

Charlottesville and the Battles of History

By [Mumia Abu-Jamal](#)

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Featured image: Malcolm X (Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

The events surrounding Charlottesville, Virginia have a resonance far beyond the borders of Old Dominion. Even though they began as a strictly local affair, they quickly assumed a national character, because this strictly local event stems from the nation's history—a history that remains not only contested but bitterly unresolved.

That history, of course is the toxic poison of White Supremacy, and the trigger thereof—African Slavery—the intentional, centuries-long economic, social, communal and psychic exploitation of Africans for the financial and psychological benefits of the White Nation. This toxin has tainted the bloodstream of the Nation, and infected all segments of society, and was integral to the very development of Whiteness as a core identity for millions of people who call themselves “Americans.”

As we look at protests rolling throughout the country, the first thing we must recognize is that this isn't about monuments. Nor is it about the Civil War.

It is about the Present. It is about how this country will define itself, how it sees itself, and how it understands its future.

But history, true history is more about today than yesterday, for it is the pathway to tomorrow, and it lives or dies in the minds of the young who learn, or unlearn, how this country came to be, and what role they play in th



...e days to come.

The great Black freedom fighter, Malcolm X repeatedly said,

“Of all our studies, history best rewards our research.”

He knew this not only because he was taught this by his Teacher (Honorable Elijah

Muhammed) but because he learned this in the very expression of his life. For, as a state prisoner, a man so hated that he was called “Satan,” his learning of a deeper history of Black people literally made him a new man. It gave him confidence, it turned his loathing into loving, it gave him purpose—and perhaps more importantly, perspective.

Perspective. How to look at the world. How to interpret it. How to understand why things are the way they are. That’s the real value of History.

It teaches Perspective of Now—not Then.

And that’s the reason why monuments, turned green by oxidation and pigeon poop, are seemingly at the center of these controversies.

The Trump presidency signaled a Great Leap - Backwards. It was the expression of a deep, profound fear of the Future, of Change, of Transformation. So, they hold on to Yesterday, invoking Tradition—as if the central Tradition of America wasn’t—and isn’t—Black Slavery, which launched it into and Economic and World Power.

Charlottesville is thus a turning point—a pivot point upon which the Nation turns back, or moves forward, creating a New History.

This only the people of America will decide.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is the author of [Writing on the Wall](#).

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