

Abstract

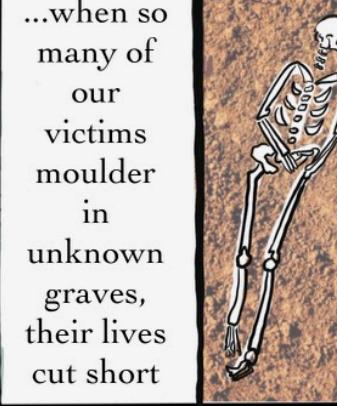
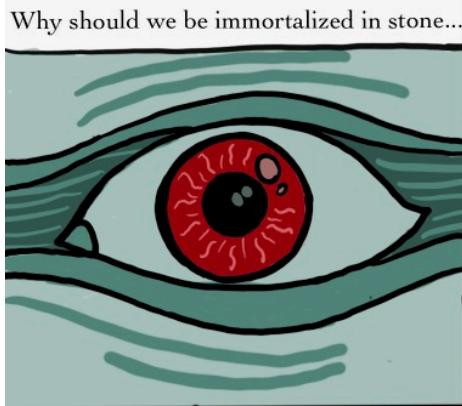
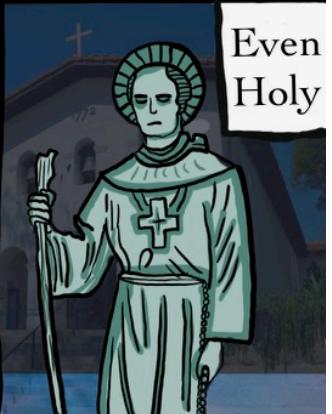
In my short comic strip, *Giving Up the (Marble) Ghost*, I will be focusing on the recent efforts by protestors across America to remove statues and iconography related to America's history of genocide and slavery. In 2020, the larger BLM movement motivated many American towns and cities to consider removing statues of individuals like Robert E. Lee, Junipero Serra, and Christopher Columbus. In a "*A Glossary of Haunting*", Eve Tuck refers to the continued existence of Native American groups as something that "haunts" America as a reminder of a failed genocide. (Tuck and Ree, pg. 643) Tuck and Ree take a positive view on "ghosts," symbolically conceptualizing them as the living reminders of failed attempts to wipe out minority groups. As symbolic "ghosts" of genocide, the presence and continued activism of Native Americans can "haunt" the American consciousness and force the country's political values to be re-evaluated and improved. As defined by Tuck and Ree, the term "haunting" is the refusal of minorities to be erased via genocide or institutional racism, and the transformation of the passive "ghost" into an active, corporeal seeker of justice.

While Tuck and Ree define haunting as a positive process, I tend to take a more cynical approach to the term. While America is "haunted" in a positive way by the activism in minority communities, our country is also "haunted" in a negative sense by the ghosts of slavery, genocide, and ethnic cleansing. In "*Genealogy of Monster Theory*," Weinstock discusses how the presence of monsters can be viewed as a message on morality from otherworldly sources. (Weinstock, pg.6) Monuments to racists and colonizers, considered monstrous, can be viewed as

uncomfortable messages from a collective American consciousness. The presence of such statues and monuments in public spaces solidifies the sordid truth that racism and bigotry is still alive - and was often celebrated throughout American history. Within the theoretical framework established by Weinstock and Tuck, I have interpreted the destruction of Confederate statues by protestors as a sort of symbolic “exorcism”, an attempt to erase the ghosts of racism, slavery, and bigotry, as least from public view. Tuck and Ree both define the process of “exorcism” as a means of reclaiming agency - a way for the haunted to cast out spirits who are negatively influencing them. In this case, one way to combat racism is by removing statues of racist icons.

However, while one can tear down statues of bigots, it is much more difficult to “tear down” flesh and blood human beings who believe in hateful ideology. Statue demolition and group protests in 2020 were met with extensive backlash and mockery by alt-right groups. The authors of *“Attack of the 50 Foot Social Justice Warrior”* note that alt-right individuals become radicalized within insular online spaces, cultivating hateful rhetoric that they spread to the real world. (Massanari & Chess, 2018) In this short comic, I have attempted to capture the ways in which this energy of hatred is circulated in American society by making hatred and racism a literal malevolent energy - one that resides in the Confederate statues being demolished. While one exorcism is complete, the malignant spirit of hatred inhabiting the statues moves on to possess the actual humans who still continue to espouse racist beliefs. The demolition and destruction of statues of colonizers is conceptualized as an eternal war, one in which Americans must constantly fight the demons of bigotry and injustice to keep democracy alive.

Giving Up the (Marble) Ghost



And so, our search for new bodies to possess began anew.

And so you will find us



Lurking wherever there
is hate and fear in the
hearts of men.

Whether disguised as knowledge



Where there are walls to divide

