DETAIL

They can also offer evidence to correct inaccurate “emotional truths” that people might otherwise innocently believe or cling to for other reasons. In defense of various Confederate monuments, some have argued, for example, that the Confederate states’ secession was not about slavery. Historians have re-published the declarations of secession issued by all the Confederacy states, each of which mentions slavery as a prominent cause of their secession.²⁵

Artists

If planning a new monument, consider whether bringing the artist into the process early enough to develop an understanding of not only in the specific goals of the project, but also the related current and historical community issues.

Symbols experts

Changing the environment will cause ripples that those studying symbols can flag for planners. Their scholarly work, for example, suggests that:

- A symbol has little effect unless it is placed, set up, or accompanied by programming so that the public will interact with it. For that interaction to be memorable, it may need to engage more than just the visual perceptions of visitors.²⁶
- Symbols play an important role in individual and group identities, intimately linked to the emotional aspects of group identities (race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc.).
- The meaning of symbols and effectiveness of public spaces to gather people will change over time and be perceived differently by various individuals and groups. For example, people may stop using a public space if they drive past a line of other visitors’ parked cars displaying bumper stickers which they view as threatening.
- The meaning of symbols is dependent upon the physical, political, and cultural context in which they exist.
- The context of symbols is linked to the type and regularity of the rituals in which they are used. For example, torches carried by marchers shouting anti-Semitic slogans convey threat while the torches may be perceived as providing lighting at outdoor night-time memorial service.
- New or removed symbols sometimes traumatize and sometimes incite people to violence.
- It is important to remember that contestation over a symbol is likely to represent more underlying social issues. Symbols, even if demanded, may be seen as a gesture – no more – if not accompanied by programmatic or legal changes.

IN MORE DETAIL

- The process of creating or dealing with symbols may sometimes have a more important impact than the symbol itself, as sustained collective efforts to transform symbols can also lead to discussions about changes in policies and practices (but consider the counterweights to that statement discussed in Point 3, p.12).
- Commemorating injustice may unwittingly give the “oxygen of publicity” to the hateful persons if the focus is on the perpetrator rather than the victims.
- Planners need to provide for upkeep if they expect the symbol to achieve its goals in the future.
- Changing symbols has been a tradition itself. The Monument Lab reports, “[T]he first recorded monument removal in the United States was on July 9, 1776 (statue of King George III of England, New York, New York).” The report adds that over the years many monuments have been removed for non-political reasons, such as “aesthetic updates, the dedications of new parks, moved roadways, and scrap metal drives during World War II.”²⁷

ILLUSTRATIONS

Changing public understanding

Marc Howard Ross, a Bryn Mawr political science professor, has studied symbols as a counter to the tendency of those living in the northern United States to forget collectively that slavery was common in the North. With few visual reminders and for other reasons, those in the North may inaccurately view slavery as a “Southern problem” and therefore feel less responsibility to respond to its aftermath.²⁸ A potential counter to this excuse for Northerners not getting involved in advancing racial equity might include changes in the public and commemorative landscape that remind the public of the North’s role in slavery for two centuries. One outgrowth of Ross’ work is the plan to construct a new cemetery to honor the lives of 8,000 Black persons whose remains were discovered buried under a Northern city playground.

Trust in disinterested historians

Virginia Supreme Court Justices unanimously cited as rationale for its ruling to permit removal, despite contractual language to retain the statue, an expert’s testimony that “the [Robert E.] Lee Monument was erected as a symbol of defiance to Reconstruction, and as an unapologetic statement regarding the continued belief in the virtue of the ‘Lost Cause’ and in the Confederacy’s pre-Civil War way of life, including the subjugation of people of African descent. The post-Reconstruction proliferation of Confederate monuments was contemporaneous with and closely related to the passage of racially discriminatory policies. . . .”²⁹

Drawing on outside resources to help a community memorialize, educate, and promote discussion

Symbols experts can guide a community to draw on resources such as the Equal Justice Initiative, a national nonprofit that has expertise and a commitment to collaborating with communities to memorialize, educate, and promote discussion of racial justice. The initiative, for example, offers ideas that communities can implement without substantial resources, such as its brochures and videos, a “History of Racial Injustice Calendar,” help in gathering soil at lynching sites for exhibits, erecting historical markers, and a general guide to local communities, [The Community Remembrance Project Catalog](#). Its own Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery provide examples of engaging education, commemoration, and discussions about the past and future.³⁰

Providing for upkeep

Already graffiti mars the Black Lives Matter signs painted on streets across the nation in the aftermath of George Floyd’s death. For some, the continual upkeep might be expensive. For example, the Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery commissioned 16 artists to create the street mural below.

“Black Lives Matter” murals have already been damaged by vandals,³¹ raising the question of how they should be maintained.



Following the death of George Floyd, the Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery (in Minneapolis) commissioned a block-long mural painted on the surface of Plymouth Avenue on the North Side. 16 artists each filled up one letter in the phrase ‘BLACK LIVES MATTER’. Photo by August Schwerdfeger.

7. OPTIONS

Develop a range of options for adding to, removing, combining, transforming, and explaining the contested symbols, as well as creative ways to establish interactive spaces, possibly including plans for changes unrelated to symbols.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Keeping in mind community goals regarding the environment, identify symbols and public spaces with the potential to serve these goals, by themselves or in combination with other changes and stakeholder involvement.

Think broadly about what might affect how people experience their environment including holidays, festivals, parades, ceremonies, music, food served at public events, pictures on university websites, events on a holy day for members of a particular religion or ethnicity, rituals such as battle reenactments, who lives in college dormitories, and art. The ritual context in which symbols are used is central to understanding meaning and changes in meaning.

Anticipate the ways people will feel threatened by change so that the planning can weigh the needs of these individuals.

Examine existing symbols that work against the identified goals or that might lead to conflicts because of advocacy regarding national or local issues.

Consider what other steps, such as storytelling or policy changes, might be combined with the symbols strategy to help achieve the community's goals.

Identify the ways in which there is tension among the goals served by each option, such as approaches that make people comfortable to engage while at the same time protecting people from insults and threats.

Consider ways to allow future modification, such as temporary exhibits or policies that facilitate changes over time.

IN MORE DETAIL

Generating multiple options and discussing them with community members and experts (as discussed in Points 5 and 6, pp.16 and 18) increases the chances of settling on a symbols approach that meets multiple interests. A multiple-option approach also encourages the kind of deliberation that promotes understanding across societal divides. This process can help identify potential opposition to any additions or modifications of symbols, so that the potential backlash can be weighed in the choice of options.

IN MORE DETAIL

By combining both symbol and non-symbol options, planners can gauge the degree to which that combination serves their goals. The combined approach may be particularly helpful when a group has demanded the relocation of a symbol to achieve something visible because they perceive that visible change may keep up the momentum to achieve other, more important long-term goals. If deep changes can be implemented in the short term, the group may be open to a different symbol-based strategy, one that might honor the interests of yet other groups.

To begin the option creation, staff for the planning group might suggest a series of discussion questions. Questions to encourage the group to think of options that make positive contributions toward achieving goals might include, depending on the community or campus goals:

- a. What new or modified ritual or other symbol would help the whole community understand something currently important to part of the community, make part of the community feel valued, or instead provide a way for the community to grieve or celebrate together?
- b. Would commemorating difficult pasts with current effects (e.g., discrimination that reduced wealth for descendants) facilitate change?
- c. Would a new symbol promote understanding across the community's fault lines or feel welcoming to a broader base of people?
- d. Could a symbol lead to a transformative shift in how people understand history, and thus their determination not to repeat the errors?

To anticipate how existing symbols might undermine community goals or are resented by members of the community, focus on the present and future. Questions to spur discussion might include:

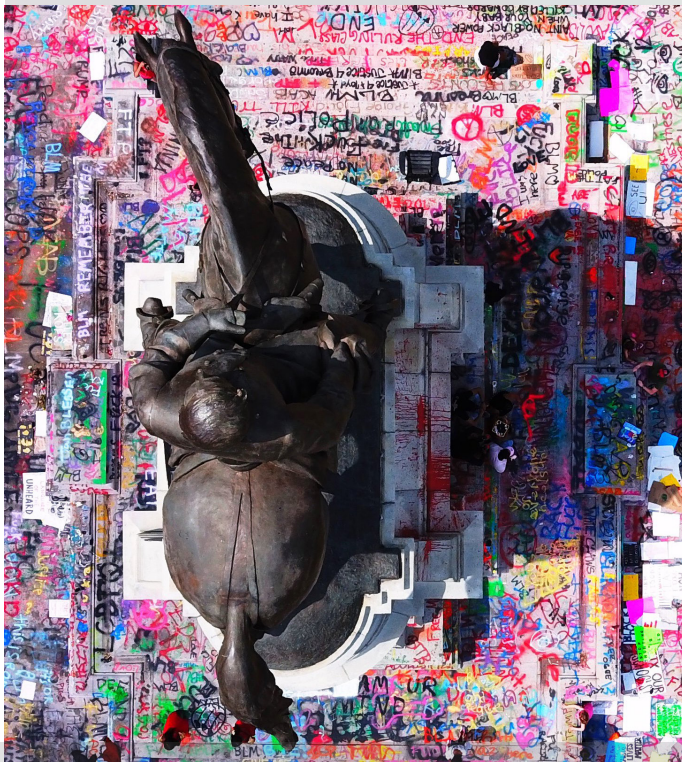
- a. Do the symbols honor persons whose accomplishments required the oppression of others?
- b. Do the symbols encapsulate narratives of history while omitting the difficult, painful, and shameful parts that continue to affect persons in the present or recognize them such that it honors those now affected?
- c. Do the symbols honor heroic acts by some (often whites and men) but not others?
- d. Has a positive symbol fallen into disrepair, so that it reflects disrespect rather than respect?
- e. Will the symbol stimulate hateful feelings among a portion of the community, such that it might incite violence targeted against people in a different group?
- f. Does the symbol convey false information about the nation's or community's ideals?

IN MORE DETAIL

Relocation or destruction of a symbol that offends or venerates hate is the most obvious way to change the environment. It may sometimes be the best solution. In fact, the failure to move a symbol expeditiously may result in violence. A number of U.S. cities and campuses, for example, removed Confederate statues proactively after watching the violence that occurred in in the 2017 Charlottesville “Unite the Right” protest focused on the potential relocation of a statue of Confederate military commander Robert E. Lee.

Nothing is set in stone, even those things that appear to be. [H]istory, whatever else it can contribute, confers no absolute entitlements in relation to the streets and squares of the modern city.

Dominic Bryan et al., regarding Belfast, Northern Ireland³²



The city did not remove the graffiti surrounding the Richmond, Virginia statue of Confederate military commander Robert E. Lee, allowing to remain the messages of current opposition to it. The city removed the statue in 2021. Photo by VCU Capital News Service.

At other times, though, a group may give a symbol such cultural significance that relocation may spark conflict while achieving little. Planners may want to consider other options illustrated below, such as:

- relocating from a busy public space,
- finding a new name to replace offending ones,
- creating new spaces,
- setting up temporary exhibits,
- adding enactments and explanations,
- deliberately allowing the space to become overgrown and covered with graffiti through neglect to communicate its lack of connection to the current community and its aims,
- augmenting something else that will gain more attention,
- creating positive events, holiday, and rituals,
- finding other ways to honor the identity that feels threatened (e.g., “that is our flag”) by the contemplated change, and
- eliminating all of something, such as all statues in public spaces or all buildings named for donors.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Symbols as part of other changes

A century ago, the Florida legislature permitted the City of Sanford to annex Goldsboro, a nearby city that had been founded and run by Black persons since shortly after the Civil War. Sanford renamed Goldsboro's streets for white persons. After the Trayvon Martin killing in 2012 that led to years of demonstrations, the city began working to advance racial equity. As part of that effort, they worked with current residents of the Goldsboro area to re-name the streets for its Black founders and heroes.

Moving and contextualizing symbols

Budapest, Hungary relocated statues of Soviet figures to a field outside town to acknowledge the hurt caused by constant interaction with the symbols while preserving the historical or cultural significance for those desiring to visit the statues. The architect designing the new space said, "This park is about dictatorship. And at the same time, because it can be talked about, described, built, this park is about democracy. After all, only democracy is able to give the opportunity to let us think freely about dictatorship."³³

Making the symbol interactive

The University of Virginia developed a new space, discussed in Point 2, p. 9, that reflects on the contributions of and suffering by enslaved persons. At the same time, the university created a community engagement committee to engage others with the space. This group, which included multiple descendants of enslaved persons at the University of Virginia, prompted them to form a new group, Descendants of the Enslaved Communities at UVA. That group now hosts events and interchanges at the memorial.

Sensitivity to where people will take note of a symbol

To bring to mind the tragedy of police violence, organizers erected signs to commemorate George Floyd's murder by a police officer with signs that the public would encounter at Floyd's place of work and other spaces that he visited on a regular basis.

Temporary exhibits

A descendent of the mass killing in Bosnia created a temporary exhibit of coffee cups from the victims' families, gaining permission to set them up for a few days in central places in a series of cities around the world and interact with visitors.³⁴ Sometimes people spontaneously create exhibits, such as the grieving persons who left stuffed animals and flowers on the sidewalk after Trayvon Martin was killed in 2012 by a neighborhood watch volunteer. The City of Sanford, Florida handled these temporary exhibits sensitively, discussing with residents how they might be preserved and moved to a location where they would be valued and away from destructive weather effects.

A new narrative for a historic space

For years, visitors to the Whitney Plantation, founded on the Mississippi River in Louisiana in 1752, perceived an idyllic setting, with no note of the plight of enslaved plantation workers. A few years ago, organizers changed the tours to focus on the suffering endured by enslaved persons, including enactments, thereby creating a symbol that teaches the horrors of slavery.³⁵



Contrasting photos of the Whitney Plantation, showing the home for enslaved persons (left) and owner (right), reprinted with permission of the Whitney Plantation Museum, <https://www.whitneyplantation.org/photo-gallery/>. Programing for visitors now focuses on the suffering of these enslaved persons.

A new museum

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati offers exhibits, learning materials, stories, and events that attract visitors from across the nation to a portion of the Ohio River that was a crossing point to freedom for thousands of enslaved persons. The goal is to promote freedom today.

No new statues

British columnist Gary Younge argues that all would be better off to take down the old statues and refrain from erecting new ones. The new ones, he argues, will likely be the subject of controversy in 50 years or so. He suggests instead that we honor those we admire through the educational curricula, museums, and celebrations.³⁶

A new celebration

The nation in 2021 recognized Juneteenth – June 19 – as a federal holiday. A number of cities and states had already given it official recognition. Juneteenth was celebrated previously primarily by Black Americans as the day that slaves in Texas first received the benefit of President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, issued about two and half years before they learned about it. Making the celebration more universal is aimed at encouraging all to honor that history and promoting understanding. Celebrations sometimes include singing, street fairs, historical reenactments, and prayer breakfasts.

8. IMPLEMENTATION

Implement the plan with attention to building understanding and relationships among members of the public and dealing with broader concerns that became apparent during the focus on symbols and public spaces. Put in place a process to assess and modify what has been created.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Anticipate resistance to change and develop a strategy in response and prepare leaders to respond quickly and effectively.

Take time, when feasible, for a communications initiative to develop broader public support.

Consider fitting the implementation within existing patterns, such as during already scheduled events and parades, within existing museums, or where people expect to learn.

Identify other goals for change, already generally accepted, and try to fit within those plans.

Will it fit within the community's: Tourism strategy? Economic development? Redevelopment or infrastructure initiatives? Events planning? Or for a university, within the university's: Student activity goals? Diversity plans? Publicity for scholarly programs? Need for events space? Campus beautification efforts?

Watch social media for inaccurate information (e.g. "The 9/11 attacks never happened.") and **refute it.**

Find private resources to blunt arguments about best use of tax dollars.

Develop influential endorsers, including those respected by likely opponents locally and at other levels.

Invite people to a pilot version of what is planned, as some people may imagine that they will dislike something until they experience it.

Plan for upkeep, publicity, staffing, and even relocation.

IN MORE DETAIL

The communications strategy put in place for implementation can be used as well when conflicts arise, as discussed in Point 13, p.39. The time will be well spent to develop a communications "tree" regarding those who will be putting out information, those watching for and refuting false information, and development of relationships with community members who have influence in the community and on social media.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Explaining and celebrating during the implementation can promote public understanding and awareness.

The City of Orlando renamed Stonewall Jackson Road as Roberto Clemente Road, explaining that to reach its goal of making the city “a more welcoming, inclusive place for all” that it would honor Baseball Hall of Famer Clemente, who died in a plane crash while bringing supplies to survivors of an earthquake in Nicaragua. The announcement invited community members to an unveiling ceremony where they were to be joined by Clemente’s sons.³⁷

Tie new symbols authentically to the community.

Steven Whyte, the sculptor of “Comfort Women: Pillar of Strength,” pictured in Point 1, p.9, consults before creating public art with members of the community. He explains:

“Public art is only effective or affective when it is authentic. Authenticity comes from careful research and collaboration with both the subject matter featured in the work and the community who will serve as the home and stewards of the artwork. I want to honor the story I’m telling in a manner that will have permanent resonance. The community is my guide to the nuance and sensitivity required to make that possible.”

9. PLAN AHEAD FOR CONFLICTS

Develop a plan for addressing likely future conflict situations.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Create public policies that establish an expectation that symbols and public spaces will change over time. For example, in future donor agreements, universities might limit the duration of the clauses related to naming public spaces.

Establish detailed plans about who will do what to carry out the strategies discussed in Points 10-14, should a conflict arise.

Deepen relationships with those who can help to encourage a peaceful response during a volatile situation.

IN MORE DETAIL

Absent creation of new policies to facilitate change, there may be legal and democratic processes for preservation but none to authorize renegotiation or relocation.

A conflict over symbols and public spaces may develop in hours rather than days. Preparation may be the only way to be sure that relationships are developed, the leadership team members know the roles they should play immediately, and provision has been made to add contract workers in key areas, such as communication and mediation, as discussed in other Divided Community Project publications for community and university leaders.³⁸

ILLUSTRATIONS

Changing symbols/public space policies going forward

The nation of South Africa provides an illustration of removing legal barriers to creating the environment it sought under its new status of universal suffrage. In 1999 South Africa by statute gave authority to transform heritage institutions, public names, and holidays to promote “racial transformation, reconciliation, and nation building.”³⁹ Following this, the nation, for example, created the National Day of Reconciliation to replace the Day of the Vow, which the previous Afrikaner-dominated regime observed to celebrate that God gave Afrikaners victory in a 1838 battle against the Zulu nation. They renamed Port Elizabeth International Airport for Chief David Stuurman, a Khoi leader considered a hero who resisted subjugation by colonialists.

WHEN SYMBOLS CONFLICTS EMERGE

Conflicts about symbols and public spaces may be about much more than that. To maintain trust and avoid eroding a sense of community during a symbols contest, consult, listen to, and demonstrate an understanding of what lies beneath the demands and concern for all members of the community. Once a conflict begins, groups stake out positions publicly and passions increase – often before any process can begin. It will then be difficult to find an option that pleases everyone. One group will often want change. Another group will want to preserve what was established historically or artistically, will not understand why the contested symbol is problematic, or will raise the “slippery slope” argument about what else will have to be changed after this one. But a collaborative process may help enhance trust and a sense of community even if it is not practical to convene that process until after leaders make decisions about the contested symbols. A collaborative process may also lead to deeper and more significant change on issues such as social justice or pandemic disagreements underlying the conflicts over symbols and open spaces. It may decrease backlash, as those opposed to change have gained an understanding of the reasons for it, even if they do not support them.

10. LISTEN AND OFFER SAFE EXPRESSION AVENUES

Listen to staff and others who have relationships with those who care or might later care about the resolution of the symbols conflict and to symbols experts. Determine the root causes, underlying interests, political and legal issues, relevance to history and group identities, emotional investment, and potential for violence regarding each stakeholder group. Develop safe avenues for expression regarding contested symbols.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

The following strategies are designed to be implemented expeditiously, once a symbols conflict has occurred:

Consult with community or campus leaders who are community bridge builders or have a stake in the conflict. Listen to their concerns. Seek their help in constructive communication and problem solving before you make decisions about next steps. Let the public know about the consultations. Keep these leaders informed on an ongoing basis.

Engage especially communities that are most directly affected by the conflict. Consider using mediators to get in touch with these communities.

Develop a protocol between the chief executive official and law enforcement (including nearby agencies that may become involved) and let the public know that they are working together on a constructive response. Keep key city/county department/campus staff in the communication loop. The protocol should take into account the various motives for participation (express grief or outrage, achieve change, oppose other positions, or act as opportunists) and the various stages of protest (including particularly the winding down period when property damage or violence is more likely to occur).

Use communication approaches and other means that reach and are trusted by each pertinent group within the community, city/county staff, social media influencers, and external audiences. If not ready to make decisions, tell the community what values will govern responses to the conflict. Monitor social media and counter misinformation. Move quickly to reflect the urgency felt by the public.



What leaders can do constructively changes in the midst of conflict over symbols and public spaces. Still, collaborative processes can play a positive role either as part of decision-making in response to requests for change or after those decisions. In this photo, protestors and law enforcement face off in demonstration in Marin County, California, on June 17, 2020, regarding a street named for and a statue of Sir Francis Drake, an English explorer thought to have been involved in trading enslaved Africans. Photo by Peg Hunter.

Call on experts who can help leaders understand the underlying political, historical, and economic aspects of the problems.

Help community members understand why a symbol is troublesome to others. It might, for example, celebrate those who oppressed the ancestors of some parts of the community. Conveying personal stories might help.

Indicate that the community or university acknowledges protest as a valid expression of civic voice and engagement.

Offer safe avenues for residents and staff to express their views and emotions, keeping rival groups apart both at the demonstration and walking to and from parking.

Plan for creation of a community command center to facilitate quick communications between law enforcement of all involved departments, chief administrators, those who know each affected part of the community, and mediators.

Train volunteers who can help keep protest activity peaceful. They can help set the tone, separate opposing groups, or stand between protestors and law enforcement, mediate, and act as observers.

Lay the groundwork for more discussion/deliberation regarding both the immediate and underlying concerns. Commit publicly to these plans. Be sure that the announced timeline is realistic.

Remember that the issues need not be defined by demands, but rather by the concerns underlying them.

Search for the root causes, identities and underlying interests for the viewpoints being expressed.

Stay in touch with groups within the community and the ways that they define the issues.

Avoid giving voice or attention to racist or other hate-based views, focusing instead, where feasible, on the harm to those targeted and on the heroes who protect and comfort those targeted.

Offer support for faculty and staff dealing directly with conflict and for students who feel targeted by the conflict.

IN MORE DETAIL

Once a symbols conflict emerges, time is of the essence and yet the tasks facing leaders are complex. Ignoring even a few of these actions can lead to injuries and even death, according to an after-action report on the 2017 Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally to protect the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee.⁴⁰ Preparation is key, as few community and campus leaders have the time to pursue all these actions in the hours and days after a conflict arises unless they have prepared in advance to do so. The Divided Community Project has published separate guides for community and campus leaders that offer more detailed ideas for leaders in this situation, as well as ideas to prepare ahead for this situation.⁴¹

A key factor will be informing actions by reacting to the underlying interests rather than the presented demands and opposition. Often a symbol that seems hateful to one group may be a cultural icon for another. Understanding the reasons various groups have focused on a symbol helps to summarize what is going on for the community, promote mutual understanding, develop options, and predict likely actions.

Underlying interests also inform decisions. Changing symbols and public spaces, but not in the underlying reasons for them, can be problematic, and seems rarely to lead to satisfaction. Conversely, dealing with the underlying issues can be partially satisfying even if the symbols and public spaces are not changed.

When searching for the root causes, it may help to ask persons with varying viewpoints and histories why the symbols are powerful in the first place. Special care in this inquiry may be warranted if the concern relates to race. It might be easy for white persons to believe that symbols, such as buildings all named for white men who supported the racial policies of their times, are not about race, while People of Color may feel that the building names tell them that they do not belong in this space.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Preceding a decision with listening, framing the issues and solution, and following a decision with a collaborative process regarding new symbols and accompanying actions

In 2020, the Principal of Bountiful High School in Bountiful, Utah received a petition from two alumni, supported by some students, to end the use of “Braves” as the school’s mascot. He began a listening process over a period of months, including a 25-member consultation committee, written comments and both public and private meetings with students, faculty, staff, representatives of the Shoshone Nation, and other community members.⁴² The controversy between pro and con groups became raw at times – in one public meeting the mayor told one person objecting to the mascot that she ought to be

less easily offended.⁴³ After this consultation period of several months, the principal announced a decision to change the mascot and the beginning of a collaborative process to select the new mascot. At the conclusion of that process in 2021, the school chose a new mascot, a red-tailed hawk. Throughout this process, the principal framed the issues in ways that helped each group understand the other's interests, making personal the importance of being open to new ideas. He acknowledged his understanding of those who value tradition, noting his wife's graduation from Bountiful High School and his own decades long association with the school. He explained what he had learned during the listening period about why not only the symbol offended members of the school and community but so did the stereotypical and insulting depictions of Native Americans that the mascot had stimulated. He characterized his own views as having been changed by the heartfelt statements, and he aligned his decision with the poet Maya Angelou's admonition to "do the best you can, until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."⁴⁴ In the end, some individuals reacted negatively to the change in a 70-year-old symbol, but news articles did not note as much rancor as in earlier articles. Those petitioning for the change, Native American representatives, and a state representative gave supportive statements that were appreciative of the processes and the decision. The Bountiful High School faculty greeted the announcement with enthusiastic applause.⁴⁵

Changing symbols and public spaces, but not in the underlying reasons for them, can be problematic, and seems less likely to lead to satisfaction

In 2019 a student at the University of Wisconsin complained that the Homecoming Committee made a video for a football game half-time that did not show any students of color, despite having video footage of a diverse group of students. After her complaint, the video was re-done to reflect the diversity of the student body and an apology was issued. But the student who complained was not satisfied that the "symbol" was changed and a simple apology issued. She told a reporter, "It's never about the isolated incident at our institution or at any other institution. It's about that no one sees a problem until incidents like this occur. . . . [A]lthough it may just seem like a homecoming video or just somebody forgetting to be put in a video or the lighting being too bad, it's about the fact that nobody cared."⁴⁶

11. PROCESS PLANNING

Weigh a range of resolution processes for both the symbols/public space conflict and the underlying concerns, ranging from a quick decision to a long-range collaborative process, including multiple options in between, such as a mediation, commission, and arts council. Decide on a process or a range of processes. Appoint members. Prepare those involved in the processes so that they will work constructively. Offer emotional support for those involved, should they become a focus of hate or controversy. Make clear who has ultimate decision-making power. Coordinate with other public bodies that have authority regarding these matters.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Determine whether it would be better for public officials to decide quickly or instead institute a collaborative or consultative process involving the community broadly. (For more on selecting deliberators, see Point 5, p.16.)

Make explicit who will decide

and the limitations on the decision-maker's authority.

Convene a collaborative

process, even if that will occur after a decision about the contested symbols and convey a realistic timetable.

Engage a mediator, both to consult on process and to help engage the community. Consider using a mediator who is skilled in collaboration and conflict resolution processes and is familiar with the issues being discussed.



Even a quick decision to remove a symbol opens the possibility of creating a collaborative process to replace it. The toppled Christopher Columbus statue outside the Minnesota capitol building in St. Paul on June 10, 2020. Photo by Tony Webster.

IN MORE DETAIL

Should public officials decide before beginning a collaborative or consultative process?

Collaborative processes that involve relationship building, storytelling, and other processes take time. Quick decisions by public officials may make sense if:

- leaving a symbol in place will attract violence, a particular risk for prominent physical symbols such as statues in a public square.
- the symbol insults deeply and is in a situation that people encounter it regularly as they go about their lives, such as a Confederate flag flying over the state capitol, as illustrated below by the Charleston flag situation (Point 3, p.12, and below).
- delay might result in making the desired change impossible later, such as not seizing a moment when the public supports doing something or before a state legislature limits the authority of cities to move public symbols.

Absent those conditions, beginning with a consultative or collaborative dispute resolution process offers significant advantages. A collaborative process can build support, understanding, and connections within the community. The collaborative process may

IN MORE DETAIL

also be less likely to produce a backlash than a quick decision. If there is public backlash, it can lead to bitterness and battles between localities and the state, such the illustration below from Memphis, and even violence. The delay created by a collaborative dialogue may also help those who typically resist change to listen and gradually change their view about the need for change in this situation.

To reduce the time involved in a collaborative process, it may be helpful to use an existing process, such as a city arts council or a university dialogue process. Another time-saving approach is to place the immediate conflict first on the agenda, with a broader planning effort to follow. Dealing first with one significant issue may create momentum for the longer term planning.

A quick decision could be followed by a collaborative process such as that described in Points 2-9 above. Committing to convene that process may display needed openness to involvement from those throughout the community.

Alternatively, the quick decision might be labeled as a temporary one, to be re-examined and perhaps modified as the result of what is learned in the collaborative process that engages the community more broadly.

How do collaborative discussions differ in the midst of conflict?

Point 3 (p.12) above discusses collaborative processes in general, but the greater potential for anger and staking out of positions amid conflict suggest a few additional strategies:

- Consider using a mediator who is experienced in dealing with parties in conflict. Mediators can shuttle among people if some “see no reason to talk,” as often happens after firm stands have been taken. They sometimes can be accepted even when people are angry with or don’t trust public officials. Their experienced facilitation can allow the public officials to participate in the deliberations regarding the options.
- It may be helpful to begin with what most groups share. For example, do people tend to agree on the pertinent history? Do they agree on certain values regarding symbols and public spaces?
- People can more successfully navigate difficult discussions if they have prior relationships. Perhaps begin by developing relationships across societal fault lines.
- Not everyone is accustomed to having conversations with persons whose views they do

not accept. Can each group develop a consensus on the norms for these conversations?

- It may be a higher priority during conflict to include in the group persons who are bridgebuilders among various identity groups, such as faith leaders, and leaders of the chamber of commerce, Urban League, bar association, universities, and United Way.
- It may be more important to delineate whether the group is advisory only. A lack of clarity about decision-making may deepen the bitterness involved in symbols contexts, especially when students are involved and may not be familiar with where that authority lies, as illustrated below by the University of Missouri situation.
- Consider how you can protect those who volunteered to serve on planning committees related to symbols and public spaces. These volunteers generally did not bargain to land in the middle of a major conflict. Crowds may come to their homes. They may be attacked through social media or on national news.
- Plan what to do about racist or other hateful views. By focusing on the victims and heroes, you may be able to avoid giving voice and publicity to promoting hateful views. Considering using mediators to keep in touch with persons pursuing hate-based agendas, so that you know some of their plans, can help them stay safe, and can protect others from them.

Communicate out front the things you have no control over (laws, etc.) and explain them clearly to the community, so that they know you're not refusing to collaborate.

*RaShall Brackney, former Chief,
Charlottesville Police Department*

ILLUSTRATIONS

A quick decision

There are times when a decision by public officials may be the optimal approach. After a hate-fueled multiple murders in a Charleston, South Carolina church in 2015, the state enacted legislation requiring the removal of the Confederate battle flag from the state Capitol, something sought by civil rights activists for decades without success. In addition to taking advantage of a politically feasible moment and removing a highly visible offensive symbol, as discussed in Point 3 (p.12), that decision was a visible step toward reducing incitement to hate, perhaps indicating that the broader community showed empathy at an important moment.

Clarity regarding the decision-maker

After civil rights advocates and students demonstrated and demanded removal of a Thomas Jefferson statue on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus in 2015, 2016, and 2020, the university system's president appointed a task force to recommend a decision. After six months of deliberations, in January 2021, the task force recommended a compromise position – non-removal of the statue but addition of a sign. The sign's text would note both Jefferson's contributions and that he owned slaves and supported expulsion of indigenous Americans from their land and add a QR code for more detail. In June 2021 the university's governing board rejected the sign, leaving the statue unchanged except to add security to protect it.⁴⁷ The Associated Press reported, ...“The University of Missouri Board of Curators has rejected a proposal to add information about Thomas Jefferson's history as a slaveowner near a statue of the 3rd U.S. president on the Columbia campus, which has been roiled by racial tension for years.”⁴⁸

Taking time for a collaborative process

In 2020, in Sanford, Florida, some argued that the city should turn down a request to paint “Black Lives Matter” outside a public safety complex on a street in the historic district that once comprised Goldsboro, an African-American-founded city. Instead of saying no, as Andrew Thomas, Sanford's Director of Community Relations and Neighborhood Engagement, recalled, “To explore the request, a group representative of Black Lives Matter, community leaders, and Goldsboro residents were convened to discuss the viability of the messaging, cost, maintenance, and location. After several meetings, the group found common ground and reached an agreement.” The agreement included a different location for painting Black Lives Matter with accompanying artwork and quotes regarding race and equity as well as a memorial and appointment of a committee to look into other strategies and events “publicly denouncing all forms of hate, bigotry and social injustice, celebrating diversity, and promoting inclusion.”

Quick decisions – achieving a result versus backlash

In 2013, as efforts to remove Confederate memorials gained strength, Tennessee enacted a bill that prohibited city removal or modification of memorials on public lands without permission of a state board largely appointed by the governor. The City of Memphis circumvented that law in 2017 by selling two parks to a private group, and a local court approved the action. The city then relocated the statue of a slaver trader and Confederate general and of the President of the Confederacy from the now privately-owned parks. In 2018, amid state lawmakers' angry comments about the Memphis action, the Tennessee legislature amended the statue to require state board permission before cities transferred memorials to a private owner.⁴⁹

12. OPTIONS

Develop a range of options for dealing with the underlying non-symbols issues as well as options for adding to, removing, combining, transforming, and explaining the contested symbols.
Consider new approaches, such as creation of a new common space.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Ask a series of questions to surface options:

- What commemorative approaches might help each group achieve its goals? Can the commemoration involve multiple groups who then learn from and support each other's tragic histories?
- Would a new location help, as in the example of Soviet statues moved outside Budapest (discussed on page 26)?
- Does an educational approach re-purpose the symbol, as with the new focus for tours of Montpelier (discussed on page 14)?
- Are there hierarchies among the degrees of offense felt by various symbols of concern? Does this suggest creating options first for the most offensive?
- What do existing resources permit? What are sources of additional resources, including ongoing resources for upkeep and staffing?

Changing the framework:

- Changing the perspective by learning about analogous situations internationally and the solutions selected may allow contending participants to “reset” and think about their own issues with new eyes.
- If the group is stuck about the resolution of contested symbols, focus the conversation for a while on whether more significant changes can be made. With momentum from progress on the more significant changes, return to the contested symbols, which then may be something more easily resolved.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Beginning with a collaborative focus on whether more significant non-symbols changes should be made

In 2017 David Faigman, newly-named as Chancellor and Dean of the University of California/Hastings College of the Law, read in a local newspaper about what he later called “horrific,” “atrocities,” “terrible crimes,” and “genocide” perpetrated against Native Americans by the college’s namesake and founding dean and donor.⁵⁰ That spring he organized the Hastings Legacy Review Committee, comprised of Hastings faculty, staff, alumni, and students and commissioned a historian to provide research. Though changing the school’s name became an issue, Dean Faigman also asked the committee to look into as well providing restorative justice for these acts to the descendants of those harmed, the Yuki People. In consultation with the Yuki People, the college became involved in

providing a number of services responsive to what some of the Yuki People identified as needs. These programs, some still in planning, included facilitating help with broadband access, hiring professionals to record their elders' stories, establishing summer fellowships to offer pro bono legal services, and working with the high school debate team. Although some originally resisted removing the college's name, by November 2021, the school's board, including the original Dean Hastings' great-great grandson, unanimously supported a request to the state legislature and governor to change the college's name.⁵¹

Using a new location

In 2021, the City of Bristol, England, moved a statue of a 17th century slave trader that Black Lives Matter protestors dumped in a harbor in 2020, to a museum where people would not have to confront it while there could be a discussion about what should happen next. The discussions could relate not only to the statue but multiple institutions in Bristol named for the slave trader.⁵²

13. COMMUNICATIONS

Expand communications capabilities so that people hear consistent messages frequently, residents know where to go for information, and the staff is prepared to field questions from national as well as local media.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Contract for extra communications help, if needed.

Find trusted sources to communicate with each group within the community, including those who get their news from social media, using [resources](#) geared to times of conflict.⁵³

Challenge false information.

Consider arranging for people to tell personal stories that will promote understanding.

ILLUSTRATION

Stories can help promote understanding when opposing sides face off.

A conflict arose over the renovation of a historic courthouse in Virginia. A group of white preservationists spoke to the significance of the courthouse. "Jefferson, Monroe and Madison practiced law in these courthouses," they said. The single Black attendee, silent until a final go-around encouraged everyone to speak in turn, told this story in response: "My ancestors were bought and sold at this courthouse." That greater depth underlying the latter story resonated and changed the narrative.⁵⁴

14. PLAN AHEAD OF THE NEXT CONFLICT

Follow the resolution with proactive planning, as described in Points 1-9 above.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Develop a long-term strategy for addressing backlash, preservation desires, and public involvement with the symbols.

Prepare a detailed plan for a volatile situation, to be ready to implement strategies covered by Points 10-14 quickly.

Commence proactive planning, as described in Points 1-9.

IN MORE DETAIL

A recent conflict experience provides motivation for engaging in a proactive and more comprehensive planning process that will take time and resources. Convening that process quickly after the conflict wanes can therefore contribute to its success. Such a process can make the community more resilient and prepared.

LEADERS' CHECKLISTS

1. PROACTIVE PLANNING TO IMPROVE OPEN SPACES AND SYMBOLS AND PREPARE HEAD TO ADDRESS CONFLICTS

TOPIC	LEADER'S TASK	GROUP'S CHARGE	TIMING
Research	Commission an assessment related to improving the sense of well-being among community members and likely visitors.	<p>Ask the group to read this Guide and consider:</p> <p>--What about the community or national history:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continues to trouble or harm these individuals? • Yields lessons that ought to be learned? • Provides a basis for identifying a common identity, shared aspirations, or inspiration? <p>--What continue to be the deep concerns, heartfelt goals, group identities, and sources of division for these individuals?</p> <p>--Are there factual disagreements that feed some of these divisions and concerns?</p> <p>--Are there matters of cultural importance that might improve a sense of belonging if honored in the environment?</p> <p>--What about community life or developments elsewhere would be good times to engage people in thinking about change in public spaces and symbols?</p> <p>--What about the political landscape should be considered in timing and approach?</p> <p>--What legal requirements should be considered when changing public spaces or symbols?</p>	1-2 months

LEADERS' CHECKLISTS

Goals	Commission a committee of personable stakeholders, symbols experts, and public or university leaders to develop the goals that should be taken into account by the planning group for improving the public environment.	<p>Ask this group to take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --What matters to the community, given the research conducted above, in terms of possible goals for improving public spaces and symbols, including potentially making all feel valued and safe, instilling confidence that career success is feasible -- especially for all young people, promoting understanding of each other, commemorating the past, inspiring, and offering safe and welcoming places for interactions across identity groups. --What do others in the community think about these goals or others? --Are there tensions among these goals? --What are the highest priorities among these goals? 	1-2 months
Process planning, timing, decision-makers, membership, staffing	Decide who will make the decision and then the collaborative or consultative process that will lead to the decision on how to change the environment to achieve community goals.	<p>Ask those you will consult with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --In weighing how much input to get before announcing the planning process, consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much will it help the community to have a design process that broadly engages versus how important is it to get results quickly, especially with respect to symbols that are highly controversial or insulting? • How much will it help implementation of any changes to engage key people in the early planning? • What is the best timing for beginning the process in terms interest in change, willingness to support the work, political issues, and other local or national events? --Do you need to change any policies (naming, art choices, upkeep for spaces and symbols) before the process begins? 	1 month or more, depending on input desired

LEADERS' CHECKLISTS

<p>Process planning, timing, decision-makers, membership, staffing (cont'd)</p>	<p>Decide who will make the decision and then the collaborative or consultative process that will lead to the decision on how to change the environment to achieve community goals. (cont;d)</p>	<p>Will it help to provide mediators or facilitators to ensure broad participation and an effective process?</p> <p>--Are there existing processes that could handle this planning effectively or which should coordinate in some way the new planning process?</p> <p>--Recruit the planning group, taking into account whether they will all work well together and collectively offer the qualities listed here (pp. 16-17).</p> <p>Designate staff assistance for the group so that they can volunteer in a few hours per month.</p> <p>Prepare the planning group members.</p> <p>Make clear who will make the final decisions.</p>	<p>1 month or more, depending on input desired</p>
<p>Options</p>	<p>Charge the planning group to think creatively about options available to improve the public spaces and symbols.</p>	<p>Charge the planning group with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to symbols experts, including artists, regional planners, historians, and others, on the breadth of options available, including relocating existing symbols, creating new spaces, adding explanations for existing symbols, creating positive events and rituals, museum exhibits, and more, • Developing options to improve the environment, taking into account the assessment and goals, • Listening to campus members about these options and others, • Prioritizing among options, • Considering what other changes should accompany changes in the environment, such as storytelling, other measures to make students feel welcome, etc., • Identifying those who will resist the proposed changes and ways to work with them, • Noting aspects of the environment that are likely to become controversial in the near future, and • Recommending ways to deal with future needs to modify public spaces and symbols. 	

LEADERS' CHECKLISTS

Plan ahead for conflicts	Assign staff to study the planning process that just occurred and use their observations to propose protocols for future conflicts, deepen key relationships, and improve laws and policies for the future.	<p>Tasks include:</p> <p>--Propose detailed protocols and assigned responsibilities for dealing with future symbols conflicts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of safe spaces to express concerns, • Identification and notification of people who will immediately listen to those affected by the conflict and to whom they should report quickly what they have learned, • Development of detailed protocols with law enforcement, including those additional agencies who will be asked to help that designate those who will be within the control center in the event that there is concern about violence, • Preparation of detailed plans for communications, including social media, • Planning to contract quickly for increased resources, if needed, in communications, counseling, and mediation, and • Training ahead those who can help keep people safe during a volatile situation. <p>--Deepen relationships with stakeholders, bridgebuilders, and experts who can become part of an urgent response to conflicts.</p> <p>--Suggest policies that facilitate and create an expectation of changing the public spaces and symbols over time.</p>	6 months
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LEADERS' CHECKLISTS

2. WHEN CONFLICTS OVER SYMBOLS AND PUBLIC SPACES ERUPT

TOPIC	LEADER'S TASK	GROUP'S CHARGE	TIMING
Listen and provide safe expression avenues	Assign staff, asking them to report back regularly to you, to listen to key persons, begin communications, manage media, message all constituents, assure safety, and offer counseling.	<p>Ask pertinent staff to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Consult with bridge builders, those with a stake in the conflict, and experts such as civil rights mediators who may help understand. Listen. Seek their help in communicating during the conflict and their ideas for problem-solving. Use mediators to reach those whom the official leaders may not want to contact directly. --Establish or update protocols between chief executive and law enforcement (including nearby agencies that may supplement local police). Establish a control center to make decisions during volatile periods. --Develop safe avenues to express viewpoints and emotions. --Prepare for the spokespersons and other identified leaders broad communications, designed to reach and be trusted by each key constituency. Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That leaders are in consultation with key groups, • An explanation of underlying interests (but not necessarily the demands) at issue, • Authentic reactions to the interests that will depend on the circumstances, for example, whether the advocacy arises from a desire to express racist sentiments or to communicate sincere concerns, • Empathy for those targeted and praise for those who are comforting them, while avoiding giving attention to those espousing hate-based views, • That community or university values that will be applied in responding to the concerns, including support for expression of views, desires to keep all safe, desires for all to feel valued and welcome, and more, • Opportunities to express viewpoints and emotions safely, and • Lay the groundwork for more discussions/deliberations concerning underlying concerns. --Train volunteers who can help keep protest activities peaceful. --Make sure that support is provided for staff (or faculty) dealing directly with the conflict and for any who feel targeted by the conflict. 	In first hours and days

LEADERS' CHECKLISTS

Process planning	Determine what must be decided quickly and what can be the result of more time-consuming collaborative process. Design the collaborative process. Tell constituents who will decide what.	<p>Advise those helping to make decisions and to design and assign other matters to a collaborative process to consider:</p> <p>--whether a quick decision is needed to avert violence, avoid deep insult, or seize a timely moment,</p> <p>--how much decision-making can be reserved for a collaborative process which could occur before any decision or at least before some decisions,</p> <p>--to design the collaborative process with the considerations listed under "Process planning" in the planning ahead checklist, plus additional considerations required when planning amid conflict, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put bridge-building leaders on the planning group, • Use of mediators, • Develop relationships among those planning, • Establish group norms, and • Support the group and staff if under public/media attack. 	1-2 days
Develop options	Charge a representative group that includes symbols/ public space experts with helping to generate a variety of options to deal with the conflict.	<p>Ask communications staff if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ All constituent groups are being kept up to date through sources they trust, ◦ Communications repeat the values that will be employed in dealing with the conflict and the consultations that are ongoing, ◦ Communication experts are monitoring social media, ◦ Timely and credible responses are given to false reports, ◦ Communications include helping various groups understand each other, perhaps giving publicity to personal stories where that is comfortable to those telling them, ◦ There is a strategy to deal with national media, should they direct their attention to it, and ◦ Staff and those targeted in the conflict are receiving messages of support. 	Beginning in the early hours and continuing throughout the conflict and afterward
Plan ahead for next conflicts	Direct the energy that a conflict generates to engage the community in improving public spaces and symbols, assess and improve the past responses to conflict, and develop a strategy to address backlash.	<p>Appoint planning group/s and charge them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Improve the public spaces and symbols, as described above, ◦ Assess the response to the last conflict and develop detailed plans for the next conflict, and ◦ Develop a strategy to address the backlash to the immediate past conflict and that may continue over time. 	Several months to years.

Endnotes

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- ⁷ Alexandra Hutzler, *Richmond Crowd Cheers as Robert E. Lee Statue Removed: "Hey Hey Hey, Goodbye!"*, NEWSWEEK (Nov. 7, 2021), <https://www.newsweek.com/richmond-crowd-cheers-robert-e-lee-statue-removed-hey-hey-hey-goodbye-1627050>.
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- ¹⁰ Nora McGreevy, *Why the First Monument of Real Women in Central Park Matters—and Why It's Controversial*, SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE (Aug. 26, 2020), <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/monument-controversy-women-pioneer-central-park-180975662/>.
- ¹¹ See, e.g., Christine Hauser, *"It Is Not Coming Down" San Francisco Defends "Comfort Women" Statue as Japan Protests*, NEW YORK TIMES (Oct. 4, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/04/us/osaka-sf-comfort-women-statue.html>; Sasha Ingbar, *Osaka, Japan, Ends Ties with San Francisco in Protest of "Comfort Women" Statue*, NPR (Oct. 4, 2018), <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/04/654474739/osaka-ends-ties-with-san-francisco-in-protest-of-comfort-women-statue>; Interview with Ron Wakabayashi, former executive director, Japanese-American Citizens League, Sept. 8, 2021.
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- ¹³ Danae King, *Social Justice Park Sculpture Intended to Inspire Unity, Social Change*, COLUMBUS DISPATCH (Feb. 1, 2021). Photo by Nancy Rogers.
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