

# Cities look to remove Confederate statues after deadly rally in Virginia

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Workers begin removing a Confederate statue in Gainesville, Florida, August 14, 2017. The statue is being returned to the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which erected the bronze statue in 1904. County officials said they did not know where the statue would be going after that. Photo from AP Photo/Jason Dearen

In Gainesville, Florida, "Old Joe" was finally taken down. The Confederate statue was put up by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1904. The group is made up of descendants of the Confederate soldiers who fought for the South and to keep slavery during the Civil War.

This weekend, workers hired by the group loaded "Old Joe" on a truck and drove away quietly.

## Rally Turned Violent In Virginia

It was a different scene in Charlottesville, Virginia, on Saturday. There, a group of white supremacists protested around a Confederate statue and argued that it should not be removed. People who identify as white supremacists wrongly believe that white people are better than all other races. Anti-racist demonstrators stood against the white supremacists. One person was killed and dozens more were injured in the confrontation.

"We should not glorify" our country's dark history of slavery, said Lauren Poe, the mayor of Gainesville.

The Southern Poverty Law Center is a nonprofit group that monitors the activity of hate groups across the country. Last year, the organization counted more than 1,500 things around the country named after Confederate figures or dedicated to the Confederacy. This includes holidays, statues, flags and the names of cities, counties, schools and parks. Nearly half are monuments, which are in 24 states. Most are in the South, but 24 are in the North and 21 in states that did not exist at the time of the Civil War.

The deadly white nationalist rally in Virginia is intensifying a debate: what will happen to Confederate statues across the country? Many city officials were horrified by the violent confrontation. They soon began announcing plans to take down Confederate statues in their own cities.

## **City Officials Speed Up Plans To Remove Statues**

In Jacksonville, Florida, City Council President Anna Brosche asked for a count of all of the Confederate statues in Jacksonville, in preparation to take them all down.

She said the statues "represent a time in our history that caused pain to so many."

Jim Gray is the mayor of Lexington, Kentucky. He plans to have the statues of two famous Confederate soldiers moved from their current location near the site of a former slave auction.

San Antonio Councilman Roberto Trevino is trying to remove the statue at the center of Travis Park. For years people have mistakenly identified the figure as William Travis, a Texas hero who died at the Alamo; it's actually a statue dedicated to the Confederate soldiers who fought in the Civil War.

## **"An Unfortunate Message Of Hate"**

"This is not an important art piece, but a monument to power. It was put in to remind people of that power. It is an unfortunate message of hate, and we think it's important to relocate it," Trevino said Monday. "We do think that history is important so we're looking for an appropriate location for it."

St. Louis took down its Confederate Monument in Forest Park in June, after years of debate. The city gave it to the Missouri Civil War Museum.

In Memphis, Tennessee, city attorney Bruce McMullen plans to file a petition to remove a statue of Nathan Bedford Forrest from a park. Forrest was a Confederate general and an early leader of the Ku Klux Klan.

In Baltimore, Maryland, Mayor Catherine Pugh ordered four statues taken away under the cover of night on Tuesday. In the morning, Baltimore residents woke up to empty marble blocks.

Pugh ordered the removal of statues of Confederate generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. She also ordered the removal of a statue of Roger B. Taney, a man from Maryland who wrote the infamous 1856 Dred Scott Supreme Court ruling which denied citizenship to African-Americans.

## **Protesters Topple Confederate Statue in North Carolina**

Some people didn't wait for cities to remove the Confederate statues. On Monday, during a rally against racism, protesters in North Carolina toppled a nearly century-old statue of a Confederate soldier. Activists took a ladder up to the statue and used a rope to pull it down. A diverse crowd cheered as the statue fell.

Seconds after the monument fell, protesters began kicking the crumpled bronze monument.

In response, Democratic North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper tweeted: "The racism and deadly violence in Charlottesville is unacceptable but there is a better way to remove these monuments."

Back in May, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu moved his city's four main Confederate statues at night, after receiving threats of violence from Confederate sympathizers and white supremacists.

## **Confederate Symbols Fuel Concerns**

White supremacists carried Confederate symbols in Charlottesville. The mixing of white supremacist symbols and Confederate symbols will make it difficult for government agencies to defend having Confederate statues, said Heather Cox Richardson. She is a history professor at Boston University.

Now local officials will find it harder to ignore questions about Confederate statues, Richardson said.

"It was always possible for people to look the other way," she said. "After Charlottesville, I do not see how Americans can look the other way. You have to make a choice at this moment."