Slavery in the Age of Memory

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Engaging the Past

Ana Lucia Araujo

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For Alain Bélanger

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Battles of Public Memory

Public memory of slavery is a permanent battleground. Surely, slave-trading activities in ports of Europe, Africa, and the Americas were never a secret. But in the early 1990s, during the period that followed the end of the Cold War, this painful past was brought to light like never before. Many cities and former slave ports in the Atlantic world encompass sites attesting their involvement in slavery and the slave trade. In some cases, these structures, such as wharfs, slave markets, and slave cemeteries, were abandoned. In other cases, they were deliberately destroyed and made invisible. As black social actors continue to fight against racism and police violence, they also reclaim these urban spaces by demanding the recognition of these sites as places associated with the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. Whereas organized groups demanded that urban landmarks such as buildings and streets named after pro-slavery individuals, slave traders, and slave owners to be renamed to honor enslaved people, other groups also fought to take down public monuments representing men involved in slave-trading activities and who supported slavery. Drawing from the notion of public memory and using examples from England and the United States, I explore how different citizens and groups engaged in debates associated with the Atlantic slave past of their societies. Regardless of historical evidence, for social actors, communities, associations, and other organized groups seeking to memorialize slavery, what is at stake is whose views win and prevail in the public space. In this struggle, men and women demanding the preservation of heritage sites associated with the Atlantic slave trade, or the removal and renaming of tangible markers commemorating pro-slavery individuals, and, in turn, the construction of monuments honoring enslaved historical actors are not simply the act of engaging with the slave past. Indeed, they are also decrying entrenched structures of white supremacy that perpetuate racial inequalities and racism that insist in remaining alive in former slave societies and societies where slavery existed. Still, although their interventions are

shaped by local and national contexts, in societies shaped by white supremacy, not only are their actions and discourses carrying similar elements, but the responses to their activism by governments, institutions, and elite groups designated as white also present significant similarities.

Colston Must Fall

Africans set foot in Britain as early as AD 253.[1] In the early sixteenth century, well before the British involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, descendants of Africans had lived in Tudor England. As historians David Olosuga and Miranda Kauffman have shown, the traces of this very early presence can be found not only in archaeological sites, paintings, and artworks but also in written archival documents.[2] Likewise, over the last fifty years, in several scholarly works and projects, historians have shed light on how Britain at large benefited from the wealth generated by the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in Caribbean colonies.[3] Despite abundant evidence, this ancient history of black presence in Britain has been largely ignored. Also until recently British involvement in the Atlantic slave trade has been concealed from the public landscape of its former slave ports. Port cities became the quintessential examples of this active participation in the inhuman trade.

Despite this long-lasting deliberate denial, of the European nations involved in the Atlantic slave trade, Britain is among the first ones to begin highlighting its slaving past in the public sphere. Organized groups of black residents of former British slave ports such as Liverpool, Bristol, and London, as well as other cities like Nottingham, Bath, and Birmingham, with the support of some academics and other activists, exerted pressures on public authorities and institutions that gradually started acknowledging the nation's nefarious involvement in the trade of enslaved Africans.

Bristol's active participation in the Atlantic slave trade is well documented.[4] More than 2,000 slave voyages departed from Bristol transporting nearly 565,000 enslaved Africans to the Americas.[5] During the eighteenth century, the city was the first British slave port, active for two decades (1723–1743), even though during the overall era of the Atlantic slave trade it remained the second slave port in Britain, following Liverpool. Black Bristolians descend from immigrants of former British colonies in Africa and the Caribbean islands, where their ancestors were enslaved. During the 1970s, Bristol's black population remained economically excluded, facing growing rates of unemployment and deteriorating housing conditions.[6] Under section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824 (still in force), the police could stop, search, and arrest vagrant individuals who were suspected of criminal activity.[7] As poverty remained largely concentrated in neighborhoods where most residents were black and immigrants of African descent, law enforcement increasingly targeted these citizens, contributing to upsurge in racial tensions.

On April 2, 1980, suspecting drug dealing activity, Bristol police officers raided Black and White Café in St. Paul's, a neighborhood of nearly 7,000 residents where half were of black Caribbean descent. As they dragged customers outside the premises, a growing crowd of hundreds gathered in the streets and reacted against the police. While tensions escalated, St. Paul's insurgent residents looted Lloyds Bank and various shops in the neighborhood while also setting fire to several cars. The incident resulted in thirty-three people injured, including twenty-one police officers and three firefighters, and twenty-one individuals arrested, though none were convicted. St. Paul's incident left deep scars in Bristol's black community. As other smaller incidents followed, excessive use of force proved to be ineffective, therefore leading the city authority and members of the civil society to engage in public debates about racism and racial inequalities.[8]

Drawing from these earlier conflicts motivated by existing racial tensions, Bristol's public memory of slavery emerged in the early 1990s. According to the Census of 1991, 376,113 people resided in Bristol, including 6,000 African Caribbean residents (about 1.5 percent), 106 black African residents, and another 861 residents individuals recorded as "other black."[9] In the Census of 2011, Bristol's population was 428,234 people, including 6,727 identified as African Caribbean and 12,085 as black Africans, both groups summing up nearly 4 percent.[10] Although only citizens of Caribbean descent have direct ties with slavery, these two groups are linked to Britain's colonial history, having been impacted by the legacies of slavery and colonialism, especially racism and racial disparities.

Debates about Bristol's slave-trading past became prominent during and following the *Festival of the Sea*. During this event, held at the historic harbor from May 24 to May 27, 1996, the city administration clearly failed to mention Bristol's leading role in the Atlantic slave trade.[11] Black residents and their allies, with the support of academics, publicly reacted to this omission. They reached the public sphere and started exposing Bristolian families who inherited wealth generated by slave-trading ventures.[12] As underscored by Christine Chivallon, this initial process of memorialization of the Atlantic slave trade was accelerated by other events. In 1995, British novelist Philippa Gregory, who is identified as white and who spent her childhood in Bristol, published the historical novel *A Respectable Trade*.[13] Set in Bristol at the end of the eighteenth century, the book explored the story of the city's slaving activities by centering its narrative around a prosperous slave owner and Mehuru, an African-born enslaved man.[14] The novel was soon transformed into a television series. At the end of 1997, an advance screening was presented to a Bristolian audience. Aired in 1998, the series' success contributed to bringing Bristol's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade to the public space and propelled an avalanche of commemoration activities. Also in that same year, with the goal of highlighting the city's participation in the infamous commerce, city councilors, council officers, members of Kuumba (a community center oriented toward Bristol's black

population), representatives of the Commission for Racial Equality, and other residents of black Caribbean and African origin created the Bristol Slave Trade Action Group (BSTAG).[15] This initiative led to the creation of a small exhibition at the Georgian House Museum (as discussed in Chapter 2), the house of the merchant, planter, and slave owner, John Pinney, who owned several sugar plantations and enslaved people in the island of Nevis, in the Caribbean. These debates had a public impact and propelled more concrete actions. On December 12, 1997, during the European year against racism, Ian White, member of the European Parliament for Bristol, sponsored a plaque to honor the victims of the Atlantic slave trade. Unveiled by the novelist Philippa Gregory, the marker that reads "In memory of the countless African men, women, and children whose enslavement and exploitation brought so much prosperity to Bristol through the African slave trade" was placed at the city docks on the exterior wall of the then Bristol Industrial Museum.

Whereas the growing recognition of the city's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade made the descendants of slave merchant families and some ordinary Bristolians uncomfortable, black citizens and other supporters made distinctive efforts to gradually appropriate the city's space by exposing its slave-trading past through tangible markers. Black and white women were crucial actors in this process. After holding consultation sessions with black Bristolians in 1998, academic historian Madge Dresser along with Caletta Jordan and Doreen Taylor (who had been providing guided tours exploring the city's slave trade sites) released the booklet *Slave Trade Trail around Central Bristol*.[16] Sponsored by the Bristol City Council and the Society of the Merchant Venturers, the brochure mapped the locations associated with the history of the Atlantic slave trade.[17] Starting at Bristol Industrial Museum at Prince's Wharf, just beside the floating harbor, the trail highlights forty-two sites, including buildings, wharfs, pubs, squares, streets, and churches that were associated, directly or indirectly, with the city's slave-trading activities.

Bristol's black citizens supported by academics continued fighting to memorialize the Atlantic slave trade in the following years. In March 1999, the city inaugurated Pero's Bridge in the docks area. Spanning St. Augustine's Reach in Bristol's floating harbor, the pedestrian bridge was named after Pero Jones, an enslaved man owned by the merchant John Pinney who was brought by him from the island of Nevis to Bristol and who lived in the Georgian House.[18] Almost hidden, on the left side of the bridge's entrance, a plaque whose engraved letters are fading reads:

> Pero's Bridge: This bridge is dedicated to the memory of Pero, an enslaved man of African origin who was brought from the Caribbean island of Nevis to Bristol in 1783. He was a servant of the Pinney family who lived in what is now the Georgian House Museum in Great George Street. He died in the city in 1798.

While various organized groups, gathering activists, city representatives, and academics supported and pushed the emergence of all these initiatives, some white members of the civil society remained strongly opposed to proposals that would expose in the public space the city's controversial past. At that point, such divergent views were articulated through letters published in local newspapers.[19]

In the same period, Bristol Museums and Art Gallery and the University of West England produced the exhibition *A Respectable Trade? Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery*. Curated by Sue Giles, the show was held at the City Museum and Art Gallery from March 6 to September 2, 1999. The political debates about the city's participation in the Atlantic slave trade shaped the approach of the exposition that counted on a wide range of advisors, including academics and citizens such as Bristol councilors, associations representing ethnic minorities, teachers, and community workers, who called local black citizens to participate in the consultation process.[20] Although members of the black community initially joined the efforts, their participation gradually decreased. Yet, during the six months it remained in view, the show attracted 160,000 visitors, confirming that public engagement could produce positive results.[21] When the exhibition ended, some of its displays were transferred to the then Bristol Industrial Museum to compose the new permanent gallery titled *Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery: The Story of the City's Role in the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade*, addressing the city's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. Although imperfect, the new space came to stay. Despite the closure of the Bristol Industrial Museum in 2006, the new museum M Shed that replaced it in 2011 maintained the old display. Likewise, during the commemoration of the bicentennial of the British abolition of the slave trade in 2007, Bristol unveiled *Breaking the Chains*, an exhibition that occupied six galleries of the entire third floor of the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum.[22]

In the last thirty years, Bristol's social actors waging battles for the public memory of Atlantic slave trade also engaged with existing monuments and markers honoring individuals who supported the inhuman trade. Edward Colston (1636–1721) has been the most controversial historical character at the center of these disputes. Although residing in London, Colston, a native of Bristol, is still considered the city's father. He belonged to a family of merchants, and his father had an important role in the Society of Merchant Venturers, a charitable entity that played an important role in the expansion of the British Empire. When Bristol entered the Atlantic slave trade, many members of the society made profits from the infamous commerce and from slavery, especially through investments in West Indies sugar production.

Colston joined the Court of Assistants of the Royal African Company in 1680, an entity that until 1698 detained the English monopoly of the commerce with Africa. His trading activities comprised imports of goods in ships owned by his father and brother, including the trade of sugar with the West Indies, which along his participation in the ownership of a sugar house

at St. Peter's churchyard in Castle Park greatly contributed to his wealth.[23] According to Kenneth Morgan, it is unknown to what extent Colston directly profited from the selling of enslaved Africans, even though he underscores that he was paid to occupy positions in different committees of the Royal African Company.[24] Yet historian Madge Dresser has emphasized Colston's direct participation in the trade of enslaved Africans, activity documented by the existence of numerous written records attesting his presence in meetings of the Royal African Company that "approved the sale and transport of Africans to the Caribbean."[25] In 1710, as a member of the Church of England and a Tory, Colston was also an elected Member of Parliament for Bristol.

Like other merchants whose activities derived from the enslavement of Africans and the use of enslaved workforce, Colston utilized part of his profits to finance schools, churches, almshouses, and other charitable ventures not only in his hometown but also in London and surrounding areas. Therefore, between the eighteenth century and the end of the twentieth century, the collective memory of white Bristolians embraced the depiction of Colston as a philanthropist who contributed to many important charitable causes. But as racial consciousness started emerging and uncovering the city's memory of slavery, a variety of black and white citizens along with scholars increasingly denounced Colston's involvement in the commerce of enslaved Africans. Like in other Atlantic societies that participated in the slave trade and where slavery existed, place names are crucial reminders of the city's slave-trading past. Indeed, to this day many Bristol sites still carry Colston's name. The booklet *Slave Trade Trail around Central Bristol* already identified three of these landmarks. First, the Colston Hall, on Colston Street, surrounded by Colston Yard and Colston Avenue. The building is located where the city's first refinery of Caribbean sugar stood. In 1708, the warehouses were converted into Colston's hospital that was later renamed Colston's Boys' School. The Colston Hall was constructed in 1867 to house an auditorium, yet, Colston's name remained attached to it. Second, the trail highlights All Saints' Church, an Anglican temple on Corn Street. The church houses Colston's opulent Baroque tomb, designed by the famous British architect James Gibbs (1682–1754). The marble tombstone consists of a vertical panel structure, framed by two Greco-Roman columns, listing Colston's charitable ventures in London, Mortlake, East Sheen, Tilerton, and Manchester, and concludes with the following words: "This great and pious Benefactor was known to have done many other excellent Charities, and what He did in Secret is believed to be not inferior to what He did in Public," which blatantly failed to mention that Colston benefited from slave-trading ventures. Colston's marble life-size statue carved by the Flemish sculptor John Michael Rysbrac (1694–1770) rounds out the tomb at the front of the panel. The sculpture represents Colston reclined in left lateral position. With both legs flexed, and with his left hand touching the right side of his chest, the drapery of

his clothes gives the sculpture a sense of movement. Other sites named after the slave merchant but not comprised in the trail include two schools, Colston's School and the Colston's Girls' School.

The booklet *Slave Trade Trail around Central Bristol* also highlights the infamous bronze statue paying homage to Colston (Figure 3.1). Created

FIGURE 3.1 *Colston statue, Bristol, UK. Photograph by Ana Lucia Araujo, 2018.*

by sculptor John Cassidy (1860–1939), the monument was unveiled on November 13, 1895, by the Lord Mayor of Bristol W. Howell Davies (1851–1932). The sculpture was commissioned by a committee led by Bristol book printer and publisher James William Arrowsmith (1839–1913), who promoted the Industrial and Art Exhibition of 1893–1894, held in the city's downtown area, in the same zone where the monument stands (Colston Avenue, not far from Colston Hall).[26] The statue measures nearly eight feet and is placed on a pedestal of approximately ten feet, and each corner of the plinth is decorated with sculptures depicting bronze dolphins. In the full-body statue Bristol's iconic city father is represented like he appears in images of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The statue shows Colston in his middle age. Wearing a long curly wig, he appears in a meditative attitude. The right arm is crossed in front of his body and the right hand holds a long stick. The left elbow is pressed into the palm of his right hand, while the left hand supports his head. The bronze plaque adorning the pedestal reads "Erected by citizens of Bristol as a memorial of one of the most virtuous and wise sons of their city." Not surprisingly once again, the text excludes any references to Colston's association with the trade and exploitation of enslaved bodies. But as Madge Dresser points out, such suppression is a relatively recent occurrence. Indeed, until the first years of the twentieth century, Colston's involvement with slavery and the slave trade was quite visible in municipal printed materials. For example, the city's official guide published in 1908 mentioned Bristol's slave-trading activities and consisted of not only textual references to Colston but also the reproduction of the painting *The Death of Edward Colston* (1844) by Richard Jeffreys Lewis (*c.* 1822–1883).[27] This rendering of Colston's death shows him in his deathbed, attended by a vicar, an unidentified relative or friend, and a black female servant who is kneeling and kissing his hand, in a position of submission and alleged gratitude.[28] However, in its edition of 1934 (centennial of the British Slave Emancipation Act), the official municipal guide no longer made references to Colston. The change may be related to the publication of Colton's biography by Reverend H. J. Wilkins that presented evidence of his membership in the Court of Assistants of the Royal African Company.[29] But despite these developments, Colston continued to be commemorated in ceremonies and the numerous Bristol landmarks named after him.

As the battles of public memory of slavery surfaced in the 1990s, black Bristolians started protesting Colston's omnipresence in the city's landscape. In 1998, Bristol's musical group *Massive Attack* (of which two of its members are black Bristolians) pledged to not perform at Colston Hall until the name of the building changed and continued campaigning to rename the concert hall.[30] In a press statement, the group also demanded the construction of a statue honoring the "Unknown Slave," a request that to this day has not been fulfilled.[31]

Colston's statue on Colston Avenue did not escape the storm. In January 1998, its pedestal was painted with the words "slave trader." The event gained visibility in the national press, exposing the persistent racialized debates wherein black activists and other social actors involved in the process of memorialization of Bristol's slave past supported either the removal of the sculpture from the city center or the addition of a plaque acknowledging Colston's participation in slave-trading ventures.[32] Still, white Bristolians opposed these proposals in public demonstrations and in the local newspapers *Bristol Evening Post* and *Western Daily Press*, defending that the statue should be preserved whereas "malcontented ethnics" should return to their "ancestral homelands."[33] Like any battles of public memory of slavery, when one group demands the removal of a statue or renaming a landmark, individuals with opposing views immediately respond in the public sphere to defend it. Colston became the symbol of Bristol's slave-trading history that survived over the centuries among a population identifying as white. For these groups, protecting Colston's statue is part of how white supremacy operates in Bristol. Keeping the statue is synonymous with preserving a white Bristolian identity as opposed to that of Bristol-born black residents who are still considered "foreigners" by the local white population.

Two decades after these debates started, Colston continues to be a central symbol of Bristol's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade. During the commemoration of the bicentennial of the British abolition of the slave trade, black residents persisted in their demands to topple Colston's sculpture. The statue's pedestal was painted with red in December 2007, calling attention to the city father's "bloody involvements in the slave trade."[34] Although protestors persisted in demanding the statue's removal, the city public authority continued ignoring these calls. In this context, over the last ten years, activists, ordinary citizens, academics, and artists engaged in what Alan Rice appropriately characterized as "guerrilla memorialization" by developing alternative and creative ways to contest the infamous monument. As argued by historian Olivette Otele, Bristolian activism has specifically focused on "the visual representation of this common history" of slavery and colonialism, in line with other movements such as Rhodes Must Fall in South Africa and the wave of protests that demanded the removal of statues honoring Confederate generals in the United States.[35] On the eve of the bicentennial of the British abolition of the slave trade, artist Graeme Mortimer Evelyn, who is racialized as black, developed *The Two Coins Project*, a visual sculpture and moving image installation that would be projected in several sites of memory of slavery around the world, including Bristol's Colston's statue on Colston Avenue.[36] Although the project was not approved, artists and citizens committed to making Bristol's slave past visible in the public space led many other "unauthorized" interventions.

The launch of Countering Colston in 2016 helped the movement to acknowledge Bristol's role in the infamous trade gain additional strength. The public campaign gathers academics, concerned residents, one city councilor, and members of the board of Colston Hall. The group's goal is to tell the history of Colston as a slave trader and demand the removal of his name from all of Bristol's premises. On November 9, 2016, posters placed around the pedestal of Colston's statue displayed the terms "human trafficker," "kidnapper," "murderer," and "slave trader."[37] In August 2017, a plaque reading "Unauthorized Heritage: Bristol: Capital of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1730–1745, commemorating the 12,000,000 enslaved of whom 6,000,000 died as captives" was placed on the plinth of Colston's monument. The plaque, whose creation has been attributed to British sculptor and street artist Will Coles (identified as white), followed the model of Bristol's official heritage plaques displayed on heritage buildings and remained attached to the monument for almost two months before its removal by the city authority.

On May 6, 2018, protestors appended a red yarn ball and chain to the feet of Colston's statue. Although not as explicit as previous manifestations, the subtle intervention is a reference to his slave-trading activities.[38] On the date designated as anti-slavery day in Britain (October 18, 2018) another intervention occurred: one hundred figurines representing human bodies were displayed in front of the statue. The lying white statuettes evoked the image of the *Brooke*s, the iconic eighteenth-century British slave ship whose diagram was extensively used in abolitionist propaganda.[39] Surrounding the statuettes were rectangular blocks whose surfaces were painted with the words "here and now," underscoring the idea that slavery still exists. Other blocks indicated the professions of present-day individuals submitted to forced labor: "nail bar workers," "sex worker," "car wash attendant," "domestic servant," "fruit picker," "kitchen worker," and "farm worker."

Although its visual impact was undeniable, this intervention poses several problems for the study of public memory of Atlantic slavery. First, unlike previous social actors organized around groups with an anti-racist agenda, the authors of the action concealed their identities. Were they just a group wanting to call attention to the issue of modern-day slavery, or did they situate themselves in the long struggle to recognize Bristol as a city that largely benefited from the trade on human beings and where black citizens are still victims of racism? Second, by highlighting present-day human trafficking, a problem that affects peoples of all origins in various parts of the globe, instead of underscoring Colston's participation in the inhuman trade, the creators of the installation evacuated the racialized dimension that marked the Atlantic slave trade and continues to determine its legacies, therefore distancing themselves from the approach that since the 1990s has led Bristol's debates. To this day, as no second plaque was added to the monument, these interventions at Colston's statue contribute to the ongoing pressure on the municipality to officially recognize the city's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade.

Despite resistance, there are new developments. For example, after two decades without official acknowledgment or revision, in April 2017, Bristol Music Trust, the charity that manages Colston Hall, announced it will change the building's name after the end of renovation works expected to be completed in 2020. In 2018, Cleo Lake, a city councilor and member of the Green Party, former actress and activist, who is also a member of the movement Countering Colston became Bristol Lord Mayor.[40] Lake identifies herself as a black Bristolian: "I was born in Bristol. I am first-generation Bristolian. My father was a proud African man born in Jamaica and my mother is of Scottish heritage, so I am Campbell by clan on my mother's side."[41] In a powerful symbolic gesture, she decided, in July 2018, to remove Colston's large painted portrait that was prominently displayed in her office. Despite these pulverized initiatives and the widespread media coverage of the protests to remove Colston's name from the city's landmarks, institutions such as the Colston's Girls' School decided to keep its designation. Hence, movements such as Countering Colston continue to evolve and the demands to publicly recognize Bristol's slave-trading past in the public space persist. Yet, despite the specific local context, Bristol's battles of public memory of slavery are in dialogue with similar movements demanding the removal of statues of individuals who supported slavery and colonialism around the world.

Whose Streets?

Liverpool shares a similar slave-trading history with Bristol. In the 1730s, the city became the largest British slave port, passing Bristol and London. In the last two decades of the eighteenth century, the city's docks developed extensive shipbuilding activity. Nearly 4,972 slave voyages started in Liverpool, which transported approximately 1,337,530 enslaved Africans to the Americas.[42] Obviously, a great part of Liverpool's economic activity and wealth derived from its slave-trading interests during the eighteenth century until 1807, when the British slave trade was outlawed.

After the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 legally ending slavery in the British colonies, the ways slavery has been memorialized in the public spaces of former British slave ports changed. Because of the massive abolitionist movement that emerged in Britain toward the end of the eighteenth century and because of its colonial role in Africa, at various moments British public commemoration basically emphasized the role of white savior abolitionists instead of honoring the victims of slavery and the slave trade.

Liverpool was not remarkable in its abolitionist activities. After the legal ban of the British slave trade in 1807, and especially between the 1820s and the 1830s, a greater number of organizations supporting the end of slavery emerged in the city. Still, this new trend contradicted the fact that in the

decades that followed the British abolition of slavery Liverpool's economic activities greatly relied on cotton grown by enslaved men and women in the United States.[43] Liverpool was the biggest cotton port in the world, and its merchants "traded raw cotton, shipped cotton goods, and financed both cotton agriculture and cotton manufacturing."[44] These interests explain why the city was the "most pro-Confederate place in the world outside the Confederacy itself."[45] In the early 1860s, on the eve of the US Civil War, Liverpool economically supported the Confederate states in a variety of ways such as warship building, as well as credit and military equipment.

The marks of this special relation with the Confederacy remain visible in the city's built heritage. For example, Charles K. Prioleau (1827–1887), a Confederate businessman from South Carolina, was married to the daughter of a Liverpool's shipowner. Naturalized British citizen, he became the representative of the merchants and bankers Fraser, Threholm, & Co, who had privileged ties with the Confederacy and therefore made possible the transactions between Liverpool's businessmen and the Confederates. Prioleau's residence at number 12, Rumford Place (today's 19, Abercromby Square, building of the University of Liverpool) became known as the Charleston House in a reference to his Confederate home state.[46] A fresco depicting a palmetto tree, symbol of South Carolina, decorated the walls of the building, erected to house an unofficial embassy of the Confederacy.[47]

Despite growing self-criticism, Liverpool's slave-trading past and its later support of pro-slavery Confederacy survived in commemoration activities and accounts published during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These memories drew from a nostalgic view of slave labor, when Britain made its wealth on the slave trade and slavery. As late as 1907 (the 700th anniversary of Liverpool and the centennial of the British abolition of the slave trade) commentators had no objections to the evocation of the memory of the city's cotton trade with the US South.[48] Three decades later, the British landscape of commemoration of slavery had barely changed, and the same trend continued. In 1934, Britain timidly observed the first centennial of its abolition of slavery. Reinforcing white supremacy, William Wilberforce (1759–1833) was consolidated as a central figure symbolizing British humanitarian vein, a tendency that persisted during the entire twentieth century.[49] Overall, Britain's active participation in the Atlantic slave trade and its support of slavery were absent from the festivities that instead emphasized its role in promoting abolitionist ideals, an accent that also justified the continuation of British imperialism in Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia. Likewise, as sociologist Mark Christian has emphasized more than two decades ago, the city of Liverpool also made efforts to conceal its crucial involvement in the Atlantic slave trade.[50] Like in the United States, during the period that immediately followed the end of the First World War (1914–1918), Liverpool witnessed the emergence of white mobs targeting black seamen and black British veterans.[51]

Although Britain passed racial equality legislation in the 1960s, it was not until the end of the 1980s that a variety of groups whose origins are associated with British colonial rule in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean started demanding central and local governments to take official measures to address the problem of racial inequalities affecting the country. These actions entailed an ethnic monitoring system to collect racial and ethnic statistics, and the creation of antiracist programs.[52] This new nationwide trend coincided with the end of the Cold War, a period that favored the assertion of national and collective identities of historically oppressed groups in societies involved in the Atlantic slave trade and wherever slavery existed.[53]

Like in Bristol's case, historians have largely studied Liverpool's involvement in the slave trade.[54] Yet the city's recognition of its slave-trading past presented specific challenges. The economic recession in 1981, during the government of Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013), impacted the city's working class, and its black community witnessed a dramatic rise in unemployment. In this context of racial disparities and growing police violence against black residents, Liverpool police stopped and arrested a motorcyclist in Toxteth, a low-income neighborhood, on July 3, 1981. The incident led residents to respond violently to police truculence, provoking an insurrection that lasted many hours and then remerged twenty days later. Although Liverpool black social actors did not typically lead movements to remove statues honoring slave traders and pro-slavery individuals, during the insurgence, residents pulled down the statue of William Huskisson (1770–1830), a Member of Parliament for Liverpool, mistaking him for a slave merchant. This spontaneous intervention forced the city to remove the statue from its plinth.[55] The Toxteth protests also led to the production of the Gifford Report examining the city's race relations and influenced later developments on memorialization of the Atlantic slave trade in the city.[56]

In the early 1990s, despite its ancient presence in Liverpool, the city's black population remained socially and economically excluded.[57] Today estimated at 4 percent, the city's population of African descent includes men and women whose ancestors settled in the city as early as the eighteenth century, as well as the descendants of immigrants from British colonies in Africa and the Caribbean who established themselves in the city starting in the nineteenth century. During the 1980s and the 1990s, residents identified as black consisted of "formerly colonized and currently racialized groups" such as Asians, Chinese, and Arabs.[58] In other words, being black was and still is a political identity, associated with the lived experience of racism and exclusion. But for men and women of African descent, this black identity is intrinsically related to the history of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade. Anthropologist Jacqueline Nassy Brown showed how in the early 1990s, black residents of Liverpool carried a collective memory of slavery and even without being asked they associated their experiences of racism to specific urban sites linked to slave-trading activities.[59]

A Liverpool black resident, Eric Scott Lynch evoked the slave past at least since 1980 to decry the persistency of racism in Liverpool. Asserting a "Liverpool-born-black" identity, he denounced how whites continued manipulating the divisions among black populations to support white supremacy and racism in the same way "White slave owners put Black over-seers over the slaves."[60] In the years that followed, Lynch started interpreting the city built heritage linked to the Atlantic slave trade by leading the Liverpool Slavery Trail, a tour highlighting the sites and buildings that witnessed Liverpool's history of the Atlantic slave trade and black population.[61]

This process that brought the slave-trading past of British ports to the public space produced various initiatives. In 1994, after a three-year-long process involving the consultation of the local black community, the Merseyside Maritime Museum in Liverpool opened in its basement the permanent exhibition *Transatlantic Slavery: Against Human Dignity*, or simply *Transatlantic Slavery Gallery.*[62] Academics and members of the city's black community were crucial players for the creation of this new exhibition space embracing the history of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade.[63] Curated by Anthony Tibbles, the show consisting of forty text panels, video displays, audio recordings, artifacts, and artworks, as well as a replica of the hold of a slave ship, established Liverpool's first permanent display telling the history of slavery.[64] In 1997, UNESCO passed a resolution making August 23 (the day that marked the beginning of the Saint-Domingue slave insurrection in 1791) the International Day of Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition. On August 23, 1999, Liverpool commemorated the first Slavery Remembrance Day, a date that since then has been celebrated with a parade, a ceremony at Canning Dock as well as lectures and symposia. On that occasion, Member of Parliament Bernie Grant (1944–2000), who had been a central leader in the African Reparations Movement, unveiled a plaque at the docks acknowledging Liverpool's role in the infamous commerce. Later that year, on December 9, 1999, the Liverpool City Council voted on a text addressing an apology for the city's participation in the Atlantic slave trade. These measures, along with the creation of a *Transatlantic Slavery Gallery* in the Merseyside Maritime Museum that gave birth to the International Slavery Museum (see Chapter 4), were very significant. However, they were not accompanied by other tangible initiatives effectively interfering in the urban space.[65]

Nevertheless, black concerned citizens and their allies were demanding more than the simple recognition of Liverpool's slave-trading past in the confined space of the museum. Although a plaque is a concrete marker, most passersby do not see it in the middle of the touristic paraphernalia that since the turn of the twentieth century has been installed along Liverpool's renovated docks. In this context, activists also wanted to address the city's slave past through interventions that would alter the city's landscape. Evidently, like in Bristol, addressing this problem was and remains a

major challenge because the marks of Liverpool's slave-trading activities are present nearly everywhere in its houses, churches, streets, squares, and cemeteries.[66] In this urban landscape embedded in white supremacy, many plaques identify different buildings around the city, especially those where male prominent figures were born and lived. Yet, because no inscriptions indicate the sites associated with the slave trade, the connections between these places and the city's slave-trading past remain invisible to tourists, outsiders, and newcomers.

One of the most prominent constructions in the city's downtown area is the Liverpool Town Hall. The eighteenth-century neoclassic building stands in High Street at the intersection with Dale Street, Castle Street, and Water Street. Part of the National Heritage List for England, its high dome is adorned with a statue of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and patron of arts, trade, and strategy. The building's large rooms and ballrooms feature decoration of the late Georgian period. Built at the height of the British involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, between 1749 and 1754, the building is a slave-trade heritage site, because most of the city's mayors between the eighteenth century and 1807 (date of the British abolition of the slave trade) were directly or indirectly connected to the infamous commerce of human flesh. Not surprisingly, at least twenty-five lord mayors of the Borough of Liverpool during the period between 1700 and 1820, along with many councilors and Liverpool's Members of Parliament, had interests in the infamous commerce.[67]

The Liverpool Town Hall offers guided tours twice a month. On an annual basis, during the summer, the building is open to public visitation as well. In addition to exploring the building's architecture, lavish furniture, crystal chandeliers, and collection of artworks, local visitors and tourists can have tea with live piano music in the Lord Mayor's Parlor. In the two floors of the building, the rooms and ballrooms are decorated with objects, sculptures, and paintings, many of them associated with the slave trade. Under the sumptuous staircases, on the first floor, two glass displays exhibit the Liverpool Town Hall's silver collection consisting of a variety of objects given as gifts to the city over the centuries. Among these objects, there is a George III oval silver cake basket (by silversmith Robert Hennell, 1780) offered in homage of Thomas Golightly Esq. (1732–1821). Golightly, whose painted portrait is featured in the International Slavery Museum, was elected member of Liverpool Town Council in 1770, and in 1772 he was the city's mayor, having served the city in various capacities until his death. A wine merchant and shipowner, he financially participated in the Atlantic slave trade until its abolition. Opposed to the abolition of the slave trade, as late as 1807, Golightly's name appeared in the list of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa.[68]

Nearly two dozen painted portraits of former Liverpool mayors are exhibited all over the rooms of the second floor of the Liverpool Town Hall, but the explanatory labels attached next to the paintings omit the

term "slave trade." In one of the rooms, for example, hangs a full-body oil portrait of slave trader George Case (1747–1836), by artist Sir Thomas Philips (1770–1845). Case was a member of the Town Council for forty-five years and Mayor of Liverpool in 1781–1782. However, the label describing the painting does not include one single word regarding his active participation in the Atlantic slave trade. It also omits that Case along with his father-in-law William Gregson (1721–1809), who in 1762 had also been the Mayor of Liverpool, was member of the syndicate that owned the infamous slave ship *Zong*.[69] In 1781, while the *Zong* was heading to Jamaica and ran out of water, the crew threw overboard 133 enslaved persons to cash in the insurance taken on their lives. The *Zong* became known worldwide as one of the bloodiest massacres in the history of the inhuman trade. As underscored by historian James Walvin, the *Zong*'s atrocious incident did not discourage Gregson from continuing to engage in the slave trade. Between 1781 and 1790, his slave ships transported 8,018 enslaved Africans from the Gold Coast region to be sold in various Caribbean islands. Between 1780 and 1800, Gregson's ships transported 34,931 slaves, half of whom were disembarked in Jamaica.[70] Obviously, references to these atrocities are nowhere to be found in the Town Hall building.

Likewise, one of the ballrooms features another smaller oil painting portraying Peter Whitfield Brancker (1750–1836), who is described in the label as "a merchant, trading with the West Indies." Indeed, Brancker was a captain in the slave trade, who during the period 1784–1799 was also a slave merchant, an information that is not displayed in the labels explaining the painting. In the various labels associated with the displayed portrait paintings the only one that includes the term "slavery" is the tag describing the portrait of William Wallace Currie (1784–1840), Mayor of Liverpool in 1835–1836, who is referred to as a man who "devoted much of his time to the anti-slavery cause."

Like the Liverpool Town Hall, other iconic sites are associated with the city's slave-trading past. But with few exceptions, most of them remain unmarked. In 2001, during the construction works to build the new shopping center Liverpool One at Canning Place, across from the Canning Dock, workers discovered the structure of the old wharf, buried since 1826. Constructed in 1715, at the height of the British participation in the Atlantic slave trade, the dock became the point of departure of ships that would sail to African ports to exchange a variety of products for enslaved men, women, and children that were subsequently sold in the Americas. The National Museums Liverpool (a group of museums and galleries) offers one-hour tours of the dock three times a day on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. The dock's composition is visible through a porthole, a glass cylindrical structure at Canning Place (Figure 3.2), at which the following words are displayed: "The Old Dock was designed and built by Thomas Steers between 1709 and 1715." The term "slave trade" is absent not only from this marker but also from the website that announces the tours.[71] Only by reading the bar

FIGURE 3.2 *Display of the Old Dock. Canning Place, Liverpool, UK. Photograph by Ana Lucia Araujo, 2017.*

code, exhibited on the display, with a smartphone can visitors see the digital artwork *Layers of the Old Dock* that provides decontextualized references to the slave trade, including the iconic image of the kneeling enslaved man "Am I not a Man and a Brother," a quotation by Frederick Douglass, and a 1799 engraving depicting the old dock, connecting them with the more recent history of the dock.[72]

Approximately 1,500 feet from Canning Place, almost across the Princess Dock, stands Our Lady and Saint-Nicholas Church. Although the original temple dates to the thirteenth century, the church was reconstructed by the middle of the eighteenth century at the height of the Atlantic slave trade. Honoring Saint-Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors, visitors to the building can see sculptures and stained glass depicting ships that conjure the decades during which the city slave-trading activity flourished. Likewise, other churches such as the Saint-James Church at the corner Upper Parliament Street and Park Road still display its connections with the inhuman commerce of human flesh. Opened on June 4, 1775, this Anglican church is among Liverpool's oldest churches. Although closed since 1971, under the protection of the Churches Conservation Trust, the temple was returned to the Diocese of Liverpool in 2010, when safeguarding works to recuperate the building started. The church contains nineteen monuments to slave

traders, its archives comprise baptism records of slave owners and slaves, and although not confirmed by evidence, its graveyards are said to hold the remains of enslaved individuals.[73] Nevertheless, only locals and informed tourists visit the church, located outside the city's main touristic area.

Years of black activism in Liverpool impacted official initiatives that eventually had to highlight the city's links with the Atlantic slave trade. At the turn of the twenty-first century, several British institutions started preparing for the commemoration of the 2007 bicentennial of the abolition of the British slave trade.[74] This context made possible the organization of several exhibitions and conferences in various British cities, including London, where the Museum of London Docklands opened its first permanent gallery examining the city's involvement with the Atlantic slave trade, titled *London, Sugar, and Slavery*.[75]

Meanwhile, Liverpool's memory of slavery landscape continued evolving. In 2004, UNESCO added Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City to its World Heritage List. One of the three criteria for the city's inclusion in the list referred to the central role of Liverpool in the Atlantic slave trade.[76] Whereas creating permanent markers for slave trade heritage sites and conceiving monuments to honor those who fought against slavery was a project hard to achieve, after the addition of Liverpool to the World Heritage List there was additional pressure on heritage institutions to provide more information about urban structures named after slave merchants and planters.

In July 2006, Councilor Barbara Mace submitted a proposal to the Liverpool City Council regarding renaming streets that carry names of slave traders such as Ashton Street, Blundell Street, Bold Street, Cropper Street, Gladstone Road, Parr Street, Tarleton Street, Rodney Street, Cunliffe Street, Earle Street, Earle Road, Sir Thomas Street, and Penny Lane. Mace, who is categorized as white, recommended renaming the streets after British abolitionists such as William Wilberforce (1759–1833). In response, black educator Gloria Hyatt, a founding member of the organization Merseyside Campaign Against Racist Terrorism who was born in Toxteth, defended a proposition to rechristen the streets with the names of successful black individuals.[77] But opponents to the proposal quickly emerged. Although several contributors to the public debate argued that renaming the streets would "whitewash history," one of the greatest obstacles to the project was the inclusion of Penny Lane among the streets to be renamed.[78] Immortalized in the *Beatles*' homonymous song, the street is said to have been named after the slave merchant John Penny, and renaming it would directly affect the city's image and tourism industry that largely relies on the *Beatles*, whose members were born and raised in Liverpool. Without large popular support, the proposal was eventually dismissed. In 2007, the Historic Environment of Liverpool Project released a modest sixteen-page booklet, authored by historian and television presenter Laurence Westgaph, listing the streets associated with the infamous commerce.[79] Despite all the debates surrounding Liverpool's slave-trading past and the city's UNESCO World

Heritage status, only the permanent exhibition of the International Slavery Museum opened in 2007 underscores the connections between street names and the slave trade. To this day, there are no plaques or signs explaining to the city's visitors and residents how and why the names of these streets are associated with the slave trade. Yet, by their own initiative, Liverpool black citizens continue leading the battles of public memory through a variety of tools, including tours exploring the history of the city's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade. As late as in 2017, legendary Eric Scott Lynch was still taking visitors in his Liverpool Slavery History Trail. Likewise, Laurence Westgaph, now a very well-known public figure, leads The Liverpool and Slavery Walking Tour, a popular tour highlighting the city's slave-trading past. Despite these major developments, slavery memorialization remains largely confined to the International Slavery Museum. Indeed, to this day, Liverpool failed to approve the construction of a memorial or monument commemorating its involvement in the abominable commerce.

The White Tide

In the United States, like in Britain, black social actors have demanded for very long time the removal of monuments and the renaming of urban landmarks paying homage to pro-slavery individuals. These struggles of public memory are racialized and hence closely associated with the fight against racism, especially police violence against African Americans who symptomatically grew during the two terms (2009–2016) of Barack Obama presidency. In July 2013, Black Lives Matter occupied the streets of several US cities after George Zimmerman (a member of a community watch in Sanford, Florida, who killed the seventeen-year-old African American Trayvon Martin) was acquitted. Between 2014 and 2015, demonstrations continued evolving when, among others, police officers killed Eric Garner (1970–2014) on Staten Island, New York; unarmed teenager Michael Brown (1996–2014) in Ferguson, Missouri; twelve-year-old Tamir Rice (2002–2014) in Cleveland, Ohio; and Freddie Gray (1989–2015) in Baltimore, Maryland.

On June 17, 2015, a group of twelve African American men and women gathered to attend a Bible study group, as they did every week at the Emanuel African American Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. The church was no ordinary building. Among its founders was Denmark Vesey (*c.* 1767–1822), a freedman accused and convicted of plotting a slave rebellion, who was sentenced to death along with more than thirty other black men. In the aftermath of the plot, a mob of whites burned down the church building, which was only reconstructed after the end of the Civil War.

Despite this tragic legacy, nothing in that evening seemed to evoke that distant past. Since 2009, the first black president of the United States was

in office and Vesey, who for many years was referred to as a "would-be killer" by several Charleston white residents, was now memorialized in a statue unveiled in the previous year at Hampton Park.[80] But that Wednesday evening, Dylann Roof, a twenty-one-year-old white man joined the Emanuel African American Methodist Episcopal Church's Bible study group. One hour later, he took his handgun and opened fire against the attendees. Witnesses reported that Roof said "I have to do it. You rape our women and you're taking over our country. And you have to go," before shooting nine African American men and women.[81]

The investigation that followed the killing uncovered the path that transformed the young man into a domestic terrorist, including several pictures featuring him in various slavery heritage sites in Charleston, such as Sullivan Island where newly arrived enslaved Africans and crew members were put into quarantine aboard ships or in pesthouses upon their landing in South Carolina, the slave cabins of Boone Hall Plantation and Gardens, and Magnolia Plantation and Gardens.[82] In one picture, he is posing holding a gun and a Confederate battle flag, which during the Civil War and still today is a symbol associated with the heritage of those who fought against the union to preserve slavery. The pro-slavery symbol has been appropriated by white nationalists who, during the twentieth century, persisted in promoting racial hatred.

Irrespective of these heinous events, the Confederate battle flag continued flying on the grounds of South Carolina statehouse in Columbia. But honoring their long tradition of protest, African American women responded to it. In the early morning of Saturday, June 27, 2015, Bree Newsome, a fearless educator, artist, and activist of Charlotte, North Carolina, climbed the thirty-foot flagpole and took down the flag. In a public statement, she declared: "We removed the flag today because we can't wait any longer. We can't continue like this another day. It's time for a new chapter where we are sincere about dismantling white supremacy and building toward true racial justice and equality."[83]

Newsome's action was neither a new nor isolated event. Ethan J. Kytle and Blain Roberts explain that as early as in the second half of the nineteenth century, African Americans have contested monuments honoring pro-slavery white supremacist individuals such as John C. Calhoun (1782–1850), the South Carolina politician who served as the seventh vice-president of the United States (1825–1832).[84] Karen L. Cox also underscores that in 2000 the Confederate battle flag that flew atop the South Carolina state capitol was removed from the building, even though it remained in the capitol's grounds.[85]

In the months that followed Charleston's terrorist attack, black residents and activists along with other anti-racist allies organized demonstrations demanding the removal of the Confederate battle flag and monuments honoring military leaders and other individuals who fought the Civil War to defend slavery, but who lost their fight. White nationalists and

white supremacists immediately responded to the protests by occupying the public space to reclaim these symbols. Bringing back the old flawed argument that the Confederate statues and battle flag honored their alleged ancestors who died fighting for the Confederacy, these extremists argued that removing them was erasing "history," as if the statues built several decades after the end of the war constituted some kind of contemporary historical record of the Civil War. Still, neither these monuments nor any other statues derive from the work of history. They are rather part of the realm of public memory, which in this context is a reconstruction of the past that aims to fulfill the present-day political agenda of a specific group of white individuals who pretend to claim the legacy of those who fought to keep slavery alive. As part of this context, public memory of slavery and emancipation once again emerges as a racialized process. On the one hand, white individuals embrace the Confederate flag as a quintessential symbol of white supremacy. But on the other hand, as historian Kevin Levin has demonstrated, to accomplish their political project, especially starting in the 1970s, these white conservative groups also needed to fabricate the idea that black individuals not only supported the Lost Cause of the Confederacy but also joined the Confederate army not as "camp slaves" but as "soldiers."[86] Likewise, Confederate monuments are commemorative devices built nearly four decades after the end of the Civil War as part of the battles of public memory to reinforce the position of Southern whites who with the end of slavery continued promoting racial violence against African Americans in order to prevent them from acquiring economic and political power. Ultimately, Confederate monuments are devices produced by white supremacists to perpetuate white supremacy as a system intended to annihilate and make black subjects invisible.[87]

The debates and rallies around Confederate markers are useful examples of the ongoing battles of public memory of slavery, which like in Britain are intrinsically related to the dominance of white supremacy that marginalizes black subjects in urban settings, while promoting the representations of pro-slavery white men as righteous. Whereas white supremacists continue to appropriate devices commemorating Confederates, whether or not their ancestors fought in the Civil War, black activists, ordinary citizens, and their white allies appealed for the removal of these monuments because not only did they memorialize men who took arms to defend slavery, but also these statues and memorials erected during the Jim Crow era when African Americans were victims of racial hatred and denied civil rights remain quintessential symbols of white supremacy.

Tension increased when, in November 2016, Donald Trump was elected president of the United States. His discourse fomenting hate against immigrants was supported and disseminated by white supremacist and white nationalist men and women. More than ever before, these groups instrumentalized Confederate monuments by organizing demonstrations in various US cities

where the municipalities voted to remove them. On August 11 and 12, 2017, the Unite the Right rally gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia, the home of University of Virginia, founded by Thomas Jefferson, a few dozens of neo-Nazis, neo-Confederates, and Klansmen. The alleged reason for the meeting was the municipality decision to remove the statue of Robert E. Lee (1807–1870), the slave owner and general who commanded the Confederate Army during the Civil War. On the night of August 11, prevented from convening in the now Emancipation Park, where Lee's statue was covered while awaiting a decision from the city council, hundreds of extremists marched throughout the campus of University of Virginia. Carrying torches, the group freely walked around the university Rotunda and congregated at Jefferson's statue chanting slogans such as "blood and soil" and "Jews will not replace us." The following day, the far-right participants armed with assault guns, shields, and clubs were met by counter-protesters. One white terrorist drove his car in high speed over the counter-protesters killing Heather D. Heyer (1985–2017), a thirty-two-year-old paralegal from Charlottesville, leaving dozens of people injured.

The next two days after this tragedy, the movement to take down Confederate monuments gained new force. In some cities, such as Durham, North Carolina, citizens took these actions in their own hands and tore down a statue representing a Confederate soldier.[88] Following this trend, several cities in Missouri, Virginia, Florida, Texas, Maryland, Ohio, North Carolina, New York, Wisconsin, Louisiana, Kentucky, and even California decided to remove their Confederate monuments, sometimes during the night to avoid turmoil. As of 2019, nearly 1,700 Confederate markers remain standing in the United States, including nearly 780 monuments.[89] Yet, as statues were removed, various associations of descendants of Confederate soldiers started erecting new monuments in private-owned spaces around the country, suggesting that the battles of public memory of slavery and its legacies are far from over.[90]

Whereas Black Lives Matter activism evolved, similar debates and actions continued emerging in various universities in the United States. As discussed in Chapter 2, at the turn of the twenty-first century, many universities started launching initiatives to study their links with the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. During the last five years, university students, and especially black students, several of whom joined Black Lives Matter or at least sympathized with the movement, also protested the existence of markers named after slave merchants and pro-slavery individuals in university campuses. Charleston's terrorist attack impacted these debates. At Yale University, students, faculty, staff, and alumni started once again to demand the institution change the name of Calhoun College, named after John C. Calhoun, the infamous pro-slavery South Carolina politician and vice-president of the United States who graduated from the university in 1804. The pressure produced initial results. On August 29, 2015, during his address to the incoming class of 2019, Yale University president, Peter

Salovey, decried Charleston's tragedy. By acknowledging that one of the university's colleges was named after the notorious white supremacist who defended slavery, Salovey called the community to debate the issue. As the new academic year began, students organized protests denouncing long-lasting racist practices in the university, described by the protesters as an unwelcome environment for black and minority students, faculty, and staff.[91] In April 2016, Salovey declared the university's intention to examine Calhoun's legacy and develop initiatives to encourage diversity. Yet the announcement also stated that Calhoun College's name would be preserved: "More than a decision about a name, we must focus on understanding the past and present, and preparing our students for the future."[92]

While demonstrations for the removal of Confederate monuments spread all over the country, Yale University's students continued protesting. Pressed by the demonstrations, Salovey appointed a Committee to Establish Principles on Renaming, in August 2016, to determine standards for renaming university buildings. Along with community leaders and nonprofit organizations, students formed the Change the Name Coalition. After numerous rallies, including occasions when students were arrested by the police, on February 11, 2017, Yale University president announced that Calhoun College would be renamed to honor Grace Murray Hopper (1906–1992), a computer scientist and US Navy rear admiral and alumna.[93]

Outside university campuses in other northern cities of the United States, a variety of black citizens and activists also demanded the renaming of buildings associated with the Atlantic slave trade. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Boston had 16,000 inhabitants, of which nearly 10 percent were bondspeople.[94] Enslaved men worked on a variety of tasks associated with the city's mercantile economy, including shipbuilding, blacksmithing, coopering, and printing. Most enslaved women performed domestic work, even though in some rich households enslaved men were also coachmen and butlers. Slaves could work directly for their owners, but some owners hired out their human property, and in some cases allowed them to hire themselves out.[95]

Peter Faneuil (1700–1743) was probably Boston's richest merchant and slave trader, the son of a French Huguenot (Protestant) couple who fled Catholic France to escape religious persecution and settled in New Rochelle, New York.[96] After the death of his parents, Faneuil and his siblings moved to Boston to live with his uncle Andrew Faneuil, a wealthy merchant, landowner, local slave trader, and owner of Boston's Merchant Row where he bought and sold enslaved people. Faneuil inherited a large part of his uncle's assets and participated in the Atlantic slave trade through the commerce of tobacco, produce, rum, molasses, and fish, as well enslaved Africans. He owned at least one slave ship, the *Jolly Batchelor*, which on November 23, 1741, sailed from Boston to Sierra Leone. On August 15, 1743, after Faneuil's death, the slave ship disembarked twenty enslaved individuals in Newport, Rhode Island.[97]

To respond to its great trading activity, Boston opened a public market in 1733 at Dock Square, but four years later a mob opposed to trade regulation destroyed the facility. In 1740, Faneuil offered to pay for the construction of a new hall market in the same location where the previous market was located.[98] The town accepted the offer and voted in favor with the declaration, "in testimony of the town's gratitude to Peter Faneuil, Esq. and to perpetuate his memory, that the Hall over the Market place, be named Faneuil Hall, and all times hereafter, be called and known by that name."[99]

Unveiled in 1742, Faneuil Hall functioned as a marketplace and meeting hall, and quickly became one of the most important of Boston's landmarks (Figure 3.3). Over more than two centuries of its existence, the building has been the stage of several important events associated with the history of the United States. When ~~Samuel~~ Adams (17~~22~~–18~~03~~) was invested as president of the United States, a banquet celebrating him was held at Faneuil Hall, and later the site was also the place where William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) delivered passionate speeches demanding the end of slavery.[100] Although Faneuil's connections with the Atlantic slave trade are well documented, until recently the iconic building carrying his name has been remembered as a "cradle of liberty."[101] But Charleston's tragedy and the movement to take down Confederate monuments have impacted the city of Boston, where 25 percent of its overall population (estimated at 694,583) identifies as black or African American.[102]

John 1735-1826

FIGURE 3.3 *Faneuil Hall, Boston, Massachusetts, United States. Photograph by Robert Linsdell, 2013/cc-by-2.0.*

Faneuil's connections with the infamous trade were never a secret, especially for those who take the guided tours of the building provided by the rangers of the National Park Service. Likewise, on August 23, 2015, the National Park Service and the Museum of African American History commemorated the Day of Remembrance of the Middle Passage and its Abolition that acknowledged the role of Boston in the Atlantic slave trade.[103] Still, the city historically failed to make any significant effort to bring to light its connections with the slave trade and slavery. This erasure, combined with the racial tensions that emerged all over the country during the wave of protests to take down Confederate monuments, led Boston's concerned black residents to occupy the public space in unified demand, calling for the city to rename Faneuil Hall and to acknowledge the building's links with the history of the slave trade. In August 2017, the New Democracy Coalition, led by Kevin C. Peterson, challenged the city to officially change the name of the building. In a public statement, the Mayor of Boston Marty Walsh responded negatively to the request, arguing that instead of renaming he preferred to add more information about Faneuil's past to the site.[104]

But the movement to rechristen Faneuil Hall persisted. Peterson called for a boycott of the building in August 2018, along with other actions including a picket line and a sit-in.[105] Meanwhile, African American artist Steve Locke proposed the construction of a memorial consisting of a bronze plate representing an auction block embossed with the map of the Atlantic slave trade. The memorial proposal was supported by Boston's mayor, but the New Democracy Coalition criticized the project and accused the artist of undermining the demands to rename the building, as according to the group no black leader has requested a memorial.[106] On November 10, 2018, as part of a larger demonstration against racism in Boston, Peterson and other activists reenacted a slave auction at the entrance of Faneuil Hall: "I would like the community to understand that slavery was a reality in Boston, and I would like the community to connect the fact that what happened in the 1740s, in terms of the denigration of black people, continues into 2018."[107] As debates on Faneuil Hall persisted, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Boston Branch eventually opposed the project by arguing that the community had not "been given enough of a voice in the selection of the location and proposal." Reacting to this position, Locke decided to withdraw his proposal of a slave memorial on July 16, 2019.[108] In an op-ed justifying his decision, he stated that the purpose of his project "has been mischaracterized and maligned by people who have other agendas."[109] Like in other cities involved in the Atlantic slave trade where the battles of public memory are in play, the calls for renaming of Faneuil Hall are deeply associated with how over the last two centuries the tentacles of white supremacy spread throughout the urban fabric by making Boston's black population invisible, while perpetuating long-lasting racial inequalities.

Public Memory in Black and White

This chapter shows how public memory of slavery is a specific modality of memory carried out by living groups who fight to occupy the public space and have their political views prevail. Like collective memory, public memory of slavery is racialized and gendered, and fueled by the structures of white supremacy. In the second half of the twentieth century, especially after the end of the Cold War, Britain and the United States became the ground of continuous fights between racialized groups with opposing views about the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. Either in Britain or in the United States, the battles to make these atrocities visible in the public spaces of port cities such as Bristol, Liverpool, Charleston, and Boston cannot be dissociated from the ways white supremacy has operated on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Despite different contexts, many decades after the end of the slave trade and slavery, former slave ports continued to actively promote the memory of slave merchants, slaveholders, and pro-slavery social actors as benefactors and philanthropists by maintaining multiple tangible markers paying homage to them. But this hegemonic perspective never remained unchallenged. Black activists and other racially oppressed groups, along with white allies, have led various kinds of actions to oppose the public memory of pro-slavery historical actors. Individually represented or organized in associations and coalitions, these citizens use a variety of strategies such as demonstrations, performances, and works of art to bring to light the history of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. By contesting the public memory of slave merchants, slave owners, and white supremacists, these social actors denounce the persisting structures that maintain black individuals and other minorities economically and socially excluded in former slave societies and societies that participated in the inhuman trade. Their fight shows, to the degree that racism and white supremacy remain alive, the painful past of slavery is doomed to echo in the present, thus propelling the battles of public memory of slavery to endure.

54 These are interviews of Pearl M. Graham with Anna Ezell, Lucy Williams, Minnie Arbuckle, and Charles Bullock, cited by Lucia Stanton, "The Other End of the Telescope: Jefferson through the Eyes of His Slaves," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2000): 145.
55 See "Hemings Family Tree" indicating which slaves were freed, sold, or given as gifts as reproduced in Henry Wiencek, *Master of the Mountain: Thomas Jefferson and His Slaves* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), x.
56 Stanton, "The Other End of the Telescope," 145.
57 University of Massachusetts Special Collections and University Archives, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, 1803–1999, "Letter from Pearl M. Graham to W. E. B. Du Bois," February 13, 1961, 1.
58 Stanton and Swann-Wright, "Bonds of Memory," 170.
59 Stanton and Swann-Wright, "Bonds of Memory," 177.
60 Stanton, "The Other End of the Telescope," 139.
61 Edward Ball, *Slaves in the Family* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), 48.
62 Ball, *Slaves in the Family*, 55.
63 Ball, *Slaves in the Family*, 56.
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Chapter 3

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