



Ashley Hunt: So, thinking about the recent events in Charlottesville and doing some research, I realized that Charlottesville had been a part of the movement of “Massive Resistance,” which followed the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Remembering that you’re from Charlottesville and thinking about the work you’ve been doing artistically, politically, personally, I thought it’d be good to talk with you about it.

Elizabeth Webb: Yes, definitely. It’s interesting — when you first approached me about the topic, the post-*Brown v. Board* definition didn’t come to mind. I think because of the recent events, I imagined you must be referring to some sort of large scale resistance to white supremacy in the state — wishful thinking, perhaps — when in fact you were referring to the opposite. But then I remember thinking that when I first learned about Massive Resistance in high school, I always had trouble remembering what it was in history because its name connotes something that I associate with being positive — like a grassroots movement against power. I suppose that is what it is, in a way — except a white supremacist grassroots movement to maintain power.

AH: When you grew up in Charlottesville, it was decades after the Massive Resistance movement, but did that history have a presence for you, a cultural memory that one feels in the city?

EW: The history is certainly reflected in the landscape and architecture of Charlottesville, which is still a very segregated place. There is UVA, conceived by Thomas Jefferson and built by enslaved people, Jim Crow era statues of Confederate Generals in many major parks, but growing up, I didn’t really consider the weight of my surroundings. I think part of that is because I essentially grew up thinking I was white (not having been told as a child about my African American ancestry) — but also because in Virginia’s education system, the state is positioned as this “new frontier,” of central importance in the founding of our nation, with Thomas Jefferson as a genius and a local hero — C’ville’s claim to fame. Of course I began to question all these positionings after some time, including that of my own identity — but as a kid I wasn’t too aware of the persistent, racist history of my surroundings.

I also went to a high school that was almost completely white and had a large range of social classes. There were “old money” Southerners whose families owned large historic farms in the area, and poorer kids who tended to live further out in the country. There were kids with Confederate battle flags hanging from their cars, and sometimes you’d see flags around town. There were “heritage not hate” bumper stickers in the local gas station and camouflage-print hats with Confederate flags and deer heads. And until 2000, the school system still celebrated Lee-Jackson-King Day rather than Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Now Lee-Jackson Day (Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson) is celebrated on the Friday before Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

AH: And it was the statue to Lee that served as the central rallying cry for last year’s white supremacist rally, protesting the possibility of its removal, as they’ve been removed in New Orleans and other cities.

EW: Incidentally I just found a photograph of myself when I was about 9 or 10 on a school field trip, standing in front of that statue of Robert E. Lee in what was called Lee Park until June 2017. (The park was renamed Emancipation Park that June, and then again renamed Market Street Park in July 2018.) In the photo, my hand is almost on the way to a fist, but not quite. I think I was just diligently standing in line for something and raising my hand. I would like to retroactively think I was protesting, though I’m sure I wasn’t.

AH: I’m interested in how these histories settle themselves into public culture, into the space, memory and the imaginary around us, including how we are taught (or not) about it. Which makes me won-

der, how did you come to know about Massive Resistance, especially as a product of Charlottesville yourself and one of the school systems affected by it?

EW: As I understand it, Massive Resistance refers to the movement in Virginia to resist desegregation, opposing the federal integration mandates put in place by *Brown v. Board of Education*. I think even when I learned about it in high school, it was similarly vague, even though we were talking about very local and relatively recent history. U.S. Senator Harry Byrd was one of the main orchestrators of this resistance — rather than ordering schools to comply with federal orders to integrate, he and other lawmakers had the public schools shut down. It included the opening of private schools for white students only, and establishing schooling in other private sectors as well — through church, neighborhood organized schooling groups, etc, which could “legally” be segregated. They also gave state-funded scholarships to make these white private schools accessible to less economically advantaged white students. When did you learn about it?

AH: I never was taught about Massive Resistance in school. I’m not sure I was even really taught about *Brown v. Board* either, except maybe as one reference within a larger module on the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation.

EW: Wow. This is in California?

AH: Yes, where we’re taught that segregation and racism were only in the South and safely in the past. I’d say I learned about *Brown v. Board* more through popular culture at first — a simple victory for justice, folded neatly into the national narrative of inevitable progress. We did learn about the iconic images of school children attempting to enter previously white-only schools and the horrific assaults and harassment they incurred, but I was never taught much context, let alone how so many white communities got around integration entirely with such elaborate state schemes, and definitely nothing about the white supremacist terrorism that underlies all of it. Therefore, I was given no tools to understand how that violence migrated into the state discourse of crime control (that replaced overt racial control) and policing, nor how the schemes for getting around *Brown v. Board* became templates for many of today’s racial policies — the reproduction of segregated education disguised as “school choice,” school voucher initiatives, the continual defunding of public schools, etc.

It was when I began doing research around the prison system and the explosion in imprisonment that followed the Civil Rights era that I began to learn of this history, especially from communities I started to work with in the South. I was introduced to the private white schools or “Christian Academies” that remain today, nearby public schools that were desegregated but then were quickly abandoned by white families and starved of meaningful resources, and the gerrymandering of school districts (along side that of electoral districts) — maintaining exclusion through other means. I was then able to connect this with the histories I did know of white flight and abandonment in Northern and West Coast cities, camouflaged as the progressive development of suburbs and “coincidental” urban decline, and the general sabotage of public schooling in Los Angeles along racial and class lines, where I taught in my early 20s.

EW: I also didn’t really learn about these events in terms of systemic injustices and the effects that are still very present today, which I think maintains current power structures. If events are treated as historicized, isolated instances, they can be contained in a way and are easier to negate or push aside or behind as part of the narrative of progress. When they are taught as part of a system of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, which we still live under, it is much harder to separate them from the present. What amazes me is that Massive Resistance lasted for a LONG TIME! It essentially worked for 5 years. *Brown v. Board* was in 1954, and it took until 1959 for the U.S. District Court and the Virginia Supreme

Court to rule that closing public schools to avoid desegregation was unconstitutional. If you think about that in kid terms, that’s high school and half of middle school, or all of elementary school.

And then in Virginia, there is also an interesting self-identification contradiction around whether it is truly part of the South. Charlottesville in particular likes to paint a picture of itself as being both one of the founding areas of our nation, and also somehow more progressive than other areas — particularly the “Deep South” — which helps people gloss over the more painful parts of the area’s own history. That is something that I found very interesting with current UVA students responding to the recent events in Charlottesville... “not my UVA, not my Charlottesville”... and I felt like... YES... THIS is Charlottesville... one of the ugly parts that maybe (most white people) don’t see in their day to day lives.

AH: I think such conscious renunciation and disidentification from white supremacy are really important. But there’s also a fine line between that and maintaining one’s deniability about our proximity and culpability within racism. That deniability is certainly enabled by white folks’ insulation from having to feel and therefore recognize racism in our daily lives, and this insulation helps to constitute white privilege itself (my own included). Whether its it naive dissociation or refusing responsibility for how you know it benefits you, it’s further dissociated when it’s taught that what racism looks like are only the more spectacular images of this history. These images become unimaginable to us today, casting racism in the amber of the past, in black and white images and antiquated language, masking the continuity between today’s racial violence and the young children pictured bravely crossing the color-line into this or that school after *Brown v. Board*.

EW: I remember worshipping Ruby Bridges in 2nd grade, but only learning about her in February, designated Black History Month.

AH: Then racism only “looks like” the hideous, the spit-laden vitriol and violence of the segregationists, shouting, pushing and punching, chalked up to ignorance, and we can feel bad about that without having to feel responsible.

And as with Massive Resistance, the presumption of ignorance distracts us from the calculated methods of statecraft, the conspiracy, the collusion of politicians and business, the legislation and moralizing that are used to mask and preserve hierarchy. Massive Resistance took place on this level — state structure, designed by the “best and brightest,” by lawmakers, business and religious leaders and graduates of elite universities.

What caught my attention the most though was the overt shutting down of state function. Rather than have schools integrate, as you said, the start of school years were delayed, some schools shuttered altogether, and even an entire school system closed down in Norfolk. Rather than racism as vitriol and attack, this was a boycott, an emptying, an evacuation.

EW: Yes, a mini secession in some ways. Similar to the Civil War. It is fascinating to think about how the state introduced legal measures to make school closure possible. It was all “above board” (no pun intended).

AH: Secession indeed. They argued that *Brown v. Board* had overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling and the “separate but equal” doctrine it enabled. Therefore, *Brown* was “federal overreach,” conflicting with “states’ rights.” Which here is a specific sense of states’ rights, one that preceded the Civil War. It is grounded in the historic idea of “popular sovereignty” that was crafted to exempt slave states from federal control — from the Missouri Compromise to the Compromise of 1850 and culminating in Confederate secession. “States’ rights” meant a right to enslave, and that meaning echoes within subsequent methods for maintaining racial hierarchy and white rule, especially within Jim Crow segregation, and it remains a euphemism withn racial policies today.

EW: Indeed. In school, I remember students arguing vehemently for states’ rights, not probably fully understanding the depth of what they were arguing for, or the historical implications. I think we see something similar in the “free speech” argument recently, though on an individual rather than governmental level.

AH: How do you mean?

EW: That recently, “free speech” arguments have been used to protect hate speech. Historically, we tend to think of First Amendment protection arguments coming from the Left; free speech arguments were indeed central in the fight for civil rights and the protection of political dissenters in parts of the 20th century. Increasingly, the conservative Right has co-opted these arguments to defend corporate speech — notably, those fighting against gun control legislation and campaign finance reform, even for businesses that refuse to provide abortions. Practically speaking, the First Amendment has transformed from a shield of the Left to a weapon of the Right.¹

AH: That double speak was also seen in Massive Resistance: instead of it stopping oppression, *Brown* is characterized as a loss of the oppressor’s freedom. The response is a boycott by the powerful, their vacating of the state’s role, in particular its responsibility for universal education. The problem is that “universal” meant white, and this “universal student” deserved their education until the exclusion it was predicated upon was called out and actual universal access was demanded. Then we see that, in fact, this universal privilege meant white privilege. And when the state could no longer defend that exclusivity specifically, it chose to defend it generally, destroying the specific institution rather than the privilege — the institution no longer serves as a fortress of exclusion but becomes a site under siege; no longer a bulwark but a sieve, so to speak, and so the institution itself was sabotaged. Ironically, this sabotage also hit people they didn’t intend, as groups like the Norfolk Committee for Public Schools formed to fight that sabotage, including many white families as well.

EW: Yes — and the state’s abdication of its role to protect all its citizens we saw again in the Charlottesville Police Department’s non-interventionist, inadequate response to the events of August 12, 2017. When physical violence broke out between white nationalists and counter-protesters, police were directed to stay behind barricades rather than intervene and risk injury due to underpreparedness. The violence that day led to the death of Heather Heyer and the injury of many others. So similar to Massive Resistance (and what could be categorized as part of the “passive resistance” that followed), the state in 2017 used its discretion to determine who was deserving of its protection and, by extension, who was a citizen.

AH: And where the 2017 Unite the Right event was, ostensibly, organized to defend a symbolic relic of that previous moment’s hierarchies, the anxieties that fueled it seem to have run even deeper, rooted in the white trauma of the 14th amendment — the 1868, post-Emancipation amendment that established “equal protection under the law.” While laws to uphold white supremacy come and go (and come again), we presume that the monuments at stake today, like the Lee and Jackson statues in Charlottesville, point to the battles and Southern loss of the Civil War. While they obviously do, as shown by the choice of the Confederacy’s “battle flag” as the one that still gets flown, it’s possible that what it also points to is this moment of a perceived dispossession. To white privilege, the equality of equal protection destroys you, chips away at an identity built upon a myth of supremacy in which things are not equal, where you then need new symbols and rituals to preserve the myth, spaces and institutions through which to teach it, to

¹ Liptak, Adam. “How Conservatives Weaponized the First Amendment.” *The New York Times*. June 30, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/30/us/politics/first-amendment-conservatives-supreme-court.html>.

infuse its ideology into law, to perform and enforce it (Jim Crow, mass incarceration...). We see this carried into the present, not only through the 2017 events, but also through the tactics that Massive Resistance offered as a blueprint to remain separated. Nancy MacLeanⁱⁱ has located the beginnings of today's "school choice" rhetoric and "school vouchers" to Massive Resistance, which are essentially the "tuition grant program" you mentioned, allowing white families to use public school money to pay tuition at all-white private schools and draining those resources from the public system.

So across this history, we see a tension between new presentation on one hand (Confederate iconography in the public square or the investment in a figure like Trump), and erasure and withdrawal on the other (the shut down of a school or school system, the withholding of resources or sabotage of state function), which together defend white supremacy from equality.

EW: It is interesting how only when state structure failed (or could no longer support its argument on a national level) did the power sort of trickle down to individuals — with "school choice" programs, privatization, etc., which supposedly led to self-selected segregation, but of course in practice it worked in tandem with intimidation methods, akin to the informal ways individuals and the state discouraged black people from voting and asserting their 14th amendment rights. And as we also see this today in terms of school district mapping and gerrymandering, tied up in a question of economics and who can afford to live where, it abstracts the root of the issue and furthers that idea that these things are no fault of our own. Segregation is not reallllly segregation anymore, relieving us again of our own responsibility in the matter.

AH: Do you think that is what the discourse of "institutional racism" attempts to get at, or which analyses of "structural racism" try to give us a language for? When discrimination or violence are displaced from interpersonal relations and enacted through institutional structures, then arguments about choice, freedom, and so forth inoculate us against culpability: They're just trying to run a business, get their kid a good education, etc...

EW: Absolutely. I think that is certainly one of the ways that we all subconsciously uphold white supremacy and also one of the reasons why people often feel so personally attacked when confronted with an accusation of racism. I think this sort of passive racism is actually one of the most dangerous types that we see today. In Charlottesville, a month or so before the "Unite the Right" White Supremacy March/Terrorist attack, there was a KKK rally held in Market Street Park (formerly Lee, then Emancipation Park). That rally was less scary to me in some ways than the second one, because it was easy for people to outright reject the KKK and what they stand for leading up to the rally. It was harder for some people to distance themselves from an argument about something more general like "free speech," which was a huge part of the message leading up to the August 12 rally. So it created this passive block of people who wouldn't actively support it, but wouldn't outright reject it either. Granted, the amount of violence it ended up causing propelled it into a different sort of rhetoric, but certainly the way some people were talking about it leading up to it — that it wouldn't be dangerous, that it was just a right wing march for free

speech, etc. — was so casual and terrifying. In the 70s, Vivian Gordon (then director of UVA's Black Studies Program) gave a speech where she talked about the new forms of racism as "sugarcoated arsenic" — she said something like, "just as easy to swallow, but kills you just as dead."ⁱⁱⁱ This resonates for me with "passive resistance," which came after Massive Resistance and encompasses a lot of what we have talked about — including the law that said people could choose which school to go to if they were a minority in their county and would be moving to a school where they were a majority — as well as white flight (to private schools, as well as away from areas with large black populations).

AH: A part of my interest in this has come while working on my project, *Degrees of Visibility*, which focuses on the disappearance of the contemporary prison from the landscape — not shuttered but hidden within it, camouflaged, moved out of sight or disguised to resemble any other building. And I've been looking to tropes of disappearance elsewhere as well — the ruining of indigenous architecture by colonizers who then built churches or missions from their rubble; the disappearance of black schools through their battle with time, direct sabotage, or, ironically, losing students to integrated schools. I'm thinking also of the erasure of communities, like Seneca Village, the free black settlement in Manhattan that was de-

stroyed when building Central Park, or the sabotage of Allensworth in California (which I discussed elsewhere with Rachel Herzog and Isaac Ontiveros) — the free black utopian town established in the early 1900s that was strangled by surrounding white towns and is now emptied and a California State Historic Park, surrounded by prisons in California's Central Valley.

in the early 1920s as part of an effort to reinforce Jim Crow laws. Their locations are significant in that they were also used as tools for displacing thriving black communities and spurring a gentrifying re-segregation. Notably, Stonewall Jackson's statue in Court Square Park (formerly Jackson, then Justice Park) was built next to the Courthouse on the former site of the Charlottesville Jail. That first jail was built there in 1766, and until the mid-1800s the Courthouse was the only voting location — so incarceration and enfranchisement existed side by side on that site. In 1876, the jail site moved behind High Street, further away from public view as was customary across America at that time. The area became a majority-black area called McKee Row up until 1914 when the County deeded the black residents' land to the city under the guise of "cleaning up" a "rowdy" area, enabling the gentrifying re-segregation I mentioned above.^{iv} The statue of Stonewall Jackson, which includes a Confederate flag, was erected in 1921, facing South. Sophie Abramowitz, Eva Latterner, and Gillet Rosenblith argue that this statue of Stonewall Jackson, with the statue of the anonymous Confederate soldier that had been erected by the Courthouse in 1909, "worked together to mark the ostensibly public and civic space of the courthouse as the ideological property of the Confederacy...[and] suggested that the courthouse was committed to upholding the values represented by the flag." So I think your

be nearby. But side by side like that, the enfranchisement of the included and the disenfranchisement of the excluded is clearly spatialized. When the presumed civil function of imprisonment overflows, to revealing the racialized conceptions of order and disorder that it upholds (martial law rather than civil), we start to see that contradiction moved out of sight. It animates the historic pulse of erasure and presentation, deterritorialization and reterritorialization that uphold a racial order: casting black neighborhoods as "rough," and that as an excuse to erase claims to the land and evidence of a black community thriving, (re)inscribing the space with Confederate iconography, "marking" supposedly open, civic space as "the ideological property of the Confederacy." We don't have to look far then to find the contest over schools, translating all of this into the politics of education, its segregation and integration, and its relationship to literacy, enfranchisement and empowerment.

EW: I think it is also interesting to consider places that defy or even undermine the notion of Confederate ideological "property." Perhaps as a counterhistory to that of Court Square, Charlottesville's Jefferson School is an interesting case study of a structure that has gone through multiple resignifications. It was founded by the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865, in a hotel that had served as a Confederate hospital. For years, sometimes as an elementary school, and sometimes as both an elementary and high school, the Jefferson School taught traditional liberal arts curriculum (as opposed to industrial trade) to black students in Charlottesville. During Brown v. Board and the policy of Massive Resistance that followed, the Jefferson School remained open as a "colored school" and was physically expanded by the school board to be used as an example of "separate but equal" facilities. Jefferson remained an all black school until 1964 when pressures to integrate escalated; shortly after, all Charlottesville sixth graders were placed at Jefferson until 1967. Since then, the building has served many purposes and currently exists as the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, which houses a variety of social services, educational and recreational groups.^{vi}

AH: I mentioned earlier that I was working with some community groups in Mississippi in the early 2000s, specifically Citizens for Quality Education and Southern Echo in Holmes County and Jackson, where I was introduced to how this same history had settled there. They were early developers of the "school to prison pipeline" analysis, and when I was there to help them document what was happening in local juvenile "bootcamp" prisons, which were called "training schools," these histories were still bare on the surface. Segregation was still clearly maintained, through the private white Christian Academies over here, and what was left of public schools over there, which were almost entirely black and were not so ironically called "Attendance Centers." These were school buildings that had essentially been vacated of a pedagogical mission and become spaces of custody during school hours — their only real function was to mark their attendance. There was a very thin institutional membrane that separated them from the training schools, where so many of the kids would be sent. I got to interview the principle of a local "Christian Academy," whose language to defend this segregation was that it wasn't intended as segregation, just about good fami-

vi Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. "Jefferson School." *African American Historic Sites Database*. Accessed July 29, 2018. <http://www.aahistoricsitesva.org/items/show/226>.



EW: The idea of the prison is actually camouflaged within and enacted very directly through the Confederate monument statues in Charlottesville. The statues of Lee and Jackson were erected

interest in how the carceral state disguises itself is very relevant here.

iii *Sugarcoated Arsenic*. Dir. Kevin Jerome Everson and Claudrena Harold. Perf. Erin Stewart. Picture Palace Pictures, 2014.

AH: That proximity of the original jail to the city's previous voting site is super interesting, when we see imprisonment and discourses of criminality generally as historical tools of disenfranchisement, similar to poll taxes, literacy tests, and so on. If presumed to be two normal, civic functions, it might make sense that they'd

iv "Charlottesville Historic Marker Inventory: Court Square." *City of Charlottesville, Virginia*. <http://www.charlottesville.org/home/showdocument?id=30035>.

v Abramowitz, Sophie, Eva Latterner, and Gillet Rosenblith. "How Charlottesville's Confederate Statues Helped Decimate the City's Historically Successful Black Communities." *Slate Magazine*. June 23, 2017.

ii MacLean, Nancy. *Democracy in Chains*. NY, NY: Viking, 2017.

lies and Christian values, a “color-blind” language that normalized and exonerated their segregation and the carcerality that characterized the public schools.

There is a case that is working its way through the courts right now, in which school children and advocates in Detroit are suing the state for conditions that sound strikingly similar to these Attendance Centers in Mississippi. They are suing on two grounds: that the students are being denied their right to literacy; and that without the presence of meaningful education, the state enforcement of students to attend becomes a form of forced custody. While the latter suggests that without education, the institutions become a kind of prison, the question of literacy reminds me of the principle behind universal education in the first place, which is to prepare us to participate meaningfully in democracy. The unusual thing you mention about the Jefferson School is that it offered black youth a liberal arts education rather than the industrial training that many early black schools centered upon, preparing students for serving white society rather than for being enfranchised — not to prepare them as citizens but to train as an underclass. Literacy connotes more than just the ability to read and write, Paulo Friere would say that it means literacy in one’s political and historical conditions, yet the most recent decision in the Detroit case ruled against the young people and advocates, where Judge Stephen J. Murphy III ruled that access to literacy is not a constitutional right.^{vii}

EW: Something that comes to mind that I haven’t fully thought through yet is the relationship between literacy and whiteness in a more broad sense. In some ways, whiteness (as a cultural phenome-

vii Fortin, Jacey. “‘Access to Literacy’ Is Not a Constitutional Right, Judge in Detroit Rules.” *The New York Times*. July 04, 2018.

non rather than a genetic one) requires a different kind of illiteracy than that which you describe above. It requires a lack of cultural literacy and a lack of understanding of the many histories that coexist alongside the dominant narratives that we were taught in school. In some ways, the education system as it exists reinforces this kind of illiteracy among students. Interestingly, the idea of erasure that you mentioned in terms of Massive Resistance is very much present in some arguments for why the Confederate statues should stay — that taking them down would erase history — which to me, feels like an argument in support of cultural illiteracy and the erasure of other histories.

AH: So following this through to the present, I’m still thinking about memory. Certainly whether we are taught things so that they are remembered, or so they are disavowed, but also how public memory is formed, contested, privileged, concealed and revealed in many objects here: “Emancipation Park” replaces Robert E. Lee Park, and then “Market Street Park”; the terms of left movements for free speech cloaking white supremacist ideology; the symbolism of the path that the Unite the Right protestors marched; and Confederacy statues repeated throughout the South so as to territorialize and terrorize, to mark, entrench and intimidate. Are these not just markers of presence, but of erasure?

EW: I think it is important to note that erasure is inherent in whiteness — it by definition erases, at all levels of structure, from the personal to the institutional to the societal. Whiteness is defined by what it “isn’t” (black, brown, etc.), which also makes it an extremely fragile and vulnerable construct. The presentation of these monuments as “History” erases or occludes a multiplicity of other histories, and yet many white people feel threatened by their removal. This threatened feeling seems like it comes from an idea that there

is a fixed amount of power in the world, and that if one person gains it, another person must by definition lose it — a kind of scarcity model. This in turn relates to the right-wing public choice argument that you mentioned which includes the idea that economics are the realm of freedom.

The park re-naming also makes me think about the act of passing (in racial terms) — and what recontextualizing or renaming or reframing does to a person or symbol... I think about bodies that have white passing “privilege,” but that the stakes of truly entering whiteness include the violence of erasing other histories... So white presentation necessitates erasure. Of course this erasure can never truly be realized by the passing subject — we are always left with the markings (of non-whiteness), and the passing subject is passed into circulation as a counterfeit bill (borrowing from Harryette Mullen).^{viii} With the park re-naming, the markings of the violent history are still there — changing the name from Emancipation Park to Market Street Park to make it “neutral” is still an act of erasure.

AH: So perhaps we identify two things that Charlottesville is the battleground for here: through Massive Resistance, education connected to enfranchisement and empowerment, as Jim Crow wasn’t just about separate drinking fountains but about power; and in the present, the monuments as they map an ideological, privatized (Confederate) territory, in a moment where white supremacy, as a ruling ideology, might be on its last legs, seen in the larger white reactionary movement that was catalyzed by the first black president (“_____ will not replace us,” they chanted).

viii Mullen, Harryette. “Optic White: Blackness and the Production of Whiteness.” *Diacritics* 24, no. 2/3 (1994): 71-89. doi:10.2307/465165. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/04/education/detroit-public-schools-education.html>

EW: Whiteness is a fragile construction, no matter how pervasive it is. Its perpetuation depends on a constant need to validate, to separate, to announce itself as “NOT-_____.”

AH: Always in crisis because it is haunted, forever undermined by what it erases, conceals and disavows. It is weak, false and filled with holes.

EW: !

AH: So the contemporary prison then — what is it as a monument to?

+++

Images:

1. “~~Robert E. Lee~~ in Charlottesville, 2017,” by Ashley Hunt
2. “~~Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson~~ in Charlottesville, 2017,” by Ashley Hunt
3. “School Field Trip, Lee Park, 1999,” courtesy of Elizabeth Webb
4. “~~Jefferson Davis~~ in New Orleans, 2018,” by Ashley Hunt

Conversation between Elizabeth Webb and Ashley Hunt, between October 2017–August 2018.

Printed as a part of *Degrees of Visibility*, a large body of photographs that study the landscapes in which prisons, jails and detention centers sit, throughout all 50 U.S. states and territories.

Also see “Four Directions of Allensworth” (2017), a conversation between Rachel Herzing, Isaac Ontiveros and Ashley Hunt at Allensworth California State Historic Park.

<http://degreesofvisibility.info>
<http://www.elizabethmwebb.com>
<http://ashleyhunt.info>

