

Women's group behind rebel memorials quietly battles on

By ALLEN G. BREED

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CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP) — On a glorious, late-spring day, Maya Little strode across the poplar-lined University of North Carolina quadrangle, past protesters and a uniformed officer. She stepped onto the base of the Confederate soldier statue that has stood there since 1913, and splashed it with a mixture of red ink and her own blood.

The 25-year-old doctoral candidate was sending a message to Chancellor Carol Folt that the monument — nicknamed “Silent Sam” — was an affront to black students like her, “the celebration of an army that fought for our ancestors’ enslavement.” But Little was also speaking to the group responsible for erecting this memorial to “the Lost Cause” — the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

“There is no Silent Sam without black blood, without violence towards black people,” Little said recently as she sat in the statue’s shadow, campus security guards hovering behind nearby trees and columns. “I would say all that blood is on their hands. And it will continue to be until they take a stand — until they ... make an effort to take these monuments down and to be a part of actual racial equality, racial justice.”

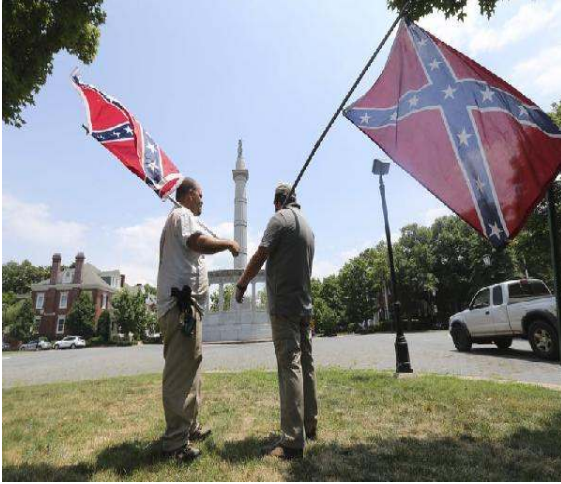


Maya Little faces expulsion and criminal charges for dousing a Confederate statue at University of North Carolina with red paint and her own blood. She says these monuments are an affront to black people and shouldn't be in the public square. (Aug. 10)

But the Daughters had already made their position clear months before Little's protest and arrest. Last summer, in the wake of riots over the proposed removal of a monument to Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia, the group issued a rare public statement.

“We are grieved that certain hate groups have taken the Confederate flag and other symbols as their own,” President General Patricia M. Bryson wrote following the Aug. 12 clashes that left one woman dead. But while Bryson insisted that the UDC condemns anyone who “promotes racial divisiveness or white supremacy,” she argued that the Confederate ancestors honored by these memorials “were and are Americans.”

She issued a call of her own: “Join us in denouncing hate groups and affirming that Confederate memorial statues and monuments are part of our shared American history and should remain in place.”



Activists hold Confederate flags.

Most people might know the UDC as that group of mainly older women who dress in widow's weeds and gather on Confederate Memorial Day to lay wreaths of boxwood and holly and sing mournful renditions of "Dixie" in honor of the estimated 260,000 Confederate service members who died in the Civil War. Seeing them arrayed in their broad-brimmed hats and red-and-white sashes, it would be easy to dismiss the Daughters as a quaint anachronism.

That would be a mistake.

As memorials have toppled and Confederate place names have vanished in the year since

the Charlottesville riots, the Daughters have fought back with lawsuits aimed at stopping the removal of rebel monuments from public spaces.

Heidi Beirich of the Southern Poverty Law Center counts the group among the leading proponents of the "cult of the Lost Cause" — noting it has distributed literature that claims most African-Americans were "ready and willing" to serve slave owners and that northern nullification of Southerners' rights forced the War Between the States.

"I wouldn't put them on ... our hate group list," says Beirich. "But they are still perpetuating some of the vilest ideas in American history, and the ones that we've worked so hard to get rid of."



Police surround the "Silent Sam" Confederate monument.

The national UDC — headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, capital of the former Confederate States of America — did not respond to requests for comment.

Founded Sept. 10, 1894, the UDC sprang from women's "hospital associations, sewing societies and knitting circles" across the South that worked to aid Confederate soldiers, according to its website. The group's articles of incorporation list five key objectives: "Historical, Benevolent, Educational, Memorial and Patriotic."

Membership is open to descendants of those who served honorably in the Confederate military or "who gave material aid to the cause." Applicants cannot use an ancestor who took the oath of allegiance to the United States before April 9, 1865, when Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

After the war, the group offered assistance to Confederate widows and orphans. But its most

visible legacy is one of metal and stone.

Members of the South's most prominent families, the Daughters dedicated themselves to telling what they considered "a truthful history" of the war. So adept were they at raising funds through bazaars and bake sales that when the United Confederate Veterans had trouble funding a memorial to Jefferson Davis in Richmond, the Daughters took over the project. The memorial, with its semicircular colonnade and 67-foot-high column, was dedicated on June 3, 1907 — the 99th anniversary of Davis' birth.

The SPLC attributes some 450 monuments, markers, buildings and other commemoratives to UDC efforts. The memorials range from modest statues like Silent Sam to the soaring 351-foot concrete obelisk marking the Kentucky birthplace of Davis, the Confederacy's only president. The vast majority were erected during the late 19th and early 20th centuries — when states were enacting Jim Crow laws meant to disenfranchise blacks — and amid the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s.



Karen Prewitt collects Confederate flags.

But the Daughters' influence extended beyond the regional boundaries of the Confederacy. Until last August, when it was dismantled, there was a Confederate memorial fountain in Helena, Montana. A UDC-funded marker also stood on Georges Island in Boston Harbor, until Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker, a Republican, called for its removal. Both are now in storage.

In its heyday around World War I, the UDC was about 100,000 strong, but in a 2000 speech, then-President General June Murray Wells estimated there were around 25,000 members across 700 chapters in 32 states.

"I don't know if we've got one more generation left in it," says historian Karen L. Cox, author of "Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture."

The group, nevertheless, still wields influence.

When Vanderbilt University decided to change the name of Confederate Memorial Hall, the Daughters' Tennessee Division sued for breach of contract. In 2016, the UDC won a \$1.2 million judgment — the current-day value of the \$50,000 donation the group made toward construction of the dormitory back in 1935.

Last August, after the San Antonio City Council voted to remove a Confederate soldier monument from Travis Park, the local UDC chapter sued, claiming that it owned not only the monument but the ground beneath it. That case is pending.

Another lawsuit was filed in Louisiana after the Caddo Parish Commission adopted a resolution on Oct. 19 to remove a Confederate monument from its courthouse grounds. UDC's Shreveport chapter claimed ownership, based on a 1903 vote by the Caddo Parish Police Jury appropriating \$1,000 for the monument's construction and designating that a portion of the courthouse square be reserved for that purpose. A federal judge recently dismissed the case,

but the group is raising money for an appeal.

Taxpayers indirectly underwrite the group's work.

Each year, the Virginia budget awards the state UDC tens of thousands of dollars for the maintenance of Confederate graves — more than \$1.6 million since 1996. UNC-Chapel Hill said it's spent at least \$390,000 since the Charlottesville riots for extra security around Silent Sam.

While the memorials draw attention, Cox says the UDC is most proud of the "living monuments" it helped to create. She's referring to the group's youth auxiliary: The Children of the Confederacy, organized in 1896.



A wreath is placed at the monument honoring the Confederate dead at Shiloh.

Boys and girls go on field trips to historic sites and clean up cemeteries. They also memorize passages from the UDC's "Confederate Catechism," a summary of its principles.

The war, reads a text from 1904, was caused by the "disregard, on the part of the States of the North, for the rights of the Southern or slave-holding States." And slaves "were faithful and devoted and were always ready and willing to serve them."

The language has been tweaked over the years. In the version currently promoted on the UDC website, that last statement now reads: "Slaves, for the most part, were faithful and devoted. Most slaves were usually ready and willing to serve their masters."

Hallie Harris joined the youth auxiliary in Sparta, Tennessee, at 16 and has fond memories of visiting Gettysburg and Andrew Jackson's plantation, and of cleaning up graves — Confederate and Union. Now 26, she is a dues-paying but not active member of the UDC.

"We're not Nazis or anything like that," she says. "We're not going around spreading hate. If anything, we're spreading love and just education."

But the Daughters are no longer as united as they once were. Amid calls to remove a Confederate statue from the old courthouse in Tampa, Florida, the president of the UDC's state division came out in support of moving such monuments from public property.

"Because of the issue of slavery ... why not relocate these to places where they can be given the respect they deserve for veteran service?" Ginger Lathem-Rudiger told a Tampa television station.

A year after Charlottesville, pressure to move these monuments continues to grow. A special commission in Richmond recently recommended that the city take down the Davis memorial and add contextual signage to other Confederate statues along Monument Avenue.

And in North Carolina, officials are trying to determine whether Silent Sam and other Confederate memorials have become public safety hazards — a determination that opponents believe could fulfill an exception to a 2015 law preventing their permanent removal.

Little, who studies history at UNC, went to the North Carolina UDC's convention last year to ask for the group's support to move Silent Sam. She was asked to leave.

Division officials did not respond to requests for comment, but at a March hearing before the North Carolina Historical Commission, state UDC member Teresa Langley said the group was "totally against any action" to remove or relocate the memorials.

"Our organization and legacy organizations like it are the primary stakeholders in this controversy," Langley said.

On April 30, as Little turned Silent Sam's pedestal red, a fellow protester read aloud the 1913 dedication speech of Julian Carr — a Confederate veteran, industrialist and UNC graduate whose name adorns a nearby city and a building at Duke University.

"One hundred yards from where we stand ... I horse-whipped a negro wench until her skirts hung in shreds, because upon the streets of this quiet village she had publicly insulted and maligned a Southern lady ..." he told the approving crowd.

Little, who says she's faced threats of violence and lynching, thinks that anecdote reveals the true purpose behind what Carr called "this noble gift of the United Daughters of the Confederacy."

In her post-Charlottesville statement, Bryson said the UDC was "saddened that some people find anything connected with the Confederacy to be offensive." But rather than publicly joining the fray, she said, the Daughters, "like our statues, have stayed quietly in the background, never engaging in public controversy."

Little says the Daughters need to stop acting as if they're the victims: "Being silent in the face of racism or violence is complicity in those acts."

Little's criminal vandalism trial is scheduled for October. In June, the UNC Office of Student Conduct charged her with violating the honor code by "stealing, destroying, or misusing property."

Meaning Little could be expelled, while Silent Sam remains.

Breed is based in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Protest in Chapel Hill ends with the fall of Silent Sam

Protesters toppled Silent Sam, the Confederate statue on UNC-Chapel Hill's campus, on Monday after a demonstration in support of a graduate student who faces criminal and honor court charges for throwing red ink and blood on the statue in April.

By Julia Wall

Education

Protesters topple Silent Sam Confederate statue at UNC

By Jane Stancill

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CHAPEL HILL



Protesters toppled the Silent Sam Confederate statue on the campus of UNC-Chapel Hill on Monday night.

The monument was ripped down after 9:15 p.m. Earlier in the evening, protesters covered the statue with tall, gray banners, erecting “an alternative monument” that said, in part, “For a world without white supremacy.”

Protesters were apparently working behind the covering with ropes to bring the statue down, which happened more than two hours into a rally. It fell with a loud clanging sound, and the crowd erupted in cheers.



After Silent Sam tumbled to the ground, people darted in and out of the crowd through a haze from smoke bombs. Atop the statue someone placed a black cap that said, “Do It Like Durham,” an apparent reference to the toppling of a Confederate statue there a year ago. People rushed to the remains, taking photos and stomping on the monument that had been erected in 1913 with donations from the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The statue has

been the focus of protests and vandalism for decades, but especially in the past year. UNC had installed surveillance cameras and spent \$390,000 on security around the statue last year.



Stephanie Chang, 21, a recent UNC graduate, said she followed the crowd to campus after word spread on Franklin Street. By the time she got there, she saw Silent Sam's head on the ground. Soon, police were covering the statue with a tarp.

"It's like, Silent Sam has been tucked in, put to bed," Chang said.

Andrew Skinner, 23, who graduated from UNC earlier this year, said he was glad the statue fell in an illegal act.



Protesters topple Silent Sam Confederate statue at UNC

A crowd of protesters pull down the Confederate statue known as Silent Sam on the campus of the University of North Carolina Monday night, Aug. 20, 2018.

By Julia Wall



"It shows that we have the power to be on the right side of history," Skinner said. "We are part of a long tradition of civil rights in this country.....We as a country have a lot of change and a lot of healing to do, and we are not going to get there putting racism on a pedestal."

Monday's gathering started as a demonstration in support of a UNC graduate student who faces criminal and honor court charges for throwing red ink and blood on the Confederate statue in April. The downtown Franklin Street event quickly morphed into a march to the UNC campus, where police officers stood at the monument.

A skirmish broke out early when someone threw a smoke bomb. Police chased one man and arrested another for resisting, delaying and obstructing an officer.



The protesters quickly took control of the area immediately around the statue, hoisting four tall banners in a square that almost completely obscured it. The head of the Confederate soldier occasionally poked out from the top of the banners.

She turned to action against UNC's Silent Sam after years of talk got nowhere, protester says

UNC's Silent Sam could be relocated under bill filed by NC Democrats

Silent Sam protester faces honor court charge at UNC

Police formed a perimeter around protesters. One banner said, "The whole world is watching. Which side are you on?" Some of the demonstrators wore Carolina blue bandannas over their faces that said, "Sam must fall."

Several bystanders wearing Confederate flags on T-shirts watched the protest. Clint Procell, 31, wore a Trump hat. A self-described conservative, Procell said he wanted to see for himself how intolerant the people protesting Silent Sam were, and the experience didn't disappoint. He said he was pushed and his hat was temporarily stolen.

"The main reason for me to come was to see the people fighting against Trump," he said. He described some of the protesters' language as hateful against police and conservatives, but said he also had several conversations that were remarkably open.

Silent Sam statue defaced with red ink and blood from protester

Silent Sam, the Confederate statue at UNC-Chapel Hill, was doused with blood and red ink by protester Maya Little, Monday, April 30, 2018.

By Samee Siddiqui

The event unfolded as students begin a new semester at UNC Tuesday, almost a year after a massive march against Silent Sam in the aftermath of violence in Charlottesville. Protesters vowed to sustain the pressure on the university to relocate the Confederate monument, but campus and UNC system officials insisted a 2015 state law prevented them from doing so.

UNC released a statement Monday night.

"Around 9:20 p.m., a group from among an estimated crowd of 250 protesters brought down the Confederate Monument on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill," the statement said. "Tonight's actions were dangerous, and we are very fortunate that no one was injured. We are investigating the vandalism and assessing the full extent of the damage."

A statement from Chancellor Carol Folt, issued early Tuesday called the actions "unlawful and dangerous" after acknowledging, "The monument has been divisive for years, and its presence has been a source of frustration for many people not only on our campus, but throughout the community."

Gov. Roy Cooper's office also released a statement, saying he "understands that many people are frustrated by the pace of change and he shares their frustration, but violent destruction of public property has no place in our communities."

The question by late Monday was what will happen now that the statue has been torn off its base. It was face down in the mud as a late night thunderstorm passed through town. Police cordoned off the area around the statue with yellow crime scene tape. Eventually, the statue was loaded into a truck.

Confederate statue known as 'Silent Sam' removed after being toppled by protesters

UNC workers remove the toppled Silent Sam statue from campus early Tuesday morning after protesters pulled it down Monday night, Aug. 21, 2018.
By Carli Brousseau

The rally had started peacefully with the singing of the black national anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

Maya Little, the doctoral history student who had doused the statue with ink and her own blood in April, appeared and protesters chanted her name. She took the microphone and spoke of an African-American man, James Lewis Cates, who was stabbed by a white motorcycle gang on the UNC campus in the early 1970s.

"It's time to build monuments to honor those who have been murdered by white supremacy," Little said, adding, "It's time to tear down Silent Sam. It's time to tear down UNC's institutional white supremacy."

Little's action in April, which she has said symbolized the "black blood" at the statue's foundation, has become a rallying cry of those who oppose the Confederate monument on the UNC campus.

Silent Sam comes down as protesters and police clash at rally at UNC

Protesters and police officers clash around the Confederate statue known as Silent Sam on the University of North Carolina campus in Chapel Hill, NC Monday night, August, 20, 2018.
By Travis Long

Another graduate student, Jerry Wilson, said being a black man on UNC's campus was a lonely experience. He read what he said was a letter he had written to UNC Chancellor Carol Folt.

"When you have to take the long way between classes in order to avoid the sight of a statue that denies your human dignity, the Southern Part of Heaven can feel an awful lot like hell," said Wilson, who studies education.

He said the university had bowed to the wishes of donors and well-heeled leaders who wanted to see the statue stay at UNC. Wilson placed a rope, fashioned as a noose, around his neck and vowed to wear it until Silent Sam was gone.

After the initial skirmish, town and university police officers took a hands off approach, standing a short distance away, keeping a watchful eye on the protest. After about two hours, many of the marchers headed to Franklin Street, followed by some of the officers. A core group of protesters stayed with the statue.

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A short time later, Silent Sam was pulled down, sending people screaming and jumping in disbelief. Smoke bombs were set off around what was left of the monument.

Retired professor Hodding Carter III was walking his dog in the area when he saw what happened, but could barely believe his eyes.

"I'm really glad that when it happened, it did not involve a great deal of bloodshed," Carter said. "I am stunned that it happened when it happened. I am really amazed that as far as I can see, nobody got clobbered, nobody got banged up."

Police stood guard over the pedestal and the fallen statue, while people in the crowd hugged

and raised their cell phones to capture the moment.

Rain began to fall, and thunder rolled in.

In the distance, car horns honked on Franklin Street, and people streamed out of the bars, though this time the commotion wasn't about a basketball championship.

But it sounded like it. In the pouring rain, the crowd around Silent Sam yelled: "Tar!" "Heels!"

Silent Sam was 'raised on black blood,' says Maya Little

On Monday April 30, 2018, Maya Little defaced UNC-Chapel Hill's Confederate monument, Silent Sam, with her own blood and red ink. "He's covered in black blood...that's his foundation," Little said.

By Julia Wall

Staff writer Carli Brosseau and staff photographer Julia Wall contributed to this report.

Read more here:

<https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article217035815.html#storylink=cpy>