



Editorial

Political Uses of the Past: Public Memory of Slavery and Colonialism II

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Ana Lucia Araujo* and Ynaê Lopes dos Santos**

The summer 2020 transformed the public memory of slavery and colonialism in the United States. The aftershocks of the transformation of the past three years reached several European countries such as England, France, and Portugal. But despite these recent transnational impacts, each of these nations and their former colonies have been reckoning in different ways with their pasts associated with slavery and colonialism in the past several decades. On the one hand, the protests that followed the assassination of George Floyd in March 2020 contributed to publicly expose racial inequalities and the omnipresence of pro-slavery symbols far beyond the United States. On the other hand, African Americans and Black populations across the Americas, Europe, and Africa have individually and collectively began fighting to take down social, economic, and symbolic structures that have historically excluded formerly enslaved and colonized populations from national official narratives earlier before the rise of these recent protests.

Drawing on this context that continues to unfold three years after the historic summer 2020, this second part of the issue “Political Uses

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of the Past: Public Memory of Slavery and Colonialism” includes four articles and one essay debating the rise of the public memory of slavery and colonialism in the United States, Brazil, Mozambique, and Portugal. The first two articles discuss the pro-slavery public memory of US Confederacy in the United States and Brazil. The two other articles examine how the public and official memory of slavery and colonialism operates in the school system of Brazil and Mozambique. These two former Portuguese colonies were deeply involved in the long history of the transatlantic slave trade, even though their positions differed. On the one hand, Mozambique provided African captives to the Atlantic slave trade, and later became a Portuguese colony. On the other hand, Brazil imported captive Africans from Mozambique and only abolished slavery in 1888. The history of slavery and colonialism left deep scars in both nations. In Brazil, racism and deep racial inequalities prevail still today.

This special issue opens with the article “From Minnesota to Mississippi: The Murder of George Floyd and the Retirement and Replacement of the State Flag of Mississippi” by Caleb Smith, Stan Brunn, and Byron D’Andra Orey. The paper explores the history of the Mississippi flag design following the period after the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, in 1865, until the present. The authors focus their analysis on the 1894 design that featured a Confederate battle flag, which remained in place for more than one century, but was increasingly challenged in the past seventy years. Smith, Brunn, and Orey show how social movements led by Black actors that greatly intensified with the murder of George Floyd in the summer 2020, eventually led to the removal of the Mississippi state flag that displayed the Confederacy pro-slavery symbol.

In “Irreconcilable Differences? A Reckoning with *Confederado* history in Brazil,” Mary Kenny explores the history of Confederates who, after the end of the US Civil War, moved to Brazil, where they were able to reconstruct their lives by acquiring land and enslaved people. The Brazilian Confederates, known as “*Confederados*”, maintained a collective, cultural, and public memory of slavery in Brazil-

ian soil, through various devices such as cemeteries and public festivals. Although several scholars such as Gerald Horne, Luciana da Cruz Brito, Maria Clara Sales Carneiro Sampaio, Jordan Brasher, and Alan P. Marcus have examined the history and the public memory of US Confederates in Brazil, their works have focused on the presence of *Confederados* in the state of São Paulo, in the Brazilian southeast. In contrast, Kenny's article examines the memory of the *Confederados* in Santarém, in the Brazilian northern state of Pará, a region marked by great land concentration, and where Brazilian Indigenous populations and *quilombo* communities have been fighting for land rights for several decades in a very hostile environment.

“Negações e silêncios: a memória da escravidão entre o manual escolar e o parlamento brasileiro,” by Alex Andrade Costa, examines how Brazilian textbooks failed to address the history and memory of slavery and racial questions over the past two centuries. Costa argues that, through silences regarding these past human atrocities, Brazilian textbooks have undermined possible reparation policies. In the same vein, the article “Nó Górdio e relações entre Moçambique e Portugal: futuro inventado nas escolas moçambicanas da província de Sofala,” by Armindo Armando, Augusto Alberto, and Martins JC-Mapera, discusses the results of a research project with school students of Mozambique's Sofala province. Drawing on focus groups with school students, the project and the article explore the perceptions about the Nó Górdio operation, a central episode of colonial violence that marked the fight for Mozambique liberation in 1970. The authors discuss how this atrocity remained alive in the collective memory of Mozambique's citizens and in the nation's official memory through news reports and existing history textbooks. The authors argue that coming to terms with the history and memory of this atrocity can contribute for a more positive future of bilateral relations between Mozambique and Portugal.

This special number also includes the essay “White Innocence, Black Erasure: Reviewing *Alcindo* (2020) Against the Fictions of Portuguese Colonial Bonhomie,” by historian Patrícia Martins Marcos,

who reviews the documentary film *Alcindo* (2020) by Miguel Dores. Finally, the number includes an interview with Rutgers University historian Jochen Hellbeck by historian José Neves. As editors of this issue, we know that the debates and actions that emerged and intensified during the summer 2020 are not finished, and many special numbers will be needed to fully grasp the transformations initiated three years ago.

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