

Spring 5-10-2019

Confederate Symbolism at Trinity College

Tyler Hartmeyer
tyler.hartmeyer@trincoll.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/trinslavery>

Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hartmeyer, Tyler, "Confederate Symbolism at Trinity College" (2019). *Trinity and Slavery Project*. 3.
<https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/trinslavery/3>

AMST 406

Professor Manevitz

10 May, 2019

Tyler Hartmeyer

Confederate Symbolism at Trinity College

The American Civil War, fought over four enduring years from 1861 to 1865, has had a lasting impact on the United States due to the ethical implications behind the institution of slavery. In present day, one hundred and fifty-four years after the Civil War, races are still divided in the United States and continue to implement the core ideals and values of the Civil War in today's society and culture. The Confederate Flag, a symbol of extreme racism and white supremacy that was a staple of southern culture during the Civil War, is one of these icons that is widely promoted and displayed today, especially on university and college campuses. After the events in Charlottesville in 2017 surrounding the Robert E. Lee statue sparked conversation about Confederate symbolism on college campuses, it was time to recognize our own representation at Trinity College. The Civil War is not only represented on the quad, where the names of students who served in the Civil War are carved into two cannons, but more importantly, in the chapel, where one of the kneeler end pews depicts a Confederate soldier carrying a Confederate flag on his back. Although this symbol of iconography was removed in 2017, the original installment begs the Trinity community to question, "Why was it put in the Trinity Chapel in the first place?" Installed in 1957, this pew end, donated to the college by the Pi Kappa Alpha, or Pike Fraternity, does not represent the history of the Civil War, but rather stands for hate and discrimination against the African American race. It was not a coincidence that this pew end was installed in 1957, a time of racial upheaval and the Civil Rights Movement

in the United States. Although the primary sources dating back to the 1950's do not explicitly discuss racism and hatred against African Americans, it is the absence of addressing the Confederate representation that suggest the continuation of White Supremacist ideals. From 1957 to present day, there has been a significant shift in opinion regarding the Confederate flag in the Trinity Chapel. The finial went from being not spoken of during the 1950's, because there was no controversy surrounding it, to widely opposed by alumni, students, professors and other members of the Trinity community in the past few years. These individuals who voiced their opinions were able to recognize the true intentions of those who installed the carving in 1957, to implement White Supremacist values into the Trinity community.

Conversations surrounding the Trinity College Pike Confederate finial began after a series of unfortunate events that occurred throughout different parts of the United States beginning in 2015. Freddie Gray, an African American man from Baltimore, Maryland, died in April 2015 from a severe spinal injury after being hunted down by police the week prior. Police encountered Gray with a switchblade, an illegal weapon, the proceeded to chase him down and drag him into a police van. His spinal injury was a result of not wearing a seat belt and having his hands and feet shackled.¹ On Wednesday, June 17th, 2015, there was a hate crime shooting at a historic African American church in Charleston, South Carolina, that resulted in nine deaths. The gunman was a white male in his mid-twenties.² Although these two incidents do not

¹ John Woodrow Cox, Lynh Bui, and DeNeen L. Brown. "Who Was Freddie Gray? How Did He Die? And What Led to the Mistrrial in Baltimore?" The Washington Post. December 16, 2015. Accessed May 08, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/who-was-freddie-gray-and-how-did-his-death-lead-to-a-mistrrial-in-baltimore/2015/12/16/b08df7ce-a433-11e5-9c4e-be37f66848bb_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.03798b2d2bb0.

² Jason Horowitz, Nick Corasaniti, and Ashley Southall. "Nine Killed in Shooting at Black Church in Charleston." The New York Times. June 18, 2015. Accessed May 08, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/us/church-attacked-in-charleston-south-carolina.html>.

directly involve a Confederate symbol, they are part of a much larger issue of the mistreatment of African American people. Incidents such as these force people to question how much racial relations have actually progressed since the Civil War? Freddie Gray's death and the Charleston church shooting instigated discussions about racial relations in the United States and more specifically, sparked conversation about Confederate representation that is widely promoted throughout this country. After the Charleston church massacre, the *Washington Post* published an article writing, "The nation reeled with shock and pain, and the state and U.S. flags atop South Carolina's Capitol dome were lowered. By the Confederate battle emblem on the statehouse grounds flew high; only the legislature had the power to lower or bring it down." Ultimately the Confederate flag was removed from the South Carolina statehouse on July 10th, 2015.³

In August 2017, a group of white nationalists in Charlottesville, Virginia were protesting over the removal of the Robert E. Lee statue, this rally was referred to as "Unite the Right." As the rallies progressed, people became angrier and more physical with one another, which ultimately turned the protests into a massive brawl. The governor promptly announced a state of emergency and the National Guard assisted local police in handling the situation. At one of the rallies in a Charlottesville park, a car intentionally plowed into the crowd, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and injuring many others.⁴ This event was very tragic and perhaps the most

³ Stephanie McCrummen, and Elahe Izadi. "Confederate Flag Comes down on South Carolina's Statehouse Grounds." *The Washington Post*. July 10, 2015. Accessed May 08, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/07/10/watch-live-as-the-confederate-flag-comes-down-in-south-carolina/?utm_term=.9257de5420f4.

⁴ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, and Brian. "Man Charged After White Nationalist Rally in Charlottesville Ends in Deadly Violence." *The New York Times*. August 12, 2017. Accessed May 08, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/us/charlottesville-protest-white-nationalist.html>.

significant turning point in discussions regarding representing Confederate monuments, statues, and other historical markers. Small glimpses into these horrific events are necessary to learn and study in order to understand the national conversation regarding Confederate representation. On a smaller, but still very significant scale, colleges and universities have recently struggled with handling their Confederate representations on their campuses.

In 1957, Trinity College had its own exposure to Confederate iconography when the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity donated a pew end finial to the chapel. This finial noticeably depicts a Confederate soldier carrying a Confederate flag on his back. At the time, the college had wanted to give fraternities the opportunity to represent their institutions within the chapel, therefore granting them each a pew end that would be designed and financially executed by the brotherhood. Although only a select few members of Pike were involved in installing the carving, they helped design the symbol and raise the necessary funds in order for it to be installed. In 1957, the year the carving was installed in the Trinity chapel, the Pike brotherhood also donned a Confederate flag hanging from their house on Vernon street.⁵ This flag hanging from their house, along with the one belonging to them in the chapel, not only showed their historical involvement in the Civil War, but also their beliefs and connections to White Supremacism.

In the March 1958 issue of *The Shield and Diamond*, Pike's quarterly publication, published a few months after the Confederate flag finial was installed in the chapel, Dale Hartford, the Assistant Director of Public Relations at Trinity College, discusses the dedication of the kneeler end pew. It is in this article that the details of the man in the carving are revealed.

⁵ Pike alumnus. "Interview with Pike alumnus." Telephone interview by author. April 26th, 2019.

Perhaps the Pike brotherhood chose Corporal Julian Edward Wood to carry the Confederate Flag in the carving because he was one of the founders of the fraternity; however, he has nothing to do with Trinity College. It is significant to note that Wood attended University of Virginia, which is where he helped found the fraternity, after being one of the first volunteers for the Confederate Army. This icon of Corporal Wood carrying the Confederate flag does not symbolize Pike member's involvement and accomplishments in the Civil War, but rather the racist idealism that white members of the Confederacy believed in and promoted. The last line of this article reads, "This is a very busy weekend at Trinity. It is Alumni Homecoming Weekend [...] and perhaps most notable of all, it is the weekend when Corp. Julian Wood raises the Confederate flag in the Trinity Chapel."⁶ Pike undoubtedly chose this weekend, when many alumni would be visiting their alma mater, to proudly show off their new pew in the Trinity Chapel. On the contrary, alumni have more recently come to recognize the discrimination associated with the Pike pew end and expressed their concerns. Ultimately, it has proved to be a symbol that the fraternity and college are not proud of.

This article is striking for many different reasons, but perhaps that it was written by Trinity's Public Relations Director is most overwhelming. Public relations roles are intended to promote a brand, in this case, a college. One would think that writing about something so racially charged and demeaning would navigate people away from the college; however, in 1957, discussing the Confederate flag was not a concern within the Trinity community. Perhaps this is due to the small number of African Americans involved in the college at the time. The IVY

⁶ Dale W. Hartford. "Trinity Chapel Dedicates Pi Kappa Alpha Kneeler End." *Shield and Diamond*, March 1958, 5. Accessed March 3, 2019. http://www.pikearchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PKA_SD_1958_MAR.pdf.

yearbook from 1957, shows only a handful of African Americans that were students during that very racially charged era.⁷ Today, this *Shield and Diamond* article would likely not exist due to the political implications surrounding Confederate symbolism. During the 1950's when White Supremacism was still very apparent throughout much of the United States, this installation of a pew would not prove to be very controversial, in fact it was received very well by the Trinity Community.

On January 24th, 1958, well over a year after the Pike pew end was installed, Robert Blynn, Executive Secretary of the Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity, wrote a letter to Mr. Dale Hartford in which he expressed his gratitude for writing *The Shield and Diamond* article. Robert Blynn writes, "We want to express our appreciation for the outstanding job done by everyone connected with this project. The conception, execution and article are all excellent. Pi Kappa Alpha counts it a distinct privilege to be a part of your beautiful chapel."⁸ This letter shows no hesitation or sense of controversy over the Pike pew end. It seems as though no one even questioned the ethical decisions behind installing the Confederate flag in the Trinity Chapel. This letter is one of many primary sources dating back to the 1950's that introduces the absence of discussion surrounding the Confederate flag. Robert Blynn only addresses the author of the article, how well it is written, and how Pike is honored to be involved in the Trinity Chapel; however, he neglects to include any of the true symbolism and meaning behind this development.

⁷ *The 1957 IVY*. The 1957 IVY Yearbook, Trinity College, Hartford, CT.

<https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=ivy>

⁸ Robert Blynn to Mr. Dale W. Hartford. January 24th, 1958. Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity. Memphis, Tennessee.

This letter suggests the privilege and power that fraternities had at the time. As far as we know, there was no resistance to installing the Confederate flag finial in the chapel, perhaps because no one felt that they could stand up to such an established institution. In this letter, it almost seems as if Robert Blynn knows that he is writing about a very immoral topic and that is why he disregards mentioning the actual Confederate flag carving itself, but rather refers to it as a project. 60 years later, in 2017, the power lies not in the white male population of the college, but rather in alumni, students, faculty, and others who believe that the carving should no longer be displayed in the chapel.

Trinity's own Chairman of the Fine Arts Department, Professor John C. E. Taylor was the man behind the design of the carving, while Erwin Dressel of C. H. Dressel and Son, Inc. executed the actual creation of the carving. It is interesting to note that someone so highly respected and involved in the college, the Chairman of the Fine Arts Department, would want to represent his college's history in this way. In a letter from Professor Taylor to Erwin Dressel, dated July 10th 1957, Professor Taylor addresses the artist, "Dear Mr. Dressel, This is just a line to say that your carving has met with high approval. Everyone who has seen it has expressed admiration, and the general consensus of opinion seems to be that it will take its place well in the Chapel."⁹ This high rate of approval is a result of Trinity's student body being a majority of white wealthy men during a time of social unrest in the United States, specifically between races.

Again, this primary source does not include the true meaning behind the actual carving, especially considering that the man depicted was not even a member of the Trinity community.

⁹ John C.E. Taylor to Mr. Erwin Dressel. July 10, 1957. Trinity College, Hartford, CT.

This letter does not even mention the word Confederate, nor talk about the actual carving itself. It is interesting to question whether this absence in speech is due to the fact that the people involved with the creation of the carving were unaware of the lasting impacts that this symbol of hatred would create, or if they just disregarded those thoughts and did not care because of their White Supremacist ideals. This letter also exemplifies how it was not only extreme white supremacists who expressed these racist ideals, but also members of a college who were most likely well respected among their community and who were not outright racists. These racist views were expressed by ordinary people too who were just living their everyday lives at college. This is due to the greater idealism in the United States in the 1950's that largely encompassed White Supremacism into everyday life.

Although the Confederate Flag pew might have been well received in the late 1950's as seen from these primary sources, both letters and the *Shield and Diamond* article, times have changed. It was not until more recently, after the events in Charlottesville, Virginia occurred, that members of the Trinity College community began to question the moral and ethical meanings behind this carving in the chapel and initiated a conversation about it, which then led to a more serious movement behind removing the carving. The college looked into the Confederate flag carving in the chapel as opposed to the names of Confederate soldiers on the cannons due to the location of the iconography. As one article from the Trinity *Tripod* states, "Every day, hundreds of students walk past the cannons, but the Chapel's role as a public and spiritual space of welcoming separates the pew from the cannons, which are located in the

quad.”¹⁰ Although the cannons on the quad are another symbol to consider, the Confederate flag in the chapel was of the utmost priority due to its location. In 2017, before the start of the school year, the carving was officially removed from the Trinity Chapel after members of the community voiced their disapproval of the symbol in such a sacred place.

In August of 2017, just a few days after the car incident in Charlottesville occurred, three Pike alumni reached out to Reverend Read to voice their objection to the carving and encouragement to rid of it. After hearing such disapproval from many alumni of the college, especially those that were members of the Pike fraternity, and other members of the community, Reverend Read spearheaded the movement to remove the carving from the chapel. Although she could have executed the decision to take down the carving herself, she went through a whole process to ensure that removing the Pike pew was what a majority of the Trinity community wanted. As is with any controversial situation, there were people that opposed removing the carving from the chapel. One anonymous professor approached the situation and expressed his concern with removing the finial. A Trinity *Tripod* article from 2017 details that “Chaplain Read voiced these concerns to the Chaplain’s Advisory Group, composed of staff, alumni, and faculty who decide on issues surrounding the Chapel. After a lengthy discussion with Advisory Staff, Pike alumni, and current Pike leadership, they reached consensus to move the finial to a place more appropriate for reflection about the role of cultural iconography.”¹¹ The Chapel Advisory Group suggested the finial sit on the St. David

¹⁰ Parker Fiske and James Kaynor. "Confederate Flag Removed from Chapel." *The Trinity Tripod* (Hartford), September 26, 2017. Accessed February 19, 2019.

<https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4262&context=tripod>.

¹¹ Ibid.

kneeler end until a more appropriate location was decided; however, as of now, the finial sits in a box in Reverend Read's office, until a decision can be made regarding where the carving should take its place. As for the pew end, it is up to the Pike fraternity to work with the school and design a new finial that will replace the original one.

Fortunately, if it were not for these emails sent to Reverend Read in 2017, the Pike finial might still be on that first pew in the chapel, closest to the altar, staring at those giving sermons and resting next to a freshmen who is sitting in the pew at Convocation, their first day as a Trinity College student. In one email to Reverend Read, one Pike alumni wrote, "Contrary to what the President (Trump) and others have argued, these statues and monuments are not historical markers and should be treated as what they are--symbols of hate and white supremacy. This same logic can and must be applied to the Confederate flag on the Pike pew." Not only does he write about the Confederate flag in the Trinity Chapel, the chapel of his alma mater, but also connects it to the larger picture of Confederate statues around the United States and the argument about whether they are intended to symbolize history or are used as White Supremacist representations. It is important that he does make this connection between Trinity and the larger movement as this topic is very relevant to discussions throughout the country regarding Confederate symbolism. It is not just a Trinity College issue, and that is why it needs to be addressed, both on and off campus.

The alumnus then continued to voice his opinion on the matter, writing, "These groups commissioned the statutes and monuments for two main purposes: (1) to spread and to glorify the "Lost Cause" myth of the Civil War as a fight to maintain the southern way of life instead of preserving slavery; and (2) to serve as explicit symbols of white supremacy by reminding

African-Americans during the Jim Crow era that they were second class citizens.”¹² In 1957, what purpose would a Confederate flag have other than to “remind African-Americans that they were second class citizens,” especially in a chapel that had nothing to do with the Civil War, given that it was built in 1933. This alumnus deserves the utmost respect and admiration as he explicitly states the true intentions and meaning behind installing this carving in the chapel.

Another alumni Pike alumni wrote to Reverend Read, “As member of the PIKE organization, I have never felt that the national organization represented the Trinity chapter in any way and I cannot think of any ethically sound reasons why someone would choose confederate symbols to represent PIKE at Trinity.”¹³ As this alumni suggests, the Confederate flag symbol has little to do with Pike or Trinity College, which insinuates there were other racist objectives in installing this specific pew end in the chapel. As stated earlier, Corporal Julian Wood was not involved in the Trinity community in any way as he was a student at the University of Virginia, so it is not appropriate for him to represent something so morally wrong and outdated in the chapel.

Lastly, a third alumnus stated that, “What the founders of the national fraternity fought for before forming Pike is an embarrassment, not a source of pride. That this pew was installed almost 100 years after the Civil War, with the Confederate flag prominent, has always been troubling to me.”¹⁴ This alumnus directly addresses that many Pike members were a part of the Confederacy. Although that cannot be changed, it should be addressed but not promoted and

¹² David Allen. "Pi Kappa Alpha Pew." E-mail to Allison Read. August 19, 2017.

¹³ Sakaguchi, Rayn. "Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity Pew." E-mail to Allison Read. August 17, 2017.

¹⁴ Baumgartner, Scott. "Removal of the Pike pew from the Trinity Chapel." E-mail to Allison Read. August 17, 2017.

widely publicized like it is in the Trinity Chapel. Although one is not able to change the past, he/she is can use it to change the present.

In comparison with the letters from the 1950's and these more recent emails, it is interesting to note the progression in openness. The primary sources do not mention the actual details of the Confederate flag in the chapel, but rather just discuss how the carving was widely approved among the Trinity community. On the contrary, in these emails to Reverend Read, the Confederate flag and the symbolism and meaning behind it is the main subject matter. In comparison to 1957, during the time of the Civil Rights Movement, people in the modern day are not only able to recognize the racism behind displaying the Confederate flag, but also are able to address it and voice their opposition to this White Supremacism. One can notice the interesting power structure here. In the 1950's power was directed from the top down, with the implementation of the carving headed by a fraternity organization and administrators of the college; however, more recently, with the removal of the carving, power has shown to be directed from the bottom up with students and alumni leading the movement to removing the finial from the chapel.

During the summer of 2017, when the Confederate flag carving sparked controversy and conversation among the community, it was not only alumni who expressed their opinions directly to the college. One Trinity student, a sophomore when the Confederate carving was removed from the chapel, wrote in a Trinity *Tripod* article addressed to the President Berger-Sweeney, "I questioned if the removal of the Confederate flag in the Chapel represented a new path Trinity was said to be championing, that Trinity had stopped kneeling at the altar of white

supremacy.”¹⁵ Although this article was not directly about the Confederate flag, he was able to tie it in to his essay about the campus culture surrounding racism and White Supremacy. The Confederate flag in the chapel was just another reason that African Americans felt unwelcomed on campus. In another *Tripod* article, President Berger-Sweeny even addressed the issue of the Confederate carving herself, writing, “I know the Chapel has been a refuge for students involved in the Black Lives Matter movement and know that so many other groups see the chapel as a space to connect, bond and build bridges.”¹⁶ Many members of the community, including the President of the college, were able to see that the chapel was a very inappropriate place for the Confederate flag, as it is a place where students, faculty, and others take refuge and heal from oppression.

On Facebook, the group “Alumni for a Better Trinity” is a platform that encourages alumni to keep in contact with the school and with one another; however, these conversations often turn into ugly arguments and debates. When the finial was removed from the Trinity Chapel in 2017, members in the group posted their thoughts and opinions regarding the controversial matter. There were alumni who were in support of removing the carving, and then a handful who strongly opposed removing this iconography from the chapel. Bill P Yelenak demonstrated his strong opposition to the removing the carving when he wrote, “Then why not leave it?! It is a piece of history and when removed it loses its historical value. What right does an organization have to remove a piece of history that belongs to all of us. I’m sorry this is not

¹⁵ Kabelo Motsoeneng. "President Berger-Sweeny: Please Listen To Us." *The Trinity Tripod*, September 11, 2018. Accessed February 18, 2019. <https://commons.trincoll.edu/tripod/2018/09/11/president-berger-sweeny-please-listen-to-us/>.

¹⁶ Parker Fiske and James Kaynor. "Confederate Flag Removed from Chapel." *The Trinity Tripod* (Hartford), September 26, 2017. Accessed February 19, 2019. <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4262&context=tripod>.

politically correct but this is damn upsetting to me.”¹⁷ Although the finial is indeed a piece of history, what it represents is morally wrong and offensive, and therefore does not belong in one of the most peaceful places on campus. In response to many of the negative and degrading comments, the head of the alumni associate for Pike, Sonjay Singh, posted, “Hi guys- I’m the Pike chapter advisor. The pew head was removed by the school with our permission and will be preserved in a historical context in the Watkinson. The chapter will be designing a new topper that will be installed in its place by the school.”¹⁸ Sonjay posted this in response to people that were very angry about the removal of the Confederate flag from the chapel due to historical reasons. Due to this finial indeed being history, in both its meaning and context, the Watkinson is the perfect place for it as it is the location where all the college’s archives and historical artifacts are stored.

During this semester-long research process, I interviewed one student who is highly involved in the art history department at Trinity College. I wanted to get her perspective on the issue due to her connection to art iconography and its association with history. She said,

By taking the flag out of its original context it loses the vast majority of its meaning and power as a symbol. Not to mention, by removing it you are consciously obscuring the iconographic scheme of the chapel. While giving textual descriptions about the history of the piece and displaying it in the Watkinson is good, by removing it from original context the wood carving itself loses gravitas as well as the entire chapel’s iconographic

¹⁷ Yelenak, Bill P. Post to “Alumni for a Better Trinity College” Facebook page. Accessed May 8th, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/254745931302865/>

¹⁸ Singh, Sonjay. Post to “Alumni for a Better Trinity College” Facebook page. Accessed May 8th, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/254745931302865/>

scheme (i.e. the chapels iconographic scheme is littered with Civil War stories, and symbolism. By removing the flag, you are neglecting to acknowledge the Confederacy and their role in the Civil War at large, which situationally is necessary for the war to have taken place in general).¹⁹

I felt that it was important to include perspectives from current Trinity students as well as alumni and other members of the community because this is such a controversial topic and many people have opposing viewpoints. She was a student when the carving was removed and discussed the controversy in many of her art history classes while at Trinity. There are clearly members of the Trinity community who believe that the carving should not have been removed from the chapel due to its contribution to the overall art theme in the chapel; however, it will be replaced in the coming future.

I also had a conversation with Brandon Campbell, who was the Pike president at Trinity when the carving was removed. Throughout the removal process in 2017, Brandon worked closely with the head of the Pike alumni association, Sonjay Singh, in order to accurately represent the Trinity Pike chapter. He said,

The two of us (meaning him and the head of the Pike alumni association) came to the decision that we wouldn't oppose them removing it but also didn't explicitly ask for it to be removed, both to respect the alumni and the donations they made to have it built/put in and we felt there was a better way to represent the current Pike chapter. This was the fall of 2017, so it was shortly after the marches in Charlottesville and a lot of other events related to Confederate history, so we essentially asked the school to not

¹⁹ Conversation with Trinity College student (anonymous). May 7th, 2019.

publish anything about it and didn't give any comments to the Tripod because we didn't want to create any unnecessary PR on either sides of the argument, we did what we felt was right and the best for our chapter." As I'm sure you've learned, pretty much all of Pike's founders (either 4 of 6 or 5 of 6) fought for the confederacy so the fraternity has that in their history but in terms of Trinity's specific Pike history we felt there were better ways to represent it.²⁰

As one can see from the Pike alumni emails to Chaplain Read, many Pike members felt strongly about removing the finial from the chapel; however, from Brandon's words, it can also be inferred that many brothers were indifferent towards the situation. Ultimately, the Pike brotherhood that was present when the finial was removed in 2017 are not to blame, although they should have addressed the situation right away instead of wanting to keep it under wraps. Ultimately, they recognized that there were better ways to represent their chapter and fraternity and keeping the Confederate finial in the chapel was not one of those ways.

Throughout this research process, I also interviewed a Pike alumnus from the class of 1957 who was highly involved in designing the finial and raising funds to be able to execute and install the carving. During our interview, this alumnus continuously emphasized that Pike was "different" during the 1950's. He said, "there was a Confederate flag outside the fraternity to match the stars and stripes that we hung there. It had nothing to do with support for the Confederacy or support of slavery. It was just about being different. It was about being founded at the University of Virginia. The finial was not a racist intention, it was just the history of the fraternity." When I had asked if he was notified when the carving was removed, he said, "I

²⁰ Campbell, Brandon. "Interview with Brandon Campbell." Interview by author. April 24th, 2019.

heard about it a month or so ago when I saw something in the Pike email newsletter saying that they were looking for an artist who would replace the finial. I never heard anything about them removing it. In some ways I'm sorry to see something go, but it's probably the best outcome." At the end of the interview, he left me with this statement, "You can't change history, you can try to deny it if you want to, but it happened. And it's best to get it in context." He also agreed that the Watkinson would be a very fitting place for the finial.²¹

Despite what this alumnus said, it is difficult to think that the finial was installed with very innocent intentions. The fact that a Confederate flag was put in the chapel by a fraternity that was founded in the south, and that same fraternity displayed the same Confederate flag right outside their house, screams White Supremacism. Overall, it was very interesting and helpful to speak to someone who was present at the time of the installation. I can infer from our conversation that he does not believe the finial was installed as a symbol of white supremacy; however, he does believe that removing it in 2017 was the right thing to do.

Throughout the chapters in David Blights book, *Race and Reunion*, he delves into how Americans choose to remember and forget specific parts of the Civil War. He writes that "race was so deeply at the root of the war's causes and consequences, and so powerful a source of division in American social psychology, that it served as the antithesis of a culture of reconciliation."²² As seen from the controversy regarding the Confederate flag on Trinity's campus, race is still the cause of many opposing thoughts regarding the Civil War. One hundred and fifty-four years after the Civil War, race is still the cause of many of the social issues that

²¹ Pike alumnus. "Interview with Pike alumnus." Telephone interview by author. April 26th, 2019.

²² David W. Blight. *Race and Reunion*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 2000. Page 4.

occur throughout the United States. In remembering the Civil War, Blight writes, “We sometimes lift ourselves out of historical time, above the details, and render the war safe in a kind of national Passover offering as we view a photograph of the Blue and Gray veterans shaking hands across the stone walls at Gettysburg.”²³ This quote is important because it states the truth about history. People like to glorify the past and ignore the history that is difficult to discuss. I argue that although there is some history that is difficult to discuss, for example the Confederate army in the Civil War and what they stood for, it is necessary in order to improve current and future race relations. Below is my plan for what should happen to the Confederate flag finial in the chapel so that it can and will be discussed among the Trinity community although it is of a difficult matter to comprehend.

In a scholarly article titled, “The Monuments Must Go: Reflecting on Opportunities for Campus Conversations”, the authors, Warren and Jack Christian, who happen to be the great-grandchildren of Stonewall Jackson, write to the Mayor of Richmond in hopes that the monuments of Stonewall Jackson and other Confederate leaders will be removed from Monument Avenue in Richmond. The Christians write, “They are overt symbols of racism and white supremacy, and the time is long overdue for them to depart from public display.”²⁴ They continue in the letter, “Last weekend, Charlottesville showed us unequivocally that Confederate statues offer pre-existing iconography for racists.”²⁵ This letter is very significant for understanding this topic in that it shows the severity of the situation over Confederate

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Warren Christian, and Jack Christian. "THE MONUMENTS MUST GO: Reflecting on Opportunities for Campus Conversations." *South: A Scholarly Journal* 50, no. 1 (2017): 47-56. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26484083>. Page 47.

²⁵ Ibid.

iconography whether it be monuments, statues, or smaller iconographic symbols. This topical issue is not only occurring at college and university campuses, but also in major cities in the United States. Similarly, to this paper, the events in Charlottesville encouraged the Christians to advocate for the removal of these statues.

It is of great importance when Stonewall Jackson's own descendants are begging for his statues to be removed because of his role in the Civil War as a leader in the Confederate Army. This letter is only a small part of the larger movement to remove Confederate symbolism. According to the SPLC, Southern Poverty Law Center, there was a spike in the installation of Confederate monuments during the mid 1950's and 60's, not coincidentally during the Civil Rights Era. Three years after the Charleston church massacre, over one hundred Confederate monuments have been removed; however, there are still 1,747 monuments, statues and other Confederate symbols that still exist in the United States.²⁶

Personally, as a member of the Trinity community I feel it is important to voice my own opinion on this matter. The Pike pew end should have never been installed in the first place; however, unfortunately we are unable to undue history. That being said, as a member of the Trinity community, it is our job to accept and find solutions to repair those mistakes made in the past and most importantly, be able to discuss them in order to educate future generations. I believe this pew end belongs in the Watkinson library, where it will serve as an icon that can be observed, studied, and discussed.

²⁶ "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy." Southern Poverty Law Center. Accessed May 09, 2019. <https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy#findings>.

Completely ridding of the carving is not ideal, as it now is a symbol of Trinity college's history; however, it does not belong in the chapel, a place where Trinity students, faculty, and others are encouraged to find solace and peace. The display will feature the carving in a glass case, so as to avoid theft and vandalism. The exhibition will also present primary source documents dating back to the installation of the carving in 1957, and more recently primary source documents from its removal in 2017.

Today, the Pike Confederate flag kneeler end does indeed become a symbol of history, but not a historical representation of the Civil War, but rather a history of Trinity's past mistakes and improvements. It is important to keep the finial, as it is with all Confederate statues and other representations, but better to do so in a place more appropriate and fitting for such a controversial icon. Not only does this topic apply to Trinity and other colleges and universities, but also larger institutions in the United States. Discussing difficult history is not easy but is something that needs to be done. We must not ignore the past, especially events that have been controversial, but rather discuss them. The key to this topic is the setting and location in which these Confederate symbols are located in. The Watkinson Library is an appropriate place for the finial as it will encourage students, faculty, and others to educate themselves and discuss the Confederate flag without having to pray next to it.

Works Cited

- Allen, David. "Pi Kappa Alpha Pew." E-mail to Allison Read. August 19, 2017.
- Baumgartner, Scott. "Removal of the Pike pew from the Trinity Chapel." E-mail to Allison Read. August 17, 2017.
- Blight, David W. *Race and Reunion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Campbell, Brandon. "Interview with Brandon Campbell." Interview by author. April 24th, 2019.
- Christian, Warren, and Jack Christian. "THE MONUMENTS MUST GO: Reflecting on Opportunities for Campus Conversations." *South: A Scholarly Journal* 50, no. 1 (2017): 47-56. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26484083>.
- Conversation with Trinity College student (anonymous). May 7th, 2019.
- Cox, John Woodrow, Lynh Bui, and DeNeen L. Brown. "Who Was Freddie Gray? How Did He Die? And What Led to the Mistrial in Baltimore?" *The Washington Post*. December 16, 2015. Accessed May 08, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/who-was-freddie-gray-and-how-did-his-death-lead-to-a-mistrial-in-baltimore/2015/12/16/b08df7ce-a433-11e5-9c4e-be37f66848bb_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.03798b2d2bb0.
- Fiske, Parker, and James Kaynor. "Confederate Flag Removed from Chapel." *The Trinity Tripod* (Hartford), September 26, 2017. Accessed February 19, 2019. <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4262&context=tripod>.
- Hartford, Dale W. "Trinity Chapel Dedicates Pi Kappa Alpha Kneeler End." *Shield and Diamond*, March 1958, 5. Accessed March 3, 2019. http://www.pikearchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PKA_SD_1958_MAR.pdf.
- Horowitz, Jason, Nick Corasaniti, and Ashley Southall. "Nine Killed in Shooting at Black Church in Charleston." *The New York Times*. June 18, 2015. Accessed May 08, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/us/church-attacked-in-charleston-south-carolina.html>.
- John C.E. Taylor to Mr. Erwin Dressel. July 10, 1957. Trinity College, Hartford, CT.
- McCrummen, Stephanie, and Elahe Izadi. "Confederate Flag Comes down on South Carolina's Statehouse Grounds." *The Washington Post*. July 10, 2015. Accessed May 08, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/07/10/watch-live-as-the-confederate-flag-comes-down-in-south-carolina/?utm_term=.9257de5420f4.

Motsoeneng, Kabelo. "President Berger-Sweeney: Please Listen To Us." *The Trinity Tripod*, September 11, 2018. Accessed February 18, 2019. <https://commons.trincoll.edu/tripod/2018/09/11/president-berger-sweeney-please-listen-to-us/>.

Pike alumnus. "Interview with Pike alumnus." Telephone interview by author. April 26th, 2019.

Robert Blynn to Mr. Dale W. Hartford. January 24th, 2958. Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity. Memphis, Tennessee.

Sakaguchi, Rayn. "Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity Pew." E-mail to Allison Read. August 17, 2017.

Singh, Sonjay. Post to "Alumni for a Better Trinity College" Facebook page. Accessed May 8th, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/254745931302865/>

Stolberg, Sheryl Gay, and Brian. "Man Charged After White Nationalist Rally in Charlottesville Ends in Deadly Violence." *The New York Times*. August 12, 2017. Accessed May 08, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/us/charlottesville-protest-white-nationalist.html>.

The 1957 IVY. The 1957 IVY Yearbook, Trinity College, Hartford, CT. <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=ivy>

"Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy." Southern Poverty Law Center. Accessed May 09, 2019. <https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy#findings>.

Yelenak, Bill P. Post to "Alumni for a Better Trinity College" Facebook page. Accessed May 8th, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/254745931302865/>