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A COLLABORATIVE PUBLIC HISTORY PROJECT
Dusk of Black Power – Dawn of Jim Crow

Scores of Black men served in the Virginia General Assembly after 1869 but by 1890 only four remained. “White men rule the State. No home here for mixed politics,” gloated the Richmond Dispatch after the 1889 election. That year, more than one hundred Black Virginians called on Congress to address fraud and intimidation. There was no reply. No Black men would serve in the General Assembly for over seventy years.

The first act of the 1889 elected Virginia Senate was to accept the Lee Monument.
Construction of the Lee Monument

Plans for a memorial to Robert E. Lee began at his death in 1870. Fundraising initially appealed exclusively to veterans, but soon expanded. When it was realized that the envisioned monument would be shorter than the equestrian monument of Washington in Capitol Square, additional funds were raised so Lee could stand one foot taller. Funding, design and political disagreements delayed the completion until Lee, the first statue on Monument Avenue, was unveiled May 29, 1890.
Monumental Opposition

Monuments often generate controversy. Robert E. Lee was asked about potential memorialis at Gettysburg in 1869. Lee wrote that he felt it better “to obliterate the marks of civil strife” and “not to keep open the sores of war.” Nonetheless, twenty-one years later a statue was erected here in Lee’s honor. John Mitchell, Jr. wrote of the unveiling in the Richmond Planet, the Black-run newspaper, that the South’s reverence for its former leaders slowed progress and forged “heavier chains with which to be bound.”

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MONUMENT * N. ALLEN (W)
TWO
Separate and Unequal: The 1902 Constitution

“Discrimination! Why that is precisely what we propose...with a view to the elimination of every negro voter who can be gotten rid of.” - Carter Glass, delegate from Lynchburg, during the 1901-1902 Constitutional Convention

The Virginia Constitution of 1902 restored white supremacy in Virginia by requiring segregation in schools and disenfranchising black and working-class white voters through poll taxes and voter registration exams. In Jackson Ward, a vibrant black Richmond neighborhood, registered voters plummeted from nearly 3,000 in 1900 to 33 by 1903. Largely intact until the 1960s, this constitution had an overwhelming impact on Virginia’s educational, economic and political policies for most of the twentieth century.

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MONUMENT + N. BELMONT AVE

TWO
Reapproaching the Stuart Monument

Earlier Confederate monuments such as Lee (1890) presented somber memorials to idealized heroes. After the South's essential contributions to U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War (1898), Southerners felt vindicated for the glory denied them in the Civil War. Monuments, like legal policies, shifted from stoic to often fierce representations of the "Lost Cause" narrative. In this 1907 monument, Stuart attacks in the height of battle, a stance no one dared to depict a few years earlier.
Sarah Garland Jones (1866-1905): Richmond’s First Black Female Physician

Sarah Garland Jones in 1893 became the first Black woman to pass the Virginia Medical Examining Board’s examination. She opened a practice in Richmond and offered a free daily clinic for women and children. Addressing the inadequate medical care available to Richmond’s Black population, Jones and her husband, Miles Berkley Jones, also a Howard University-educated physician, with others established the Richmond Hospital in Jackson Ward in 1902. It was renamed in her honor after her death.
Reapproaching the Davis Monument

Unveiled in 1907, the Jefferson Davis Memorial, the most egregious illustration of Lost Cause mythology on Monument Avenue, represents the only non-Virginian on the street. The conspicuous inscriptions nakedly portray the Confederacy as a noble cause—that Southerners fought to defend states’ rights rather than slavery. However, references to enslavement came up hundreds of times during Virginia’s secession debates, far eclipsing the number of times secessionists mentioned states’ rights.
Charles Thaddeus Russell: The Face of Black Architecture in Early-Twentieth-Century Richmond

In 1907 Charles Thaddeus Russell, one of Virginia’s first Black architects, returned from Hampton Institute and Tuskegee to become an instructor and superintendent of grounds at Virginia Union University. Russell designed many of the houses and office buildings that characterized Richmond’s “Black Wall Street,” including Maggie Walker’s St. Luke’s Penny Savings Bank in 1911 and, in 1915, a striking house for a prominent Black physician which in 1949 became the Negro Training Center for the Blind, the only specialized public school to serve Blacks in Virginia at that time.

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MONUMENT + N. DAVIS
FOUR
Reapproaching the Jackson Monument

The Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson Monument (1919) illuminates the profound social unrest of its decade. The unveiling coincided with the 1918 Influenza Pandemic and the rise of white nationalism during Woodrow Wilson's presidency. During the 1910s, "Lost Causers" anxiously constructed statues before the last of the veterans died. While this statue celebrates a man who died defending the slave system, it also reveres a system that Jackson never lived to see—Jim Crow segregation.

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MONUMENT AVE + ARTHUR ASHE BLVD.

FIVE
Black Richmond in 1919

The day the Jackson Monument was unveiled, The Richmond Planet, a Black newspaper, revealed two separate Richmonds when it eulogized the late Thomas M. Crump. "A useful citizen and broad humanitarian gifted in mind and generous in heart," Crump had served the Black community through the Knights of Pythias and the Mechanics Savings Bank. After fifteen months of fundraising for his distinguished headstone, a "spectacular parade" of the Knights of Pythias and a municipal band had celebrated the unveiling.

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MONUMENT AVE • ARTHUR ASHE BLVD
FIVE
Slavery By A Different Name: Maury’s Views on the Black Body as a Labor Source

In 1851 Matthew Fontaine Maury advocated the transfer of enslaved African Americans and Southern planters to the Amazon rainforest to process raw materials for commercial export. Though that plan failed, at the end of the Civil War in 1865 Maury devised another unsuccessful immigration plan that encouraged ex-Confederates to settle in Mexico with the African Americans they formerly enslaved. Maury’s plan aimed to use freed people as a labor source in a system of indentured servitude that mimicked slavery.

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MONUMENT + N. BELMONT AVE

SIX
John Mitchell, Jr. (1863-1929) - Editor, Banker, Alderman And Pioneer Of Civil Rights

John Mitchell, Jr. was born enslaved in Richmond, owned by a Confederate congressman. A teacher, bank founder, city alderman (1888-1896), gubernatorial candidate (1921) and editor of The Richmond Planet, an African-American newspaper, he promoted civil rights and racial pride tirelessly. Significant for his support of anti-lynching campaigns, he published graphic details of lynchings and advocated for the unjustly accused fearlessly. In 1904 with Maggie Walker, he organized a two-year boycott of Richmond's segregated trolleys. His epitaph reads, "A Man Who Would Walk Into The Jaws Of Death To Serve His Race."
WONDER

If you wonder why you never learned about this in school, please express your concern to the Virginia Department of Education. Tell them you want more black history to create a fuller picture in your textbooks.
CONTACT
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AND
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Wanna continue to explore the Black history of Richmond and of the Commonwealth?

Keep Learning at:

> The Black History Museum + Cultural Center
> Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site
> Richmond Slave Trail
> Untold RVA
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> The Library of Virginia (Virginia Untold Collection)
> Please consider volunteering with: Friends of Evergreen Cemetery + Woodland Cemetery.
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