Monumental changes: history isn't always written by the victors

Bronwyn Carlson

Macquarie University, Australia

Terri Farrelly

Independent scholar, Research Associate Adjunct Fellow with the Department of Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University, Australia

ABSTRACT

Recent global protests against racism, largely led by the Black Lives Matter movement, have included heated debate about various monuments and statues, resulting in many being defaced and even removed. Across this continent now known as Australia, this inflamed long-held angst regarding colonial commemorations, particularly those honouring 'discovery' and perpetuating a myth of peaceful settlement. This continent is full of colonial commemorations that honour murderers, eugenicists, racists, thieves, slave traders and a host of other 'assorted bastards' who have profited from the dispossession and exploitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Daley 2017). Across the world, there is much discussion about how best to respond to problematic commemorations. Should they be removed and destroyed? Should they be relocated to a museum or statue park? Should they be amended and rectified in some way? Such debates often result in a stalemate; however, commemoration is a process, and the meaning of commemorations can change, often shifting from being a focus of reverence to a symbol of dissent. This article explores how some commemorations in Australia, despite being protected, have experienced a shift in their meaning and ultimately come to represent a history that was not intended by the 'victors'.

Keywords

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Captain James Cook, colonial commemorations, monuments, statues, contested heritage

Monumental reckonings

In August 2017, on the continent now known as Australia, a statue of Captain James Cook in Naarm (Melbourne) was coated in pink paint with the words "no pride" painted beneath its feet. Another statue of Cook, this time in Hyde Park, Warrane (Sydney), was spray-painted with "no pride in genocide" and "change the date" (in reference to the commemorations publicly endorsed on January 26th known as 'Australia Day'). Monuments to former colonial governor Lachlan Macquarie and to Queen Victoria were also targeted with similar messages. These acts of so-called 'vandalism' occurred in the fallout that followed a heated debate about the appropriateness of such colonial commemorations and their future in Australian public places.

This debate in Australia had followed protests in the USA against Confederate monuments which had been erected in the segregation era as a means of white supremacist domination over Black communities. In response, many US city councils opted to remove their Confederate monuments. However, this incited much retaliation from neo-Nazi, neo-Confederate, neo-fascist and white nationalist groups, even resulting in the death of an anti-fascist counter-protester and the wounding of many, after a white supremacist rammed them with a vehicle in Charlottesville, Va., in August 2017 (Blout and Burkart 2020). While disgruntlement regarding Confederate commemorations was by no means a new trend, the recent Black Lives Matter (BLM) activist movement had certainly fuelled a new swell of protest which registered across the globe. BLM began in the USA as a hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter) and grew to a more widely known movement in response to police brutality against African American men and women and its widespread support has seen it achieve global reach (Carlson and Frazer 2021; Anti-Defamation League 2020).

Related events were also occurring elsewhere in the world. For example, in South Africa in 2015, the Rhodes Must Fall movement (#RhodesMustFall) was formed after a Black university student threw a bucket of excrement over the statue of white supremacist Cecil Rhodes (Fairbanks 2015). The movement grew in power and eventually sparked demands for the fall of South African head of state Jacob Zuma in 2018, as well as extending to England, against Rhodes House at Oxford University. In Canada, monuments to historical figures with a role in the residential school system and in the massacre of Indigenous peoples were rectified and even removed (Arce 2017).

Far from being a simple act of being inspired by events overseas and jumping on the protest wagon, protests against colonial commemorations in Australia have a long history. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been registering their discontent with who and what Australia’s colonial commemorations are honouring for decades, including the claim that James Cook ‘discovered’ this country and the myth of peaceful settlement. Governments have named places, streets, creeks, landmarks and buildings and created statues and monuments in honour of murderers, eugenicists, racists, thieves, slave-traders and a host of other “assorted bastards” who have profited from the dispossession and exploitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Daley 2017). Despite this, when Aboriginal journalist Stan Grant responded to the events in the US in 2017 by calling for the Cook statue in Hyde Park to be amended, what resulted was tantamount to hysteria (Murphy 2017). The Prime Minister at the time, Malcolm Turnbull, blustered that the “editing” of statues and inscriptions was an attempt to deny, rewrite and even obliterate history (cited in McKenna 2018). Grant was explicit in stating his position: he wasn’t calling for the statue to be removed, but rather to revise the existing inscription or include an additional plaque recognising First Nations peoples. However, such moves were likened to Stalinism and Grant was even

nicknamed “Taliban Stan” in the media (Grant 2019). Then Treasurer Scott Morrison commented that Australians “don’t get to choose when or how our story starts… or rewrite what has happened since” (cited in McKenna 2018, 46). Days later, the Cook statue was sprayed with graffiti and a furore ensued.

In 2020, further events in the US sparked a global reckoning for colonial, imperial and enslaver monuments (Cain 2020). Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the murders by police of Breonna Taylor in March and George Floyd in May sparked nationwide protests against racial injustice and police brutality, largely led by the BLM movement. These demonstrations inspired widespread supportive protests across the world as well as the toppling of numerous controversial statues. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their supporters took to the streets to vent their anger at the ever-increasing number of Indigenous deaths in custody, incarceration rates and police brutality (Bond et al. 2020). An Australian BLM protest march scheduled for Sydney apparently made the government nervous about the safety of the Cook statue in Hyde Park. Dozens of police were deployed to guard the statue and were joined by many members of the public, also gathering under the guise of protecting “our history” (Wainwright 2020, np). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, public gatherings at this time were not permitted. However, while BLM protesters were being threatened with arrest if they were to attend rallies, those that were in support of the statue were able to congregate freely should-to-shoulder with police (see the photo at Betoota Advocate 2020). Despite this, two women still managed to spray the statue with the phrases “sovereignty never ceded” and “no pride in genocide” (Chain and Coe 2020, np). A second statue of Cook in Randwick was also defaced (SBS News 2020). In response, Prime Minister Scott Morrison advised the Australian public to “get a grip”, stating that the protest movement against Aboriginal deaths in custody was being hijacked by radical left-wingers, declaring “this is not a licence for people to just go nuts on this stuff” (Baker 2020, np).

Both Turnbull and Morrison drew on the popular argument against removing statues – that to do so would be to ‘erase our history’. History is generally defined as “past events”.[1] Statues themselves are not history – they are ‘about’ history. And most of them do a terrible job of it. To remove a statue isn’t to change history, but how history is remembered (Grossman cited in Glaude Jr 2017). Their arguments also ignored the fact that the toppling of statues is no new phenomenon. For as long as we have erected monuments, we have also defaced and destroyed them. Ancient civilisations removed commemorations that no longer reflected their societal values and so too have modern societies. Significantly, their arguments also failed to acknowledge that protest against colonial commemorations is nothing new and in many parts of Australia, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities have already worked together to amend some of these commemorations and to give individuals and events that had not yet been acknowledged the recognition they deserve.

Off with their heads?

Commemorations are reminders, permanent tangible markers that reflect the values and attitudes of a society, committing to memory what is deemed significant and memorable. Commemorations also legitimise a particular version of history, enforcing what must be remembered and what those in power wish forgotten. On this continent, to erect statues and monuments to 'discovery' and 'exploration' is an attempt to legitimise white settler history and efface Aboriginal presence (Healy 1997). It presents only one side of the story and an incorrect one at that. The aim of these commemorations is to fortify colonial ideologies, to bolster the assertion of white occupation and permanence and black erasure. Aboriginal scholar Tony Birch has spoken out about this agenda for many years and notes that such commemorations are not marking history, but rather promoting an ideology (Birch 2020).

The reason this debate about colonial commemorations such as the Cook statue is happening now, more than a hundred years since its erection, is because these legacies still endure today (Baxter 2019). Colonisation had, and continues to have, a devastating impact on Aboriginal peoples: massacres and disease, mass dispossession of land, disruption of ties to Country and the attempted destruction of cultural practices, separation of families and communities, forced rapid cultural change, marginalisation and exclusion from the dominant culture, racism and discrimination restricting access to healthcare, education, housing and employment, disproportionate incarceration and the forcible removal of children. To ignore this debate is not an option because it also ignores who has the right to determine whose history is being privileged and whose history is being lost (Carlson 2020).

Across the world, there is much discussion about how best to respond to problematic commemorations. Should they be removed and destroyed? Some argue that removal of problematic statues will not remove the attitudes and institutional racism that allowed for their creation in the first place and could allow a kind of amnesia where the trauma and violence suffered could be 'forgotten' (Cherry 2006 cited in Baxter 2019). Should they be amended, rectified in some way, such as with an additional plaque that presents another side of the story (what is referred to as a counter-monument)? Some see this as too soft an approach while others argue it can enable these commemorations to be contextualised. Should we relocate them to a museum or 'statue park', where they can be used as a tool for education? Those in favour of this option argue it enables the provision of context and interpretation in a location that allows people to choose whether or not they wish to interact with them (Grinberg 2020). There are, however, several problems with the museum option, as explained by the curator of African American Social Justice History at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Tsione Wolde-Michael (2021). Firstly, this suggestion presumes that a museum 'should' preserve the statue and provide the appropriate context and interpretation required and it also presumes that a museum is a storage place for items such as unwanted statues.

Secondly, a museum may not have the space required, or may simply not be able to afford the alterations required to accommodate it. The funds required may indeed be better spent on preserving other aspects of history. Thirdly, a museum may not be equipped to provide the kind of context and interpretation required to appropriately display the statue. Relocation to a museum may have the unintended effect of further legitimising the statue in what is commonly revered as an authoritative space (Baxter 2019). Statue parks too can have the potential to serve as a place of veneration, like a shrine, and can generate a sense of irony or caricature that may limit the ability for serious reflection on the events and atrocities of which the statues are symbols (Baxter 2019). It has also been argued that to put statues like Cook's in a museum is ultimately an attempt at avoiding the conversations we really need to have (Bryant et al. 2018).

Such debates often result in a stalemate. However, it is not just the commemoration itself that has meaning, but also the context in which it exists – and contexts can change. Commemorations and their sites can gain new meaning as a result of certain events, or the discovery of new knowledge about that location. Commemoration is a process – "public memory does not remain static over time" (Nettelbeck and Foster 2010, 53). While those with the power can choose what is commemorated and how, they cannot completely control the meaning of the commemoration – this will evolve under the pressures of changing social interests and ideologies (Baxter 2019). We see evidence of this in the way monuments that were thought of as sites "of shared national values and ideals" are evolving to become deliberate sites "of contested and competing meanings" (Young 2000 cited in Nettelbeck 2011, 1116-7). The historical dream that our colonial commemorations would have us believe has been ruined by an ever-increasing demand for truth-telling (Healy 1997).

When protest becomes part of what a monument represents

Sometimes the meaning of a commemoration such as a statue can change enough that it ends up serving the purpose of those that originally protested against it – it becomes a symbol of dissent. This has happened in numerous locations around the world. For example, in 2011, an anonymous street artist targeted the *Monument to the Soviet Army* in Sofia, Bulgaria, transforming the statues of Soviet soldiers at the base of the monument into icons of American popular culture such as Superman, Ronald McDonald, Santa Claus and the Joker. Spray-painted beneath the statues was the phrase "Moving with the times." Since then, the monument has been the target of several more transformations (Beatty 2018). After much deliberation, the University of Mississippi installed a new plaque on a 1906 statue of a Confederate soldier, which describes how the statue was the meeting place for a 1962 rally opposing school integration (Grinberg 2020). The plaque acknowledges the university's divisive past and notes: "Today, the University of Mississippi draws from that past a continuing

commitment to open its hallowed halls to all who seek truth, knowledge, and wisdom" (Grinberg 2020, para. 18). In June 2020, during the peak of the BLM protests in response to the murder of George Floyd by police, a monument to Confederate General Robert E. Lee in Richmond Virginia, that had been covered in spray-painted messages of protest, became a meeting place for African Americans who were repurposing its symbolic meaning. Photographer Julia Rendleman posted shots on Instagram that she had taken of ballerinas dancing and young men posing for graduation photos, in front of the defaced monument (@juliarendleman, 6 June and 12 June 2020). In 1997, in Alcalde, New Mexico, a statue of Juan de Oñate that had been erected in 1994 had its right foot removed, a reference to Oñate's 1599 order, following the suppression of rebellion, that each adult Acoma Pueblo man have a foot amputated and serve decades in slavery (Labode 2018). In 2017, the statue's left foot was painted red and the words "Remember 1680" (the Pueblo revolt) were spray-painted on the base of the monument. In June 2020, as a result of increasing protests, the statue was finally removed by the County of Rio Arriba.

While our colonial commemorations supposedly reflect what we as a society value, so too does our protest against these commemorations. A number of Cook commemorations around the world, including the one that sits in Hyde Park declaring "DISCOVERED THIS TERRITORY 1770," have now become a focus for rising tensions and are imbued with additional meanings related to the protests made against them. Cook statues in England have been added to a crowdsourced map of UK monuments that celebrate slavery and racism on the *Topple the Racists* website (Stop Trump Coalition 2020). In Aotearoa, a statue of Cook in Tūranganui-a-Kiwa (Gisborne) was removed in 2019 following repeated Māori protests, with plans for it to be rehoused in a local museum. On 1 July 2021 in Victoria, British Columbia, a statue of Cook was pulled down and tossed into the harbour by protestors who smeared the pedestal with red handprints and erected wooden red dresses symbolising murdered and missing Indigenous women (Harnett 2021). Australian targets have included the Hyde Park statue, the Randwick monument on Gadigal Country, the odd-looking 'Nazi Captain Cook' statue on Gimuy (Cairns) and the monument on Dharawal Country at Woonona. During the height of the BLM marches in June 2020, someone placed a 'FRAGILE' sticker on the Cook monument at Kamay (Botany Bay) as a tongue-in-cheek observation that such commemorations are at risk.

Protest has become synonymous with Cook commemorations, particularly the Hyde Park statue. A number of Indigenous activists have depicted the removal or toppling of the Cook statue, including Kuku Yalanji artist Tony Albert in his work *You Wreck Me* (2020). The work began as a video and later became a series of collage works in which Albert depicts himself straddling a wrecking ball 'Miley Cyrus-style', singing as he swings in to kick over the statues. Gamilaroi concept artist Travis De Vries has created a digital drawing depicting a

group of Aboriginal activists in the process of pulling down the Cook statue, titled *Cook Falling, Tear it Down* (2019). Aboriginal artist Jason Wing created a bronze bust of Cook, appropriated from the typical statuary style making his identity unmistakable, even with the black balaclava that Wing has added to challenge Cook's iconography. The work is titled *Captain James Crook* (2013). Nicholas Galanin (Yéil Ya-Tseen), a Tlingit/Unangax̂ multi-disciplinary artist and musician from Alaska, created a work titled *Shadow on the Land, an Excavation and Bush Burial* (2020), commissioned for the 22nd Biennale of Sydney 2020 and installed on Cockatoo Island. The work essentially consisted of a grave for the Cook statue – an archaeological-style excavation into the earth that is very identifiably in the shape of the shadow the statue would cast.

In some locations across this continent, protest has resulted in the rectification of colonial commemorations, which not only gives recognition to Aboriginal perspectives, but arguably makes it a site of contested meanings. In Walyalup (Fremantle, Western Australia), there lies the Explorer's Monument, which has long been controversial but has become famous more recently for its addition of a counter-monument plaque commemorating the Injudinah (La Grange) Massacre. The monument was built in 1913 to commemorate three white explorers (Frederick Panter, James Harding and William Goldwyer), who were murdered by "treacherous natives" as well as Maitland Brown, the man who led an expedition to bring back their remains. Brown also responded with a punitive expedition that resulted in the massacre of up to 20 Karrijarri people (Scates 2020). In 1994, the United Nation's Year of Indigenous Peoples, Elders from Bidyadanga and the Baldja network in Walyalup, which includes descendants of survivors of the punitive massacre, added a new plaque to the monument. It outlines the history of provocation that led to the explorers' deaths and acknowledges the right of Indigenous peoples to defend their lands and commemorates all of the Aboriginal people who have died during the invasion of their Country.

The significance of missing monuments

In his book *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, the late historian Ken Inglis stated that "monuments missing in a landscape can be as significant as those erected" (1998 cited in Reynolds 1999, 174). There are a number of commemorations across Australia that inadvertently testify to the fact that Aboriginal peoples did in fact 'fight back' and that colonisation was in fact violent. These commemorations typically consist of graves, memorial monuments and even place names and they are dedicated to European settlers who were 'killed by Natives'. They serve to uphold the pioneer legend, honouring the brave settler and the characteristic representation of the 'Natives' as being savage and vengeful and their attacks unmotivated and unpredictable. Typically, the events are decontextualised; there is no account of what led up to the incident, what the settlers may have done to provoke such attacks

(other than the obvious invasion of lands). There is also no account of the retribution that followed, where settlers indiscriminately brutally massacred Aboriginal peoples in attacks that went unpunished and largely undocumented (Graves and Rechniewski 2017).

For example, in Northam, Western Australia, there is a memorial grave tablet to Peter Chidlow and Edward Jones, ‘killed by natives’ in 1837. The tablet was erected in 1929 in celebration of the centenary of Western Australia, but today is also revered by the local Aboriginal community for what it inadvertently represents – a testimony of Aboriginal resistance. At Esk in Queensland, a stone cairn was erected in remembrance of Captain Logan who was ‘murdered by Aborigines’ in 1830. The cairn was funded by an individual in 1984 who obviously admired the man. However, Logan was reportedly “hated by convicts and the Aboriginal population alike for his violence” and thereby “met a just end,” upon which “the jailed convicts celebrated with joyful singing for days” (Barrigos 2017, para. 12). The cairn also now serves as a record of Aboriginal resistance.

Aboriginal oral history tells of a number of massacres in the southwest Victorian region, including an incident where Aboriginal families were forced to jump to their deaths at the cliffs at what is today known as The Crags, located between Port Fairy and Yambuk. The event remains unacknowledged. However, there is a cross commemorating the grave of George Watmore, “speared by blacks 1842” (The Standard 2017). Aboriginal oral history states that Watmore was killed after refusing to hand over food rations promised to local Aboriginal people (The Standard 2017). Today, Watmore’s memorial at the site commemorates the life of one white man, but it also represents the absence of a memorial to the lives of hundreds of Aboriginal people, including children (The Standard 2017).

Remembrance, not reverence

The defacement of the Cook statue has served to attract attention and raise awareness through what Tony Birch calls “clear acts of provocation […] in that they interrogate the fragile foundations of colonial history and expose the naked emperor” (2021, np). The Federal Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt stated: “These statues should remain as a reminder of a point in time in our lives – even when detrimental. They serve as prompts to encourage people to talk about history” (Baker 2020, para. 21). Some colonial commemorations serve as a testament, as evidence of how Aboriginal people have been regarded by white Australia (Pearce 2016). We keep them for remembrance, but there is no longer reverence.

Some have called for not only keeping contentious statues in place, but to also let the protest become part of the story. At the launch of the Australian Heritage Festival in 2018, historian Lisa Murray delivered a provocative speech questioning if the graffiti painted on the Cook statue in 2017 should have been kept as part of the changing meaning of the statue,

rather than removed (Taylor 2018). Murray pointed out that the graffiti and protests are a sign that our values are changing and are symptomatic of a push by Aboriginal people to gain a voice as well as their rightful place in Australian history (cited in Taylor 2018). Let the protest be part of the story of colonial commemorations. To preserve the 'vandalism' and even display it enables defaced monuments to provide a visible record of how people have responded to, interacted with and contested racist historical narratives in public spaces (Wolde-Michael 2021). This idea gained a lot of ground during the 2020 BLM protests. Pseudonymous street artist and political activist Banksy responded to the toppling of the statue of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol with a sketch on Instagram of a group of people pulling down the statue, posting:

> What should we do with the empty plinth in the middle of Bristol? Here's an idea that caters for both those who miss the Colston statue and those who don't. We drag him out of the water, put him back on the plinth, tie cable round his neck and commission some life size bronze statues of protestors in the act of pulling him down. Everyone happy. A famous day commemorated. (@banksy June 9th 2020)

History isn't only written by the victors

History is written by the victors. Many who respect colonial commemorations will shrug their shoulders when questioned about their appropriateness and refer to this famous adage. It is commonly attributed to Winston Churchill, however, there doesn't appear to be any concrete proof of this. Churchill did make a joke in a speech before the House of Commons on 23 January 1948 stating: "For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history myself" (Phelan 2019, para. 3). It was a regular feature of his repartee – he'd been spouting versions of that line at public events since the 1930s (Phelan 2019). However, the sentiment of the phrase was in use long before Churchill in numerous languages. Yet, interestingly, it was associated with people who have not necessarily gone down in history as victors themselves.

History isn't only written by the victors. The fact that protest can change the meaning of colonial commemorations, even when their protectors manage to keep them *in situ*, is proof of this. The fallout resulting from any defacing and petitioning for their removal certainly serves to provide an effective method of awareness-raising. But whether the statues are toppled, rectified, or left alone is less important than the ongoing discussion they inspire about what we choose to remember and who we are today (Handler 2016).

One city is using the changing meaning of its contentious colonial commemoration to do just that. In Franklin Square, Nipaluna (Hobart), there stands a statue of William Crowther (1817-1885), surgeon, naturalist and parliamentarian. In 1869, Crowther was appointed one of the four honorary medical officers at Hobart General Hospital but was suspended in March 1869 over charges of mutilating the body of Palawa man William Lanne (aka Lanney). Lanne was amongst the Palawa people removed from Lutruwita (Tasmania) and sent to Wybalenna

(Flinders Island) and later to Putalina (Oyster Cove). Known to the settlers as King Billy, he worked on the whaling ships and became the third husband of Truganini. He was also an activist, working to improve the conditions of his people, even meeting the Duke of Edinburgh in Hobart in 1868 (City of Hobart 2021). Incorrectly believed to be one of the last Palawa of Lutruwita, when Lanne died in 1869 at the age of 34, Crowther removed his head and sent it to the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Lanne's hands and feet were also removed and Crowther then turned the corpse over to colleagues who removed the rest of the skeleton, effectively butchering him like an animal (Mansell cited in MacDonald 2021). Lanne's skull was only finally returned in 1991 (City of Hobart 2021).

The Crowther commemoration has long been a painful reminder for Aboriginal people and others aware that Crowther's legacy is not all good. Concerns had been raised numerous times over many years that Lanne's story was not being recognised and finally in 2021 the City of Hobart responded with the Crowther Reinterpretation Project. Commissioning a series of four temporary public art commissions by local arts practitioners, the project allows each to offer a response to the Crowther statue in an effort to promote community discussion. Priority was given to Palawa artists, who were each paid $5000 for the delivery of their temporary art works and given two months on display (City of Hobart 2021).

The first work of the project is *Truth Telling* (2021) by Palawa visual artist Allan Mansell, on display from April to June 2021. Mansell's work temporarily transforms Crowther into a memorial for William Lanne. The inscription is covered and instead a new plaque memorialises "our King Billy, replacing a man who was in truth a criminal with a man that was in truth a leader" and provides an explanation of Crowther's treatment of Lanne's body. The statue's head and hands are coated in red flexible vinyl printed with an image of Lanne's face, representing the removal of Lanne's head and hands. He holds an Aboriginal flag in one hand, representing the strength of the Palawa people of Lutruwita and a saw in the other (City of Hobart 2021).

The second work is *The Lanney Pillar* (2021) a collaboration by filmmaker Roger Scholes and Trawulwuy writer and curator Greg Lehman, on display from June to August 2021. It consists of a three-metre high, temporary free-standing mixed and multi-media sculpture which stands alongside the Crowther statue. It presents a series of stacked wooden blocks showing archival images, historical artefacts, film stills and text. A solar-powered LED screen displays the film footage and archival material set to a musical soundscape to present a portrait of William Lanne's life before Crowther. There is also a longer film created by the artists called *The Whaler's Tale* that can be accessed by scanning a QR code on the installation's base.

The third work is *Breathing Space* (2021) by Trawlwoolway artist Julie Gough, on display from September to October 2021. The work is a disruption of Crowther's statue, consisting of

a wooden crate-like structure that encases the statue, removing it from view and creating a break for those who find its presence distressing (Gough cited in City of Hobart 2021).

At the time of writing, the fourth and final instalment by Palawa journalist and photographer Jillian Mundy is soon to be unveiled. While increasing awareness about Crowther and the desecration of William Lanne, the Crowther Interpretation Project also serves as a community consultation process, to help inform a permanent response to the statue that can then be enacted in the near future (City of Hobart 2021). We look forward to seeing the outcome of this process and what the statue's future will be.

The BLM movement has brought renewed attention to the power of colonial monuments and the histories they represent. As this article has explored, debates have been raging across the world about how best to respond to problematic colonial commemorations – whether they should be removed and destroyed or relocated to a museum or statue park or amended and rectified in some way to be more truthful. As noted, such debates often result in a stalemate due to competing positions about how we remember and commemorate history and indeed whose history. However, as this article argues, commemoration is a process and the meaning of commemorations can change, often shifting from being a focus of reverence to a symbol of dissent. Mirning artist and scholar Ali Gumillya Baker reminds us that "everywhere is a memorial to what has come before us" (2020, np) and, thus, in this article, we the authors assert our own shift of focus by consciously refusing to use the names of cities that honour the colonial past, instead privileging Indigenous reclamation of language – a practice that is steadily regaining ground across Australia.[2] To illustrate the shift in focus of reverence to dissent, in this article, we highlight the ludicrous behaviour of some settlers as they violently defend a history they often know little about, including the actions of the police who stood guard protecting a statue while simultaneously threatening to arrest BLM protesters revealing the "fragile foundations of colonial history" (Birch, 2020, np). However, as this article concludes, in Australia, despite being protected, some colonial commemorations have experienced a shift in their meaning and ultimately have come to represent a history that was certainly not intended by the 'victors'.

Notes

[1] According to the definition of history on the online dictionary Lexico. https://www.lexico.com/definition/history. Accessed July 9, 2021.

[2] We use the terms 'Naarm' and 'Warrane' to refer to locations such as Melbourne and Sydney. While 'Naarm' refers to the body of water now known as Port Phillip, Naarm (also spelt Nairm) is used by many to now refer to Melbourne more broadly (see Boonwurrung language specialist Aunty Fay Stewart-Muir speak about language https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/awaye/features/word-up/word-up/8343268). Similarly, 'Warrane' refers to what is known as Sydney Cove but is used to refer to Sydney more broadly (see https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/sydney-cove-warrane/).These terms are used widely by many to refer to the respective cities in the ongoing efforts to reclaim Indigenous histories (see

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/17/we-must-return-all-our-landmarks-to-their-indigenous-names).

References

Anti-Defamation League. 2020. "Black Lives Matter: from Hashtag to Movement." *ADL,* June 2. https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/black-lives-matter-from-hashtag-to-movement. Accessed May 31, 2021.

Arce, Fernando. 2017. "Inside the Indigenous Fight to Reshape Canada's History." *The Walrus,* October 11. https://thewalrus.ca/inside-the-indigenous-fight-to-reshape-canadas-history/. Accessed November 5, 2021.

Baker, Ali Gumillya. 2020. "Body, Remember, Wrap Me in a Sister Cloak." *Artlink*, September n.d. https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/4861/body-remember-wrap-me-in-a-sister-cloak/. Accessed November 20, 2021.

Baker, Nick. 2020. "As 'Racist Statues' Topple around the World, Australia Is Being Urged to Address Its Own Monuments." *SBS News*, June 10. https://www.sbs.com.au/news/as-racist-statues-topple-around-the-world-australia-is-being-urged-to-address-its-own-monuments?cid=newsapp:socialshare:other. Accessed May 5, 2021.

Barrigos, Rebecca. 2017. "Tear Down Australia's Racist Statues." *Redflag*, August 28. https://redflag.org.au/node/5970. Accessed November 6, 2021.

Baxter, Claire. 2019. "Contextualising Relocated Monuments: How Have the Post-Soviet Statue Parks Presented the Contexts of Their Relocated Monuments, and Could This Be Applied to Other Societies Looking for a Similar Solution?." PhD diss., University of Glasgow.

Beatty, Bob. 2018. "Six Strategies for Dealing with Controversial Monuments and Memorials." *Hyperallergic,* June 7. https://hyperallergic.com/445981/six-strategies-for-dealing-with-controversial-monuments-and-memorials/. Accessed November 6, 2021.

Birch, Tony. 2020. "'Who Needs Monuments'. Memorials and Colonial Violence in Victoria: Black Fire III." Melbourne School of Discontent: The Black Fire Lectures of October 2020. https://zoom.us/rec/share/OVSf4tFcmSg0h6T0niNbcQyFm3sCj0v6JGYQOY7pu1Xfjex1C6DzjOPFH4DeWxAq.zLun5wo2Kymc4nc7. Accessed November 7, 2021.

Birch, Tony. 2021. "Do Monuments Hold any Value?." *IndigenousX*, January 14. https://indigenousx.com.au/do-monuments-hold-any-value/. Accessed May 30, 2021.

Blout, Emily and Patrick Burkart. 2021. "White Supremacist Terrorism in Charlottesville: Reconstructing 'Unite the Right'." *Studies in Conflict Terrorism*, 1-22.

Bond, Chelsea J., Lisa J. Whop, David Singh, and Helena Kajlich. 2020. "Now We Say Black Lives Matter but … the Fact of the Matter Is, We just Black Matter to Them." *Medical Journal of Australia* 213 (6): 248-250.

Bryant, Janeen, Benjamin Filene, Louis Nelson, Jennifer Scott, and Suzanne Seriff. 2018. "Are Museums the Right Home for Confederate Monuments?." *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 7. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/are-museums-right-home-confederate-monuments-180968969/. Accessed May 3, 2021.

Cain, Tiffany. 2020. "As the Statues Fall: A Conversation about Monuments and the Power of Memory." *SAPIENS*, July 23. Audio, 2:01:51. https://www.sapiens.org/archaeology/statues-falling/. Accessed May 6, 2021.

Carlson, Bronwyn and Ryan Frazer. 2021. *Indigenous Digital Life: The Practices and Politics of Being Indigenous on Social Media.* Cham: Palgrave McMillan.

Carlson, Bronwyn. 2020. “Friday Essay: Taking a Wrecking Ball to Monuments – Contemporary Art Can Ask What Really Needs Tearing Down.” *The Conversation*, June 12. https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-taking-a-wrecking-ball-to-monuments-contemporary-art-can-ask-what-really-needs-tearing-down-140437. Accessed April 6, 2021.

Chain, Brittany and Charlie Coe. 2020. “‘Smirking’ social worker and Greens staffer allegedly spray-painted 'no pride in genocide' on Captain Cook statue - as top cop threatens to lock up anyone who vandalises monuments.” *Daily Mail,* June 15. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8420099/Greens-staffer-social-worker-granted-bail-alleged-Captain-Cook-graffiti-incident.html. Accessed January 18, 2022.

City of Hobart. 2021. “Crowther Reinterpretation Project.” *City of Hobart*, n.d. https://www.hobartcity.com.au/Community/Arts-and-culture/Public-art/City-of-Hobart-public-art-projects/Crowther-Reinterpretation-project. Accessed November 3, 2021.

Daley, Paul. 2017. “Statues Are not History. Here Are Six in Australia that Need Rethinking.” *The Guardian*, August 25. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/postcolonial-blog/2017/aug/25/statues-are-not-history-here-are-six-in-australia-that-need-rethinking. Accessed March 22, 2021.

Fairbanks, Eve. 2015. “The Birth of Rhodes Must Fall.” *The Guardian,* November 18. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/nov/18/why-south-african-students-have-turned-on-their-parents-generation. Accessed May 20, 2021.

Glaude Jr, Eddie S. 2017. “The Storm around America’s Statues Isn’t about History. It’s about Whiteness.” *The Guardian,* August 19. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/19/storm-americas-statues-history-whiteness. Accessed March 22, 2021.

Grant, Stan. 2019. *Australia Day*. Sydney: Harper Collins.

Graves, Matthew and Elizabeth Rechniewski. 2017. “Black Wars and White Settlement: The Conflict over Space in the Australian Commemorative Landscape.” *e-Rea* 14 (2).

Grinberg, Emanuella. 2017. “What Can Communities Do with Confederate Monuments? Here Are 3 Options.” *CNN Edition*, June 30. https://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/30/us/what-to-do-with-confederate-monuments/index.html. Accessed April 25, 2021.

Handler, Richard. 2016. “Let’s Keep Arguing about Flags and Statues.” *Sapiens,* May 31. https://www.sapiens.org/culture/commemorative-markers/. Accessed May 6, 2021.

Harnett, Cindy E. 2021. “Capt. James Cook Statue Recovered from Victoria Harbour; What’s Next Is Undecided.” *Times Colonist*, July 1. https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/capt-james-cook-statue-recovered-from-victoria-harbour-what-s-next-is-undecided-1.24337872. Accessed July 9, 2021.

Healy, Chris. 1997. *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Labode, Modupe. 2018. “Confronting Confederate Monuments in the Twenty-first Century.” In *Controversial Monuments and Memorials: A Guide for Community Leaders*, edited by David B. Allison Lanham, 27-35. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

McKenna, Mark. 2018. “Moment of Truth: History and Australia’s Future.” *Quarterly Essay* 69: 1-86.

Murphy, Katharine. 2017. “Changing Colonial Statues Is Stalinist, Says Malcolm Turnbull; The Prime Minister Says Critics Who Want to Edit Monuments Are ‘Dead Wrong’ and Says ‘We Should Be Proud of Our History’.” *The Guardian,* August 25. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/aug/25/changing-colonial-statues-is-stalinist-says-malcolm-turnbull. Accessed May 30, 2021.

Nettelbeck, Amanda and Robert Foster. 2010. “Commemorating Foundation: A Study in Regional Historical Memory.” *History Australia* 7(3): 1-18.

Nettelbeck, Amanda. 2011. "The Australian Frontier in the Museum." *Journal of Social History* 44 (4): 1115-1128.

Pearce, Melanie. 2016. "Debate Rages about Statue Wording in Bathurst." *ABC News*, April 1. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-01/recognising-aboriginal-and-non-indigenous-perspectives-bathurst/7292836. Accessed February 17, 2021.

Phelan, Matthew. 2019. "The History of 'History Is Written by the Victors'." *Slate*, November 26. https://slate.com/culture/2019/11/history-is-written-by-the-victors-quote-origin.html. Accessed October 30, 2021.

Reynolds, Henry. 1999. *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth about Our History*. Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin.

SBS News. 2020. "Gladys Berejiklian Flags Tougher Anti-Vandalism Laws as Second Captain Cook Statue Defaced." *SBS News*, June 15. https://www.sbs.com.au/news/gladys-berejiklian-flags-tougher-anti-vandalism-laws-as-second-captain-cook-statue-defaced?cid=newsapp:socialshare:other. Accessed April 21, 2021.

Scates, Bruce. 2020. "Call to Topple Monuments Is an Opportunity for Debate." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, June 11. https://www.smh.com.au/national/call-to-topple-monuments-is-an-opportunity-for-debate-20200611-p551qs.html. Accessed April 27, 2021.

Stop Trump Coalition. 2020. "Topple the Racists." *Stop Trump Coalition,* June 10. https://www.stoptrump.org.uk/topple-the-racists/. Accessed May 6, 2021.

Taylor, Andrew. 2018. "Historian Questions whether Graffiti Should Have Been Left on Captain Cook Statue." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 18. https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/historian-captain-cook-statue-graffiti-indigenous-20180418-p4zade.html. Accessed May 12, 2021.

The Betoota Advocate. 2020. "Statues." *The Betoota Advocate*, n.d. https://www.betootaadvocate.com/uncategorized/police-urged-to-treat-indigenous-people-in-custody-as-carefully-as-they-treat-the-statues/attachment/statues/. Accessed May 21, 2021.

The Standard. 2017. "A very Bloody Local History." *The Standard*, July 29. https://www.standard.net.au/story/4818421/a-very-bloody-local-history/. Accessed March 8, 2021.

Wainwright, Sam. 2020. "Sorry, not Sorry." *Green Left Weekly*, July 1. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/INFORMIT.229688655326283. Accessed May 13, 2021.

Wolde-Michael, Tsione. 2021. "We Should Think Differently about the Preservation of Racist Monuments." *Hyperallergic*, May 5. https://hyperallergic.com/643843/we-should-think-differently-about-the-preservation-of-racist-monuments/. Accessed May 12, 2021.

Professor Bronwyn Carlson is an Aboriginal woman who was born and lives on Dharawal Country in NSW Australia. She is the Head of the Department of Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University and the Director of the Centre for Global Indigenous Futures. She is the founding and managing editor of the *Journal of Global Indigeneity* and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. Bronwyn is co-author of *Monumental Disruptions: Colonial Commemorations and Aboriginal Australians* and co-editor of *The Palgrave Handbook on Rethinking Colonial Commemorations*, both to be published in 2022.

Dr Terri Farrelly is an independent research consultant and an Adjunct Fellow and Research Associate with the Department of Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University. Terri is co-author of *Monumental Disruptions: Colonial Commemorations and Aboriginal Australians* and co-editor of *The Palgrave Handbook on Rethinking Colonial Commemorations*, both to be published in 2022.