

*The Modern Confederacy*

In support of MFA Thesis Exhibition, Spring 2023

By

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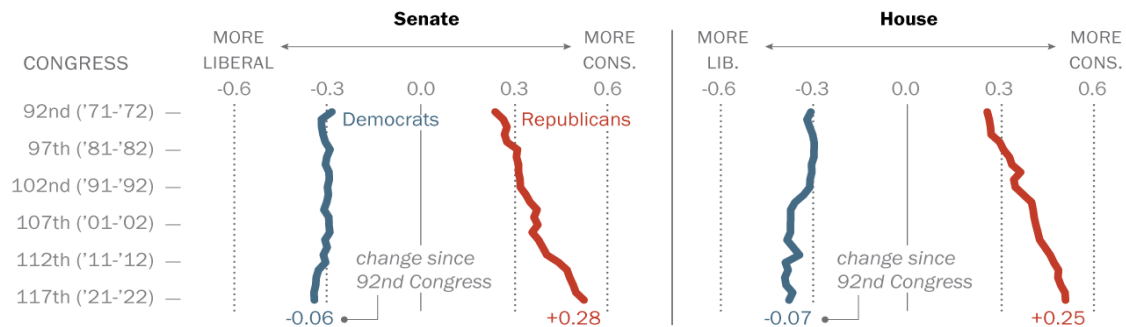
*The Modern Confederacy* draws attention to the on-going persistence of white supremacy in the United States and how it has affected and shaped the direction of the United States in a post-Civil War America, along with the gradual public acceptance and mainstreaming of a more confederate ideology by right leaning politicians, their constituents, and media since 1865. This wave has been ushered in and unleashed by various conservative politicians. Most recently this confederate ideology has been tapped into by the former president, Donald Trump, and Georgia congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Green.

In Trump’s 2015 speech, launching his presidential campaign Trump, clearly laid the framework for his white supremacist views. Trump said “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.”<sup>1</sup> This level of blatant racism was shocking to most listeners because he still went on to win the presidency after giving this speech. In fact, I would suggest that this theme may have been what brought him the victory. With this speech, it appears as though Trump opened the floodgates and gave the all-clear signal to his followers to feel a lot more comfortable being more openly racist, and as a result, the republican platform has become more conservative (See figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1**

**Republicans have moved further right than Democrats have to the left**

*Average ideology of members, by Congress*



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Voteview DW-NOMINATE data accessed on Feb. 18, 2022.

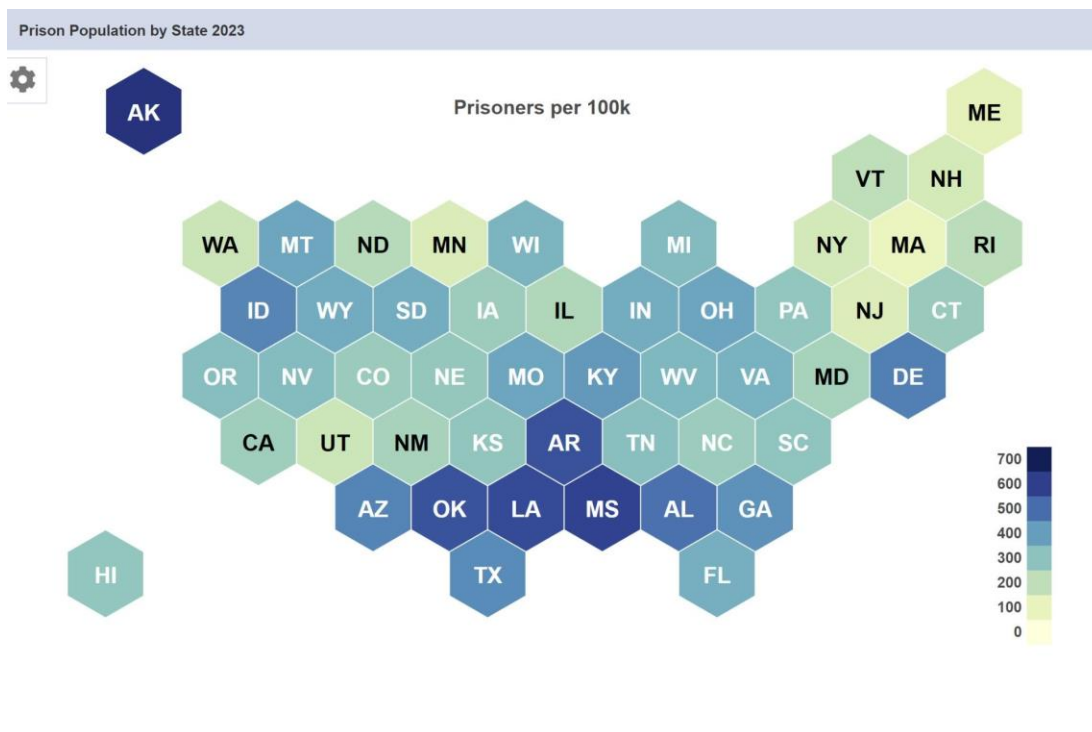
Pew Research Center 

*The Modern Confederacy* is focused on, but it is not limited to, the eleven states of the former Confederacy. “The secession of South Carolina was followed by the secession of six more states—Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas—and the threat of secession by four more—Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. These eleven [agriculturally based] states eventually formed the Confederate States of America (or CSA).”<sup>3</sup> The original Confederate states of America was a breakaway nation that sought to secede from the rest of the union. These states still have tremendous influence on the rest of the United States as they foster a different form of patriotism that is violent and divisive known as Confederate patriotism or Confederate nationalism. “We must begin to explore Confederate nationalism on its own terms—as the South's commentary upon itself—as its effort to represent southern culture to the world at large, to history, and perhaps most revealingly, to its own people”<sup>4</sup>

The Confederacy of the modern era is a nation within a larger one. Its expressions of a white supremacist world view is more subtle, yet it is a haven for extremist actors. Georgia Congressional Representative Majorie Taylor Green tweeted on February 20th of this year “We need a national divorce. We need to separate by red states and blue states and shrink the federal government.”<sup>5</sup> Green’s stance is actively supporting a Civil war which will only cause more political division in this country. Thus, making the white supremacist ideology of the Confederacy more transparent and visible with the platform of the Republican party.

Slavery was a core tenet of the Confederacy and the economies of the CSA. In the 21st Century, the system and form of slavery is more coded, more hidden. For example, the treatment of prisoners and the prison population in the Southern United States is tied to the system of slavery. The thirteenth amendment to the constitution is as follows “The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution provides that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment for crime** whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”<sup>6</sup> As a result of this more coded system of slavery the prison population in the southern United States is much higher compared to the prison population in the rest of the country (see figure 2)<sup>7</sup>: This graphic clearly shows that the southern United States still, to this day, has the largest population of prisoners. “The Deep South is the epicenter of mass incarceration. The United States incarcerates more people per capita than any other country, with prison populations growing by 86% between 1990 and 2019. For Southern states, prison populations exploded by 127% during that same period.”<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 2**



When I was crafting this series of work there was a time when I had difficulty figuring out how to convey the topic most effectively. Since white supremacy is such a large topic and so woven into the fabric of the South, I decided to transform the Confederate Battle Flag using the state flowers. The point is to show that while it refers to the original Nineteenth Century Battle and has taken on new form in the Twenty-First Century, it is still referencing the same racist ideology of state-sponsored white supremacy.

Designing and fabricating confederate battle flags was one of the most challenging aspects of my project. When I decided on redesigning the Confederate battle flag I decided to use the most common or recognizable Confederate design, “known as the Southern Cross”<sup>11</sup> and their respective state flowers into my work it took some time to figure out how these Confederate flag renditions should look. I wanted to use the state flowers for my Confederate flag redesigns because flowers grow roots which entangle and become very interconnected with the soil beneath the flower. This relationship between the soil and root is thus a metaphor for the deeply rooted white supremacy within the southern United States.



I played around with the design a good amount, before I felt confident that what I produced was strong and visually compelling. I finally decided that these flags should include the state flowers of each state. The flowers and flags have no color, so you as the viewer are just examining the shades of grays, and whites and black. Initially, I wanted the flowers within these re-designs to be black and white so I am not providing beauty, or at the very least, I am minimizing the aesthetics because the subject matter of this project should be taken seriously. I chose to work in shades of gray because people of color in this country commonly experience racial profiling as the police seem to have trouble telling them apart. I decided to put the flowers in black in white so the viewer will pay more attention to the detail of the flower and recognize that they aren't all the same kind of flower, just monotone. **(See Appendix for Photographs of flags).**

*The Modern Confederacy* written summaries of six significant events in the history of White Supremacy in the United States. These summaries clearly illustrate how white supremacy is still very much a big part of our culture and its executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. **(See the Appendix for written summaries.)**

I also include an audio track of people responding to the following questions.

- What do you know about the Confederate States of America
- What do you like, or dislike about the trajectory of the United States?
- What do you feel you can do to support racial equity and justice in your local community? **(See the Appendix for full transcribed audio piece)**

Finally, I included an extensive timeline of quotes which clearly demonstrate a persisting ideology of white supremacy in the United States that continues from the Civil War to modern day. In this timeline I start with Alexander Stephens who is the former Vice-President of the Confederate States of America and end with Marjorie Taylor Green, Congresswoman from Georgia. **(See the Appendix for timeline of white supremacy)**

Transforming the confederate battle flag presented several technical problems as well as fabrication and logistical challenges to solve. I re-designed the confederate battle flag. The technical problems were figuring out the most effective ways to get them made to do the design justice and not be weak. There were also fabrication and logistical challenges. I first considered fabricating patches of embroidered flowers to be adhered to white flags. Patches had to be designed and fabricated abroad. I bought white flags locally, not considering the gauge of the material since the embroidery would not be directly on the flag. Upon delivery the patches were stolen so the backup plan was to have the flowers embroidered directly onto the white flags. This was problematic as the gauge of the white flags was too thin to adequately support the embroidery. Fortunately, the embroiderer was able to make it all work.

The economy of the Confederate States of America was built by, and structured around, slave labor. For the Confederacy to succeed, white supremacy needed to succeed as well. The framework for my project informs my work because it sheds light on the country as it is, deeply flawed, instead of pretending that all is perfectly fine and normal. My work has value because it shows the United States as less than perfect which in turn will help viewers of my work become more critical of the news and what they hear people saying about others. I am interested in this topic because in high school I identified with white supremacists. It not only took a long time to realize that how I was treating others who weren't white was wrong, but it took time to unlearn and change this mindset.

Also, seeing the January 6th attempted Insurrection on the US capitol really made me realize how much the ideology of white supremacy is still very much rooted in the country. I chose this work because white people are often not thinking about their impact or that they could potentially be racist or biased to others. I did this project because I wanted white people to be more aware and for everyone in the country to come together, to cooperate, to be less divided.

Specifically, for me my connection to this subject matter is very personal. What follows are several anecdotes from my life that illustrate how I became interested in this subject matter. I am no longer this person, but it is a big part of my personal history.

On one of the first days of high school in my freshman English class, a student named Carter Moore. was being very loud and obnoxious to another student while the teacher was trying to get our attention. Carter's victim, named Garrik G., was someone who Carter actively resented. I am fairly certain that Carter's main issue was that Garrik had a big nose, or a "jew nose" as Carter put it. I have no idea if Garrik is Jewish, and I'm fairly certain Carter had no idea, and probably didn't care. Carter was making fun of Garrik based on things he had no control over, the size of his nose. I bring this up because Carter holds on to moments when other people make him mad. I have never heard him say that he forgives anyone or that he isn't mad. I feel like a good way to describe Carter is that he is perpetually mad about something. Yet for some reason I decided that I should start hanging out with him.

I remember another time on the bus ride home a person named Luca Fontanini. said "if a black person were to call him a cracker, he would definitely respond back by calling them a n—r." I remember at the time thinking I felt admiration for this. But it was more than that, I felt pride to be white at that moment. I no longer felt equal to people of color. At that moment, and for the rest of my time in high school and into my second year of undergrad, I had a false sense of superiority derived from my skin color. Lake Forest High School, where I attended, had a very high white population, it wasn't uncommon to hear some white person in the hall or in the dining area say something racist. Below is a quote from an article about an African American student from my graduating year at LFHS, retelling his experience.

“Charlie Kiernan says the students, some of them his friends, would point their fingers like a gun at him and yell, “Hands up, don’t shoot.” Kiernan, class of 2017, would say, “Oh, you got me,” and let out a nervous laugh. It became routine. The students were mocking the slogan “Hands up, don’t shoot,” which is associated with the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014. The phrase became a rallying cry for the Black Lives Matter movement.”<sup>8</sup>

I remember hearing someone say “besides all the genocide and all that, Hitler was actually a really good leader.” All this normalization of white supremacy in my high school was partly what led me to take on the identity of a member of the Aryan race. I knew that on my mother’s side I had German ancestors. I knew I had blue eyes and blond hair as well. I saw myself as more than white, as a completely different race. I saw myself as a member of the master race that Adolf Hitler talked about. I remember having recurring dreams of starting a race war in high school. I wanted to finish where Hitler left off.

In one element of my project, I assemble a series of quotes to show the ongoing ideology of white supremacy for part of the capstone project. This aspect of my project opened my eyes to the history and reach of white supremacy in our country. Many of these quotes that were from the mid 20th century and were derived from the following source. [segregation forever leaders of white supremacy](#) This is a large database of influential people who were in direct opposition to desegregation in schools and other public places where segregation was prevalent. (See Bibliography below for details)

My process of unlearning white supremacy started at the beginning of my sophomore year of college [September of 2018] when I had invited Carter [who is mentioned earlier] over to hang out at my dorm room. The whole time he was being racially incentive comments and talking in a very obnoxious manner. After he had left, my dorm-mate’s girlfriend had said your friend is really rude and is super racist. She was the mirror that forced me to look within myself and question if I really want to be associated with this type of person. That was the first time someone really made me stop and think about myself, and as a result I realized I needed to make a change in myself.

After seeing clips and videos of the January 6th insurrection on the U.S. capital I realized just how prevalent and persistent white supremacy is in the modern era. I felt compelled to address this deeply rooted white supremacy originating from the Confederate south. This then inspired the name and theme for my project, *The Modern Confederacy* to show that it never ended in 1865 and we are merely in a new era of the Confederacy.

There are two artists who I feel are working on the same big idea as I was working towards for my capstone project. They are Sonya Clark and Dread Scott. Both have used flags to engage their audience.

Sonya Clark's work titled *Monumental Cloth, the flag we should know* "The Confederate Flag of Truce is a simple dishcloth employed as the South's flag of surrender at the end of the Civil War in 1865. Yet, as Clark shows, propaganda continues to make the more familiar Confederate Battle Flag into the enduring symbol of this history. The exhibition asks: what was surrendered and who had the privilege of surrendering? Did the truce hold?"<sup>9</sup>



Dread Scott's work titled *A Man Was Lynched By Police Yesterday*, is a simple banner, printed with the eponymous words, is an update of an iconic flag that the NAACP flew from their national headquarters window in New York in the nineteen-twenties and thirties the day after someone was lynched. It read simply: "A Man Was Lynched Yesterday" and was part of a their anti-lynching campaign — a national effort to end that scourge."<sup>10</sup> "In 2015, Walter Scott fled for his life, stalked by a policeman who then cold bloodedly shot him in the back. We all saw the video and in response to this murder." Dread Scott.





*The Modern Confederacy* project came to fruition because I was a complacent white male who had no issue with how white people treated people of other races and saw no issue of racial tension for a long time. I was not aware of my advantages as a white-identified male in the world. I have been able to begin the lifetime process of what Black feminist scholar bell hooks declared through her essay “Overcoming White Supremacy.” I now want to help facilitate and create a conversation with those who could be consciously or unconsciously contributing to the ideology of white supremacy. I believe that only when people psychologically *secede* from this dangerous ideology will they see how much it negatively impacts the United States—and the world. It is my hope that I can help others in their process of becoming aware of, critiquing, and correcting their white supremacist attitudes through *The Modern Confederacy*.

## **Appendix**

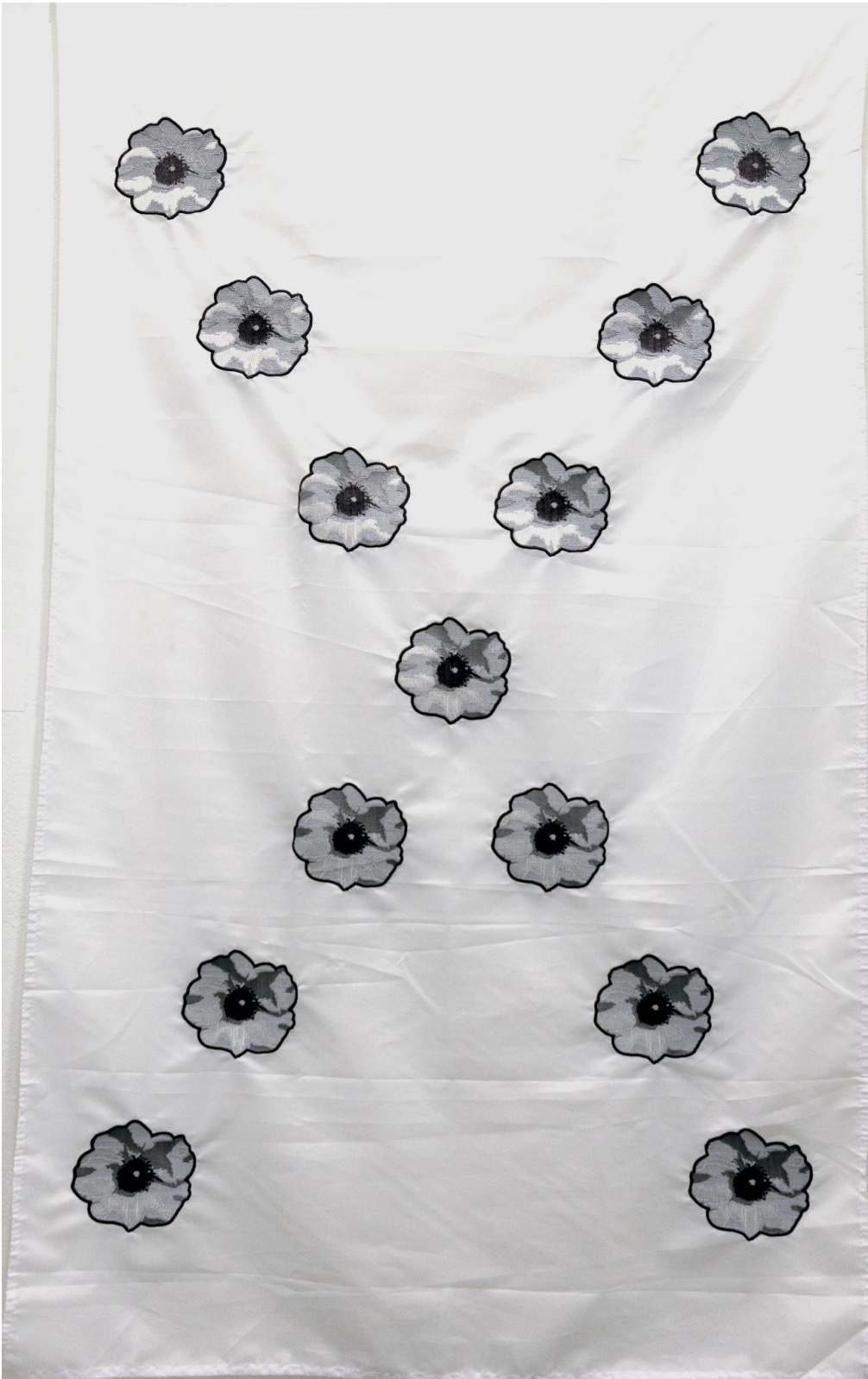
Arkansas - Apple blossom - *Malus domestica*



Florida - Orange blossom - Citrus sinensis



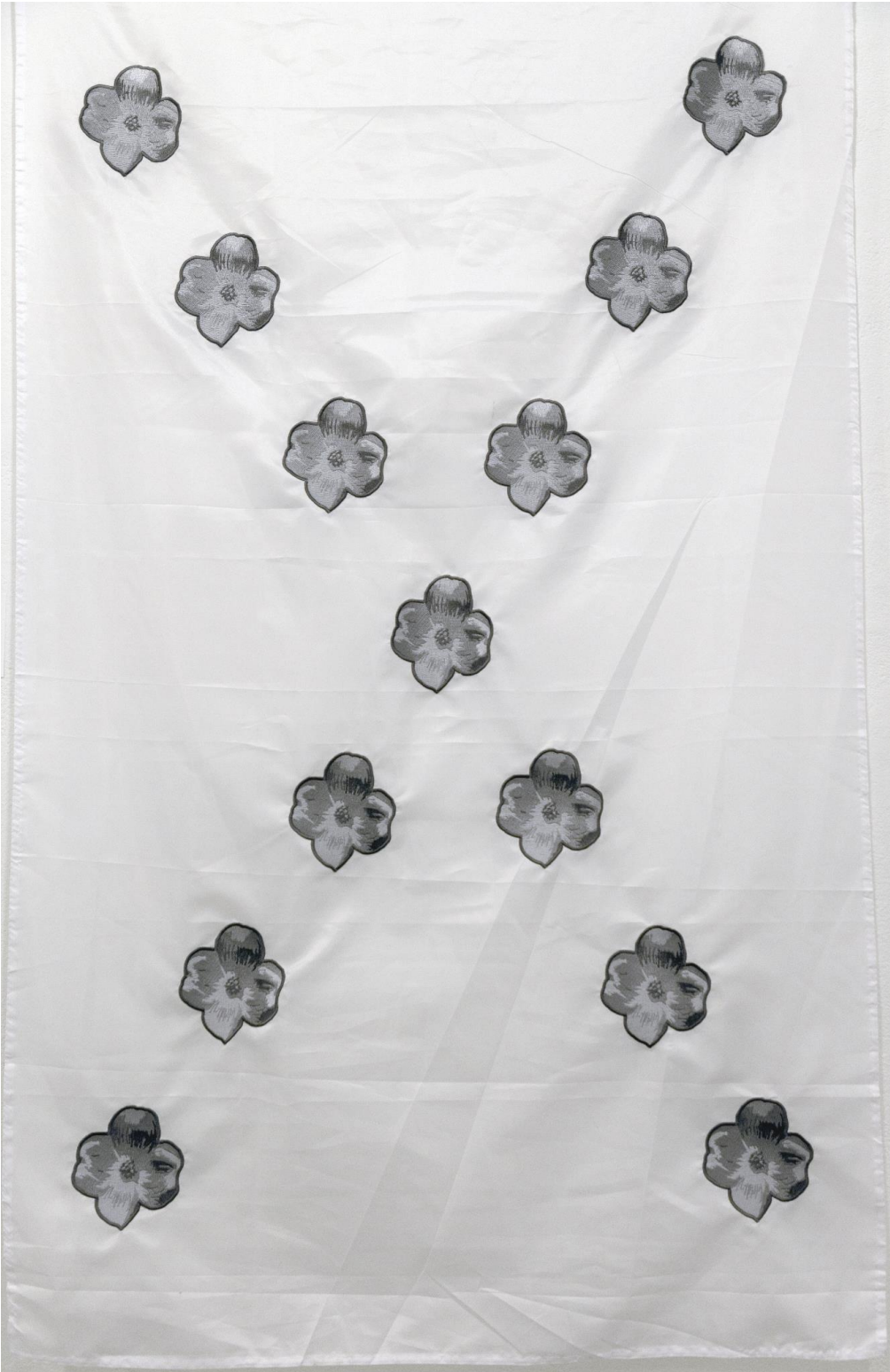
Georgia - Cherokee Rose - *Rosa laevigata*



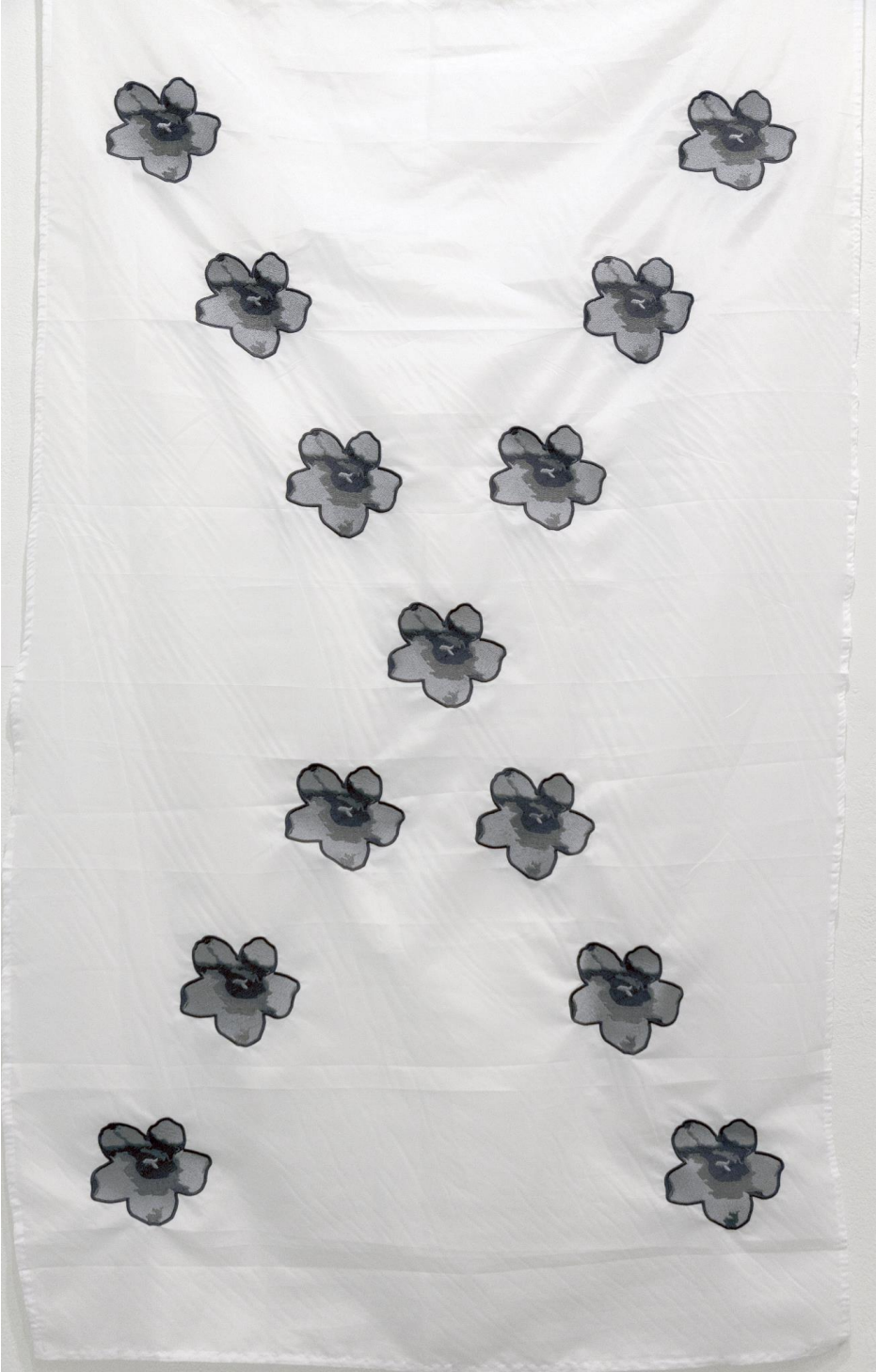
Louisiana - Magnolia - Magnolia grandiflora



**North Carolina - Flowering Dogwood - Cornus Florida**



South Carolina - yellow jasmine - *Gelsemium sempervirens*





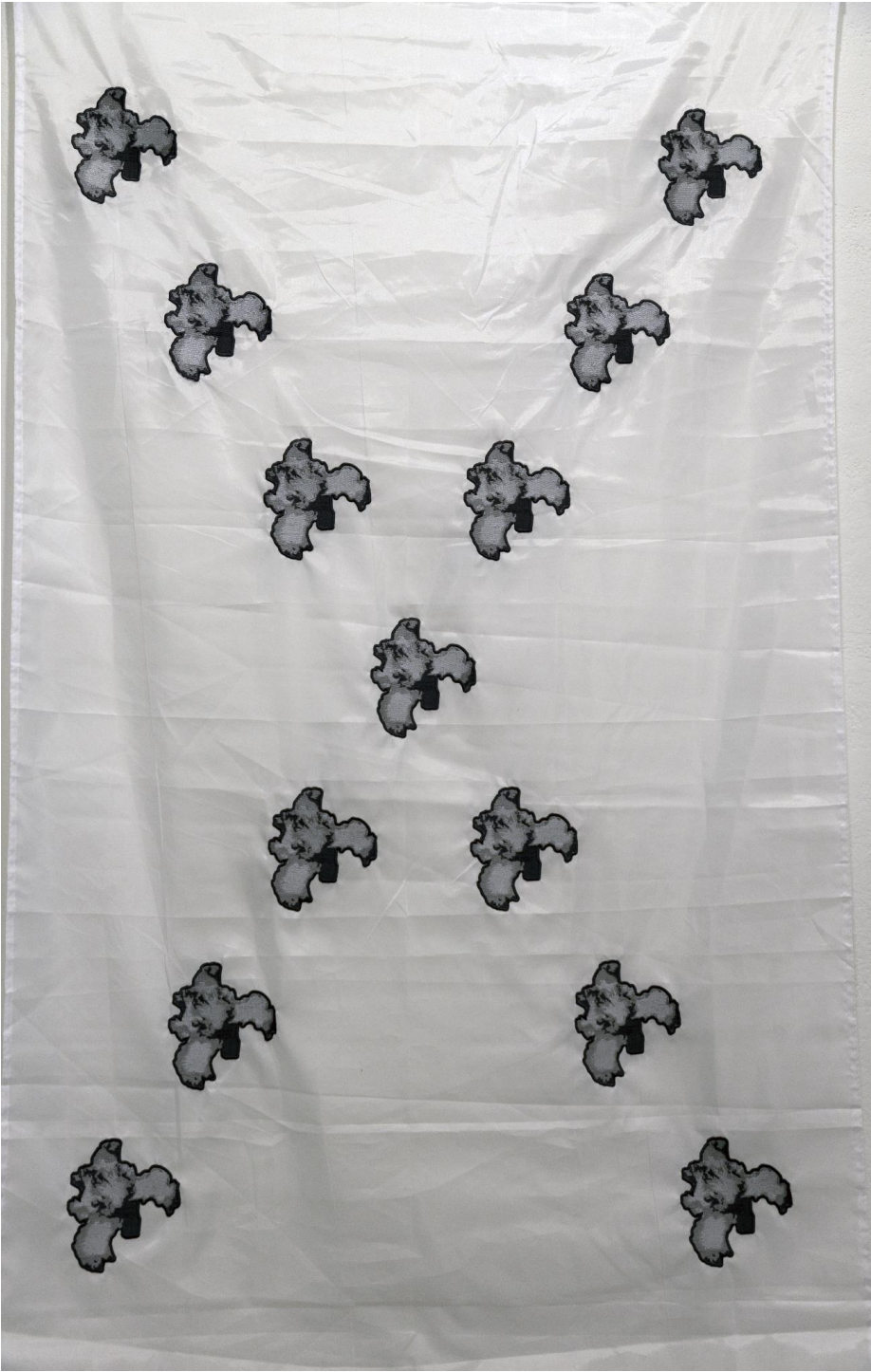
Virginia - Flowering dogwood - cornus florida



Texas - Bluebonnet - *Lupinus texensis*



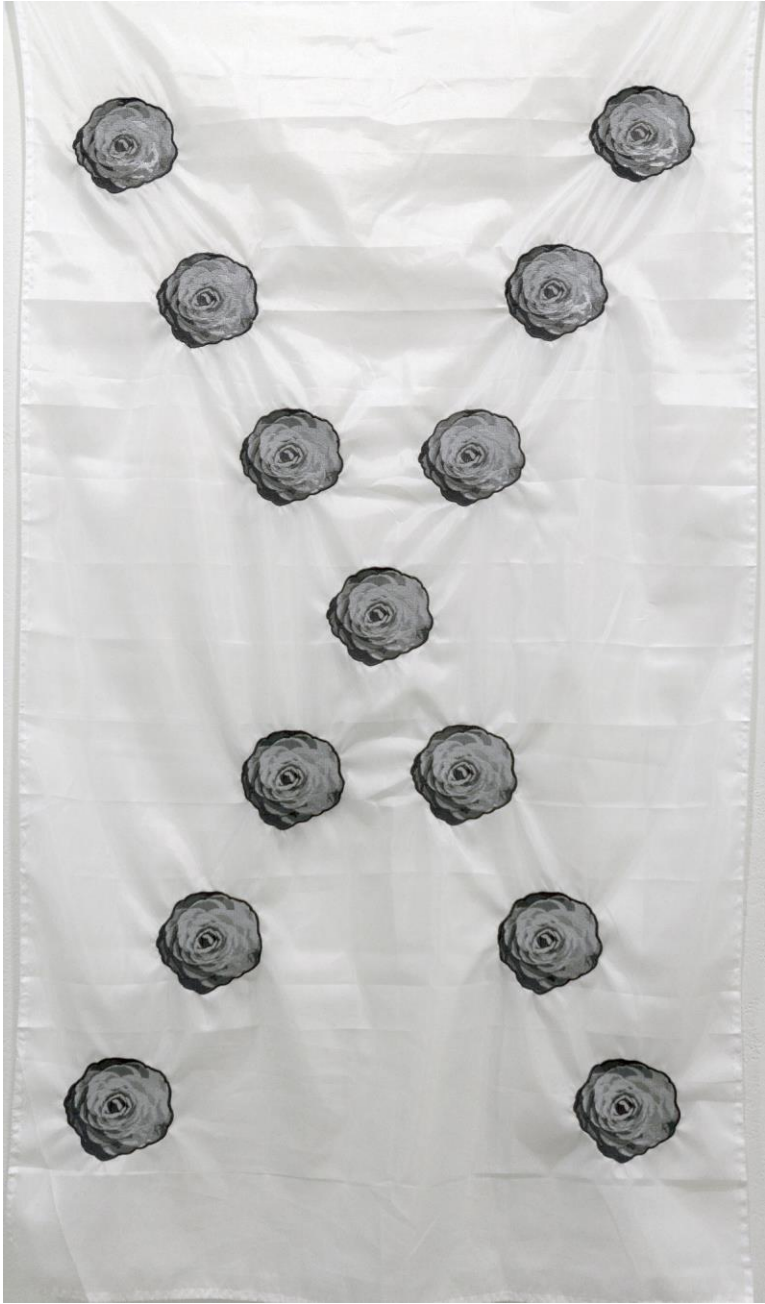
Tennessee - Iris - *Iris germanica*



Mississippi - Magnolia - Magnolia grandiflora



**Alabama - Camellia - Camellia Japonica**



# **Timeline of White Supremacy**

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**“Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition.”**

**Alexander Stephens former VP of the Confederate States of America  
March 21, 1861**

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**“I was then, as I am now, for a white man's government, and for a free, intelligent, white constituency, instead of a Negro aristocracy.”**

**Andrew Johnson, Future President August 8, 1863**

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**“The radicals have told you that the Southern people were your enemies; but believe me this is not so. I was opposed to your freedom. [Laughter.] We were all opposed to your freedom. Now, that’s honest, isn’t it.”**

**John Brown Gordon, former Confederate General  
September 12, 1868**

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**“I believe that the Negroes should be fairly and justly treated, but the Caucasian race discovered, conquered and brought civilization to this country, and I don’t think any other race should be permitted to participate in the politics of this country.”**

**Will Thurmond US District Attorney 1876**

**“God Almighty intended the negro to be the servant of the white man.”**

**James Thomas Heflin, State Representative, US Senator,  
Alabama 1901**

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**“I don’t run from niggers, but I run them from me.”**

**Olin D. Johnston, Governor and US Senator, South Carolina  
June 16, 1938**

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**“The South loves the Negro in his place, but his place is at the back door.”**

**Eugene Talmadge, Governor, Georgia  
September 5, 1942**

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**“The Klan is needed today as never before, and I am anxious to see its rebirth here in West Virginia and in every state in the nation.”**

**Robert Byrd, US Senator, West Virginia  
1946**

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**“A White America or a mongrel America — you must take your choice!”**

**Theodore Bilbo, Governor and US Senator, Mississippi  
August 21, 1947**

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**“The social, political, economic, and religious preferences of the Negro remain close to the caterpillar and the cockroach.”**

**Thomas Pickens Brady, future Supreme Court Justice, and State Supreme Court Justice, Mississippi May 27, 1954**

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**“I have worked Negroes on the plantation for years and have never had a bit of trouble with any of them. I know what is best for them... Our sole purpose is to maintain segregation. That’s what we intend to do.”**

**Sam Engelhardt, Senator, State Highway Director, Alabama  
July 25, 1956**

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**“If we can organize the Southern states for massive resistance to this order... the rest of the country will realize that racial integration is not going to be accepted in the South.”**

**Harry F. Byrd, Governor and US Senator, Virginia  
February 24, 1956**

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**“I will never open the public schools as integrated institutions.”  
Orval Faubus, Governor, Arkansas October 3, 1958**

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**“I have fought integration with all the talent and vigor I possess.”**

**Jack Gremillion, Attorney General, Louisiana  
August 20, 1958**

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**“Don’t wait for your daughters to be raped by these Congolese. Don’t wait until the burr-heads are forced into your schools. Do something about it now.”**

**Leander Perez, Judge and District Attorney, Louisiana  
December 1, 1960**

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**“God never meant for America to be a melting pot to rub out the line between the nations. That was not God’s purpose for this nation.”**

**Bob Jones Sr., American Evangelist, University Administrator  
April 17, 1960**

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**“I'll tell you what's at the bottom of it. If you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll empty his pockets for you.”**

**Lyndon B. Johnson, President, 1960**

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**“I repeat to you tonight: no school in our state will be integrated while I am your governor. There is no case in history where the Caucasian race has survived social integration. We will not drink from the cup of genocide.”**

**Ross Barnett, Governor, Mississippi 1960-64**

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**“Today I have stood, where once Jefferson Davis stood, and took an oath to my people. It is very appropriate then that from this Cradle of the Confederacy, . and I say . . . segregation today . . . segregation tomorrow . . . segregation forever.”**

**George Wallace, Governor, Alabama, January 14, 1963**

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**“It is a sad spectacle, to say the least, and it leads one to the inevitable conclusion that up to now the Negro race has not shown itself capable of effective self-government.”**

**Allan Ellender, US Senator, Louisiana  
July 7, 1963**

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**“White people don’t need a law against rape, but if you fill this room up with your normal black bucks, you would, because niggers are basically primitive animals.”**

**David Duke, State Representative, Louisiana,  
Former Grand Wizard of the KKK  
April 23, 1975**

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**“I do not believe the two societies should mix.”**

**William Rainach, State Legislator, Louisiana  
January 27, 1978**

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**“The traditional population of North Carolina and the United States is more or less stable. It's not growing. The African American population is roughly growing but the Hispanic population and the other immigrant populations are growing in significant numbers.”**

**Thom Tillis, US Senator, North Carolina, June 18, 2014**

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**“When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best ... They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.”**

**Donald Trump, Presidential Candidate  
June 16, 2015**

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**“I have always believed marriage is between one man and one woman and I will continue to work to ensure our religious beliefs are protected and people of faith are not punished for their beliefs.”**

**Marsha Blackburn, US Senator, Tennessee  
June 26, 2015**

**“America does not want Muslims coming into our country. That is why we fear this executive order may do more to help terrorist recruitment than improve our security.”**

**Lindsey Graham, US Senator, South Carolina  
Jan 31, 2017**

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**“You know, they want to put their hand on the Quran and be sworn in? No, you have to be sworn in on the Bible. But we have an Islamic invasion into our government offices.”**

**Marjorie Taylor Greene, Candidate for US Congress, Georgia  
Late 2017 - early 2019**

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**“Yeah, my heart is with civic nationalism, but my head is with racial nationalism. Because I think that’s the way things are going I think the country is precipitating out on racial lines.”**

**Peter Brimelow, White Nationalist journalist  
February 23, 2018**

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**“Social media companies, which owe their very existence to freedom of expression, now threaten to block the accounts of American politicians and publications here at home -- while eagerly complying with the demands of totalitarian, racist regimes abroad.”**

**Marco Rubio, US Senator, Florida  
July 23, 2020**

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**"This is a pivotal moment, those who aren't with us are against us ... history will be unforgiving."**

**Brian Babin, GOP Representative, Texas  
January 3, 2021**

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**"Today is 1776."  
[posted on January 6th]**

**Lauren Boebert, GOP Representative, Colorado  
January 6, 2021**

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**"If the Democrats move forward on a January 6 Commission without Republican support, the Americans will see their 'findings' for what they are: a partisan hit job on President Trump."**

**Steven Palazzo, Congressman, Mississippi  
May 21, 2021**

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**"Critical race theory is bigoted, it is a lie, and it is every bit as racist as the Klansmen in white sheets."**

**Ted Cruz, US Senator, Texas  
June 18, 2021**

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**"The concern is misplaced, because if you look at the statistics, African American voters are voting in just as high a percentage as Americans."**

**Mitch McConnell, US Senator, Kentucky  
January 20, 2022**

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**You shouldn't be mad about how they are defining your culture.  
You should be furious about the fact they are trying to replace it."**

**Vincent James, far right YouTuber, AFPAC 3 Conference  
February 25, 2022**

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**"2021 began with the historic Patriot Day, as I call it." "Just in case they are listening, this is for the FBI, the CIA...I'll reiterate it just for you. January 6 was awesome...I was proud to be an American on January 6... It was nice to see the people occupy the Capitol for once."**

**Nick Fuentes, white supremacist, political commentator, and live streamer  
February 25, 2022**

**"White people-built America with the help of God...If Black people are smart enough to build a country, why don't they build Africa?"**

**Jesse Lee Peterson, conservative radio host, pastor and broadcaster  
February 25, 2022**

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**"We need a national divorce. We need to separate by red states and blue states and shrink the federal government."**

**Marjorie Taylor Green, US Congresswoman, Georgia  
February 20, 2023**

## Transcription of Audio Interviews

### What do you know about the Confederate States of America?

**First response:** These states succeed from the union to pursue a way of life. That insured profits based on slave labor and discrimination.

**Second response:** I'm going to be brutally honest and admit that I recall really nothing about the Confederate States of America.

**Third response:** Treasonous breakaway nation in the mid 1800's that broke away from the United States of America under what they rationalized as states rights, but it was in order to maintain and hold slaves. In 1861 South Carolina was the first state to secede from the union. Unfortunately, its influence is still relevant and present in the United States today even after 150 years of slavery being abolished. It was the bloodiest war in American history and it was fought over slavery.

**Fourth response:** The south seceded from union for a desire to sustain slavery. The land that was promised to the former slaves was in fact given to the slave owners.

**Fifth response:** Eleven states seceded from the union, The issue as they framed states' rights which was really about slavery, they veiled their slavery needs when they declared they didn't want the federal government to tell them what to do. The states' rights issue boiled over into a civil war, to preserve their economic advancements through slavery.

**Sixth response:** They committed treason against the United States, they did it primarily to maintain slave labor.

**Seventh response:** We were taught the civil war was fought because the south didn't want to free their slaves. We were taught about Sherman burning Atlanta, about the battle of Gettysburg, the emancipation proclamation, and the Arlington cemetery that sits on Robert E Lee's estate.

**Eighth response:** The foundation of ignorance, fear, hate, tremendous denial. Shamed and blamed black people for their economic collapse. I often have thought, why in god's name when they wanted to secede from the union did President Lincoln fight so hard to keep them because really their position has not changed the level of ignorance and fear is still persistent around this issue especially in the southern region of the country. Their commitment to this is exceptionally still strong and that's evidenced by their poor performance in education. They have been ranked consistently in the bottom half for their education system in the country. Until they improve the truth about their history they will always remain in that awful place of ignorance, fear and hate.

**Ninth response:** The white supremacists in the south took up the Confederate flag during the Civil rights movement. So, I do not have any positive connotations with the Confederate states of America.

**Tenth response:** My knowledge is we beat the south. Though the specifics I don't recall learning in school.

**Eleventh response:** It was a bunch of states that didn't agree with Lincoln's program in moving the country forward. Decided they would best benefit by keeping things in place. Making sure that slavery stayed just the way that it was.

### **What do you like, or dislike about the trajectory of the United States?**

**First response:** What I dislike about the U.S is that Make America great again seems to be a vow towards pro- white factions and the empathy in regard for all human life seems to be viewed as a weakness or a negative by a fairly sizable segment of the population. Who would prefer to return actually to the Confederate way of life.

**Second response:** I am very concerned as to how we are so divided as a nation. Republicans versus democrats, science versus fiction. I think we have made some progress. With regard to racial equity at least in terms of after the George Floyd Murder. People who aren't directly affected by racism have become more aware of the need to improve racial equity. Companies have set aside like 50 billion dollars for racial justice training in the corporations. So there's an awakening but I still don't feel it's enough. Far too many people who aren't directly affected by racism are far too complacent about trying to make things right and equitable.

**Third response:** What I like, especially when it comes to this topic is the amount of relevance and attention that these issues of social justice and the racial inequity that exist in this country. There are a lot of people banding together to try and make this change. The thing that I dislike about this country is that there are still people stuck in their ways, it seems like they are the loudest group. As a result these people gain attention for being loud. You see this on the news people with the most outlandish points of view gain the most attention. Since media flows so freely, inaccuracies and falsehoods are able to gain a lot more traction and spread like wildfire. The people in power, unfortunately, don't want to make change. They will just do what they have to to get their votes to stay in power.

**Fourth response:** black people have been saying for years that they have been mistreated by police and with the advent of body cameras I think the evidence is there to prove that that has always been true. Even with these body cam evidence crimes that are committed are still not pursued aggressively, if at all. I think the defunding of the police mantra has become politicized to act as a scare tactic to scare white people to not engage in the conversation. I think the George Floyd murder and the subsequent Black Lives Matter protests were positive because they [the protests] were done peacefully. With the exception of white supremacist who created violence at these protests to try and make it look like the Black Lives Matter movement is violent. I think that the gun lobby is too strong, and I think it's a bad thing. I think that the polarization of politics is very jarring, it is very disturbing how many people are still willing to vote for openly racist individuals.

**Fifth response:** I am very concerned about the political divide and the tribalism that has developed in this country. It seems to me that people can't talk about politics without getting into a fight. The last few years has led to an unveiling of racism, a misogynistic, conservative approach towards culture probably was always there but was allowed to be free because of the words and actions of our leaders. What I like about this country, I don't think you can work on all these problems until they are out in the open.

**Sixth response:** On days like Jan. 6th, I get very discouraged, but our nation was able to withstand that and the broader assault of democracy. I think there are some days and some issue where there has been tremendous progress and others where it is hard to see progress has been made in the last fifty years or even back to the civil war. I'm not a person of color. I haven't lived their life. It's hard for me to say or judge as a white male in my late 50s with the life I have led. I have come to appreciate or understand or be more sympathetic to the cause of people of color in this country as I've grown older.



**Seventh response:** Are things worse than when I was young? I don't know, I know we hear about everything now. Chris Kristof, my hero writer for the New York Times says things are better especially for the children in Africa. I was very saddened when policemen kicked a young black man to death.

**Eighth response:** I do like that there has been substantial growth of new ideas, new patterns of behavior growth, I do like the openings of ideas, what I don't like is that it is 2023, and the civil war ended in 1865. The fight for justice, the fight for civil rights has been too long and we as a society have had better resources that we could have put towards this and it could have been resolved by working together and recognizing we are so much more similar than we are different.

**Ninth response:** I am not happy with the trajectory of the country at all. Quite frankly, it's disgusting and disheartening and the lack of civility, the erosion of the rights of people, there is no fact checking. You can't have a discussion with anybody anymore about facts. I think having Trump as president allowed people to let out their inner ugliness. It's an embarrassing condition that our country is in. The erosion of civil rights, the erosion of voting rights, the erosion of a woman to have control of her own body.

**Tenth response:** I do like where the country is going. The younger generation is paving the way for new ideas. As far as not liking where the country is going, the old ideals are still around and still being taught. Still being force fed. There are ones who are radical who homeschool their children and force feed them these antiquated ideas and false conspiracies. But for me, as a white gay man, I've noticed the hypocrisy and the gay culture of racism and transphobia. A lot of people tend to forget in the stonewall who threw the first brick or stone. Who was a wonderful transgender woman of color. Even the movie stonewall, was very very highly whitewashed.

**Eleventh response:** In 2023 the trajectory of the country is um, there is an imbalance-balance in my mind, I have never seen it so divided. People are very vocal about what they like and doubly vocal about what they don't like. But nobody is trying to find a middle ground. There was a time I believe 20 years ago I was seeing some improvement, togetherness, and peace.

## **What can you do to advance equity and racial justice in your local community?**

**First response:** Well first I can educate myself, which I have been trying to do, through a reading list I have. Secondly, I am passionate about food insecurity, that's a cause that I devote time and money towards. Third, I would like to learn other things I could do because I feel a little bit limited in my current situation.

**Second response:** There are things I try to do like give money to ACLU, other organizations, vote for candidates who are trying to make a difference in the world and bring equity and equality to their community. Make your voice heard when you see something that's not right speak out.

**Third response:** stick up for people when I see injustice happening, contribute to vote on racial justice issues, I can research programs and different organizations that are made to help promote racial justice.

**Fourth response:** Voting is a big deal, vote for politicians that are willing to make changes. As a public we really need to work hard to hold our elected officials accountable. The topic is a difficult topic to have for white people, for they often don't know what to say.

**Fifth response:** "I think it all begins with children. my hope and my belief is if you teach them that these initiatives will help the next generation of Americans with a more inclusive mindset and a better understanding of people who are different and cultures that are different and embrace those differences. As opposed to work to undermine the differences between us and drive wedges between people and communities."

**Sixth response:** Treat others the way you want to be treated. Treat people with respect. We need to get better at agreeing to disagree.

**Seventh Response:** The best thing for civil rights is the camera on the phone, atrocities do not go unnoticed, As for myself, age has its limits. I am more of a check writer supporting candidates who care for people than an activist.

**Eighth response:** Continue to educate myself, do a lot more listening than talking. There has been so much shame and blame towards black people. There is this pervasive theory that black people have done this to themselves, that they chose to be on the fringes of society.

**Ninth response:** I try to do things with youth, I am a preschool teacher. We have a learning library. We try to make sure the kids have access to books that show a lot of diversity of cultures of families, of holidays, of skin colors. We make sure that our classrooms are filled with diversity and the kids can express themselves how they want. We try hard not to enforce gender roles onto kids.

**Tenth response:** I feel it all starts with education. Educate yourself, educate your loved ones, and educate those around you. I also believe you should get involved in organizations that align with your ideas. If you don't wish to get involved in organizations in person, there are always ways to work behind the scenes to be an ally. Showing support through donations is one way. I however take two routes. Sometimes, I am on the frontline and working with organizations and sometimes I am the ally behind the scenes who helps educate those around me. This is what works for me.

**Eleventh response:** I started the national James Baldwin Literary Society, right here in Baltimore. Who is one of my heroes, he is one the brightest essayists of the 20th century. He told it like it was and spoke to the truth of the nation. White people got to get shit together. Too many people have benefitted from not having that discussion. “There is gonna be some time when the bill comes due”. Quoting James Baldwin, and nobody wants to talk about that. I think about bridging that racial divide, as a black man in America and doubly so as a black gay man in America.

## THE CORNERSTONE SPEECH IMPACT

### DATE(S) :

March 21, 1861

### WHO WAS INVOLVED:

Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the  
Confederacy WHERE DID THIS OCCUR:

Savannah, Georgia

### SUMMARY OF EVENT:

The Cornerstone Speech was given by Alexander Stephens, the Vice President of the Confederacy, as justification for the confederate states seceding from the union and to highlight the racial superiority that was fundamental to their governing system. The speech was called 'Cornerstone' because it laid out the foundation of the Confederate ideology as white supremacy. Other arguments for confederate secession focused on states rights and often avoided directly referencing the issue of slavery and white supremacy, but Stephens was blunt and honest in his argument. Less than a month after the Cornerstone speech was given the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter and the Civil War

### ANALYSIS & IMPLICATIONS:

The lasting impact of Alexander Stephens' Cornerstone Speech is illustrated in how it opened the door and paved the way for the persistence of white supremacist ideologies that continue to this day. Today modern Republicans are using the same thinly veiled argument laid out by pre-civil war Democrats that states should be able to make their own decisions without federal government involvement. When the veil is pulled back, modern Republicans are simply recycling the same arguments as Alexander Stephens in the Cornerstone speech to foster the ongoing persistence of the confederate white supremacist ideology.

The following sentence from the Cornerstone Speech effectively conveys the racist ideology that was foundational to the Confederate states; "Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests, upon the great truth.

that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition." It is this same perspective veiled in the states' rights argument that supports many of the positions of the far right, such as the use of modern-day police tactics like racial profiling, insurrectionist activity, and anti-immigration legislation.

Modern-day policing in the United States reflects the confederate ideology as outlined in the Cornerstone Speech, and law enforcement has advanced white supremacist ideology right by its side. The following excerpt from the 13th Amendment, paying attention to the underlined text, has been used as justification for questionable practices by law enforcement. "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." This language helps to foster a culture where police are much more likely to be suspicious that a black person committed a crime than a white person. Police are groomed to look at black people as criminals—or criminals to be—but will look at white people as innocents until proven guilty. Using the 13th amendment as justification, police can be viewed as modern-day slave catchers.

Similarly, when the media is covering a story about a police officer killing an unarmed black male, they often sidestep addressing the white supremacy being upheld by the police officer and choose to justify the police officer's decision instead of criticizing them for their actions.

Just as it is with policing, this is done by spinning the narrative that black males are criminals by saying things like "the victim had a record" or "the victim was fighting with the police officer."

The insurrection attempt at the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021, illustrates how the white supremacist ideologies of the Confederacy remain strong today. The crowds waved Confederate battle flags and other white supremacist iconography, clearly demonstrating how Confederate ideologies still exist. The supporters of the Confederacy have just been waiting for a moment when their president signaled it was appropriate to advance their cause. There are many hate groups, including white nationalist, white supremacist and Neo-Confederate groups in the 21st century. So, the racist sentiments that were expressed during the civil war have never gone away.

From the Militia Act of 1792.

"President of the United States, to call forth such number of the militia of the state or states most convenient to the place of danger or scene of action as he may judge necessary to repel such invasion, and to issue his orders for that purpose, to such officer or officers of the militia as he shall think proper; and in case of an insurrection in any state, against the government thereof, it shall be lawful for the President of the United States, on application of the legislature of such state, or of the executive (when the legislature cannot be convened) to call forth such number of the militia of any other state or states, as may be applied for, or as he may judge sufficient to suppress such insurrection."

Just as in the confederacy rejected the laws of the union, recent history, and the insurrection specifically, suggests that the modern republican right doesn't always think the laws apply to them.

For example, none of the republican politicians who supported and helped fuel the insurrection were tried. Is it possible that if the alt-right were to completely hijack congress that a Republican Speaker of the House, or someone else with similar power, could use a warped version of the Militia act of 1792 to call forth white supremacist militias to fight on their behalf and "defend their way of life," or attack what they do not agree with?

**PICTURES/ILLUSTRATIONS :**



**Alexander Stephens Vice President of the Confederacy<sup>15</sup>**

# MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE AND THE MODERN CONFEDERACY

## DATE(S) :

Various quotes and statements between 2017 - 2023

## WHO WAS INVOLVED:

Marjorie Taylor Greene (MTG) ,  
GOP Congressional Representative since 2021

## WHERE DID THIS OCCUR:

Mostly taken from online social media posts

## SUMMARY OF EVENT:

Marjorie Taylor Greene is considered an extreme right-wing politician who expresses her dis-satisfaction with the United States online. She frequently posts her thoughts and views for her many followers on social media. She shares her point of view on a variety of right leaning topics, often pushing the boundaries of how far right it is possible to go. Her political views are becoming much more common among far right leaning politicians.

## ANALYSIS & IMPLICATIONS:

Marjorie Taylor Greene (MTG) is an extreme right-wing politician. Her own well documented statements and comments parallel the overall rise in extremism in the republican party. Her views have helped usher in a new era of far-right domestic terrorism. Her own words, highlighted below, clearly show the pattern of the new normal in the far right. In one of her more recent statements made in February 2023, MTG tweeted the following.

*"We need a national divorce. We need to separate by red and blue states and shrink the federal government" (Twitter 2/20/23)*

This is very concerning because it is consistent with the



sentiments of the Confederate ideology, to secede from the union and establish a separate, independently governing body. This is unsettling, because she was a passionate supporter of the insurrection attempt on January 6, 2021.

If MTG is actually advocating for "a national divorce" then she is directly promoting civil war. The separation of red and blue states was exactly what the Confederate States of America wanted. And now through her words MTG helps the dream of the Confederate States of America to live on through the actions of politicians, their policies, and far right extremist organizations. In addition, she has made her views clear on social media about Muslim people being elected and choosing to be sworn in on the Quran.

*"There is an Islamic invasion into our government offices right now...We have that Woman out of Minnesota [Ilhan Omar] Now she's going into congress and she's gotta wear a head covering? You know, they want to put their hand on the Quran and be sworn in? No, you have to be sworn in on the Bible. But we have an Islamic invasion into our government offices Now yes, we have I'll say this we have freedom of religion in this country . . . anyone who is a Muslim who believes in sharia law does not belong in our government. . . "* She is demonstrating ignorance and intolerance for the beliefs of others. Though she acknowledges that the U.S has freedom of religion, she doesn't acknowledge that Muslims have the right to be sworn in on the Quran. She is really coming through here as a Christian Nationalist which is very dangerous.

The ideology that she is displaying is called Christian Identity and it is defined as follows.

*"Christian Identity is a religious sect and one of the longstanding segments of the white supremacist movement in the United States. It emerged in its modern form in the 1960s. Its beliefs center on a racist and antisemitic variation of British-Israelism or Anglo-Israelism, which teaches that people of European ancestry are actually descended from the so-called "Lost Tribes" of ancient Israel and are thus the chosen people of God."*

In addition to being upset that Ilhan Omar was sworn in on the Quran, the fact that MTG says that "anyone who is a Muslim who

believes in sharia law does not belong in our government" is incredibly ironic.

Sharia Law is a major component of the Islamic faith. Some majority Muslim countries adopt a much more extreme and restrictive version of Islam and Sharia Law, much like how MTG wants to take over the U.S with Christian Nationalism. MTG has an issue with anyone who isn't Christian.

In the following quote MTG is defending white males for not being racist. This further supports the conclusion that she is so extreme in her beliefs she doesn't care about the negative results.

*"I'm going to stand up for white males here. The most mistreated group of people in the United States today are white males. They are blamed for everything they're the scapegoat. Everything bad in America is because of White men. That's what you're told.*

*That's what the media wants to tell you. That's what the democrats want to tell you to blame everything on white men because white men are bad and white men are racist and white men want to hold everyone down.*

*You know, it's not fair. . . it is not fair that white men are treated that way. You want to know why? Because it's not true." Sure, it is unfair to call a whole group of people racist. But white people have for so long reaped the benefits of a post slavery America and haven't changed how they look at the world. MTG in the above quote is making it seem like white men are the victims she says they are*

"The most mistreated group of people in the United States" is very concerning because MTG is claiming that white people and their lives are more oppressed than people of color.

The day after the Unite the Right rally (a white supremacist organization) in Charlottesville, Virginia, on approximately August 13, 2017, MTG claims that the neo confederates and extreme right groups are just as bad as Antifa and Black Lives Matter.

*"Let's be truthful about Charlottesville [referencing the*

*unite the right rally, which was a white supremacist rally], You have your extreme right groups, and you also have your extreme left groups, you have your white supremacists, white nationalists, Neo-Confederates, K.K.K, and the Neo-Nazis, and we also had Antifa and Black Lives Matters'. So we had all the idiots there"*

In the above quote MTG clearly illustrates her hypocrisy and ignorance. She mentioned that the extreme right are "idiots" yet she also defends "[racist] white men" and she is a strong advocate of the insurrection attempt. All of this suggests she actually agrees with white supremacist groups and anything in opposition to the far-right she will feel threatened by. For complete clarity and to illustrate her uninformed perspective, the mission statements of Black Lives Matter and Antifa are provided below, along with the preamble to the Confederate constitution.

What follows is the official vision statement of the Black Lives Matter movement:

*"Black Lives Matter's vision is to work for a world where black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise. This means that in the long term, their goal is to change the world and gain respect for black people, so they stop being killed due to their skin color. In other words, they seek to end with racist violence."*

Antifa (Anti-fascist) was established to protest and resist all forms of radical and fascist governing bodies. In the United States, the area of focus is to fight against has white supremacy.

Preamble to the Confederate constitution.

*"We, the people of the Confederate States, each State acting in its sovereign and independent character, in order to form a permanent federal government, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity – invoking the favor and guidance of Almighty God – do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Confederate States of America."*

MTG is not someone who upholds or even values the United States, but instead upholds the values of the Confederacy as

laid out in the preamble to the constitution of the Confederate States of America. She has expressed on several occasions her desire to have a Christian nationalist America. Yes, the country was founded by Protestants, but our constitution guarantees freedom of religion which MTG doesn't seem to grasp. Through her various statements and actions, she does not support a diverse country of different ethnicity and religion. What MTG wants for the United States, but hasn't explicitly said, is a white Christian ethnostate.

The following quote clarifies MTG's position on the insurrection on January 6. Her statement about the insurrection is very disturbing for someone who is currently holding a seat in congress. These and statements about other events are a major source of fuel for the right becoming more and more extreme.

*"Then January 6 happens, and next thing you know, I organized the whole thing along with Steve Bannon here. And I gotta tell you something: If Steve Bannon and I had organized that, we would have won. Not to mention, it would have been armed."*

In a Tweet about Confederate monuments MTG mistakenly said.

*"Tonight, I stopped at the Wilder Monument in Chickamauga, GA, which honors the Confederate soldiers of the Wilder Brigade. I will always defend our nation's history!"*

In truth the monument she was referring to honors Union soldiers. This Tweet not only illustrates her ignorance of history but also clearly illustrates how openly she declares her political views as having a strong confederate leaning bias. By making this Tweet she is clearly defending the confederacy. Apparently, she claimed it was by mistake, and deleted it once she was called out. But the fact that she had it in her mind to honor those that fought to defend slavery is just wrong. This is consistent with when just last month (Feb 21) MTG uploaded a whole thread on Twitter about why the red and blue states should have a national divorce, as discussed above. Overall, MTG is an extremely conservative politician with a large social media following who has been ushering in the modern confederacy.

PICTURES/ILLUSTRATION IDENTIFY AND CITE THE SOURCE OF THE IMAGE



Marjorie Taylor Green holds a gun in a political ad.<sup>18</sup>

# THE ELAINE MASSACRE

## DATE(S) :

September 30, 1919

## WHO WAS INVOLVED:

Sharecroppers and the wealthy plantation owners

## WHERE DID THIS OCCUR:

Elaine, Arkansas

## SUMMARY OF EVENT:

The Elaine Massacre began on September 30, 1919, at a meeting of approximately 100 black sharecroppers at a church in the town of Hoop Spur, three miles north of Elaine, Arkansas. The purpose of the meeting was to determine how to get better pay for their cotton crops from white plantation owners. World War I had driven up the price for cotton due to the war effort. But black sharecroppers felt they were not getting their fair share of the profits from the white landowners. Sharecroppers had recently unionized and obtained help from a white lawyer to represent them, hoping to be taken seriously. Knowing that tensions were high the black sharecroppers had black armed guards outside of the church for protection. White landowners and law enforcement gathered outside the church, and late at night shots were fired into the church. A gunfight ensued. A white railroad security guard was killed, and a white deputy sheriff was wounded. In response, the Governor called up 500 soldiers from nearby Camp Pike to "round up the heavily armed negroes." Soldiers and vigilantes indiscriminately shot and killed any who refused to surrender immediately. The massacre lasted for four days from September 30th to October 2nd, during which an estimated 200+ African Americans were killed.

## ANALYSIS & IMPLICATIONS:

Violence originated in Elaine, Arkansas, and was in direct response to the mistreatment of black sharecroppers by wealthy landowners. Sharecroppers were paid low wages that paralleled that of slave labor. In hindsight, the massacre could have been avoided if the plantation owners had paid sharecroppers a fair wage that reflected the increased value of the cotton crop. Instead, white plantation owners decided to keep the increases for themselves and continue the subjugation of the plantation system. Taking a broader view, the focus of the violence across much of the nation during the Red Summer was equally disgusting

but a little different, less landowner sharecropper based. More so in the north where the violence had its roots in white resentment toward black servicemen returning from World War I and black migration from the south to escape poverty, Jim Crow laws, and violence from the KKK and others. Among other issues, whites blame blacks for an economic slump and labor unrest. Whites were fearful that black men trained by the military and have received better treatment in Europe would be reluctant to resubmit themselves to the treatment received previously by employers. The magnitude of the migration of blacks to the northern cities was enormous, "The Great Migration was one of the largest movements of people in United States history. Approximately six million Black people moved from the American South to Northern, Midwestern, and Western states roughly from the 1910s until the 1970s."

The Elaine Massacre and the Red Summer set the stage for events 100 years later at the insurrection of January 6, 2021. Just as racial division, economic inequity, and a global pandemic were at the root of the Red Summer, so too these were at the core of the insurrection. "Christopher Haley, a historian, writer, filmmaker, and producer of the movie 'Unmarked: African American Cemeteries' said there is a correlation between the Jan. 6, 2021 storming of the U.S. Capitol and the events that led to Red Summer. "I think the correlation is that the people rioting were white supremacists, Nazis, or anti-Semitic. They carried Confederate flags. That certainly links itself to those persons during Red Summer who hated the progress of African Americans and politicians. It would be stretching it to say there is no correlation."<sup>3</sup>

### Pictures/Illustrations



African American sharecroppers Elaine, Arkansas<sup>17</sup>

## THE MASSIVE RESISTANCE CAMPAIGN

### DATE(S) :

Started on February 25 1954 and ended in 1968

### WHO WAS INVOLVED:

Initiated by Senator Harry Byrd, but involved Governors, senators and congressmen from the former confederate states.

### WHERE DID THIS OCCUR:

Organization of the movement originated in Richmond Virginia but involved southern states throughout the former Confederacy.

### SUMMARY OF EVENT:

The Massive Resistance campaign was started in Richmond Virginia by senator Harry Byrd. Byrd was a Virginia senator from 1933-1965 and Governor from 1926-1930. Byrd organized the Governors of the former confederate south to meet in Richmond, Virginia, the former capital of the confederacy. In 1954 Senator Bryd promoted the Southern Manifesto to try and maintain segregation. He convinced "101 out of the 128 congressmen representing the old Confederacy to sign". The Southern Manifesto was formally known in congress as The Declaration of Constitutional Principles and was a document written in opposition to racial integration of public places. Massive resistance was a direct response to the May 1954 Supreme Court ruling on Brown vs Board of Education that says that states that enforce segregation in public schools are in violation of the constitution. The goal of Massive Resistance was to block and restrict, at all costs, racial integration in public schools. One example of how far the Massive Resistance doctrine would go is in a law that eliminated state funding to punish any public schools that integrated. Harry Byrd, is quoted as saying in May 1954 "If we can organize the Southern States for massive resistance to this order, I think that in time the rest of the country will realize that racial integration is not going to be accepted in the South."



This campaign, while led by Senator Harry Byrd, was supported by many others and was an attempt to reignite racial segregation in public schools.

#### ANALYSIS & IMPLICATIONS:

Although the Massive Resistance movement is a thing of the past, the impact of segregation lives on today. Modern segregation is not always a discussion of race. Now, the conversation regarding segregation in schools is centered around economic class as a surrogate for race. Urban areas have such a high non-white population that are often struggling economically that the conversation is the same whether it's about race or economics. Public education in cities is often less desirable than private schools, or suburban public schools. Unfortunately, those in the lower economic classes can't afford private schools or a move to the suburbs. Funding and resources to urban public-school systems is insufficient to level the playing field for those students, mostly of color, who have no other educational options but likely need the most help. Why should opportunity and education be limited to those who can afford it? The whole point of public education is to level the playing field and provide equal opportunity. The quality of public education within the inner cities is inadequate and needs to be at a much higher level so students aren't disproportionately disadvantaged.

The modern call for shrinking the federal government and increasing states' rights traces its roots from arguments for Confederate secession through the Massive Resistance movement. While all the southern governors were in opposition to complete desegregation, not all were willing to be so openly supportive of the white supremacist message of the Southern Manifesto and segregation. The Governors that were more cautious decided to use the term "local option" instead of Massive Resistance to define their objection to Brown v Board of Education. The local option is in effect synonymous with the states' rights argument. This is ironic because is it really states' rights, or the local option, when an individual former confederate state agrees to the white supremacist segregationist values and ideology of the larger whole? All the arguments for states'

rights and the local option point toward the ongoing persistence of the white supremacist ideologies of the former confederate states.

### Pictures/Illustrations



People protesting racial integration<sup>13</sup>

## **THE MURDER OF EMMETT TILL**

### DATE (S) :

August 24, 1955

### WHO WAS INVOLVED:

Emmett Till, Roy Bryant and his half-brother JW Milam, and Carolyn Bryant

### WHERE DID THIS OCCUR:

Money, Mississippi

## SUMMARY OF EVENT:

On August 24, 1955, while visiting relatives in Money, Mississippi, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old Chicago native who is black, was accused of harassing Carolyn Bryant, who was white, in Bryant's grocery store. Till may or may not have communicated with Carolyn Bryant during this store visit, accounts vary. A few days later August 28, relatives of Carolyn Bryant, Roy Bryant, her husband, and JW Milam, his half-brother, kidnapped, brutally beat and murdered Till. His body was recovered shortly after in the Tallahatchie River. In only about four weeks the case was brought to trial and Bryant and Milam were soon acquitted of all charges by an all-white all male jury. Both men later confessed to the crime in a paid magazine interview where they shared full details. In 2007 Carolyn Bryant recanted her testimony "Nothing that boy did could ever justify what happened to him".<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the trial Till's body was shipped back to Chicago where it was on display at the Roberts Temple Church of God in a glass topped casket for five days. Till's body was horribly disfigured and the decision to display his body is largely considered to be responsible for galvanizing the civil rights movement at the time.

## ANALYSIS & IMPLICATIONS:

Long before George Floyd, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Alton Sterling, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown and the hundreds of other African Americans to die unjustly at the hands of law enforcement and others, there was Emmett Till. The murder of Emmett Till, his young age, the overall brutality of the event, and the widespread publicity helped to solidify and ignite the civil rights movement in the 1950's. Emmett's mother Mamie Till-Mobley's decision to display Emmett's brutalized body in an open casket was a heroic choice, along with the David Jackson photo of Emmett in the casket, that springboarded the civil rights movement. Mamie traveled across the country on her way to and from Mississippi to collect her son's body and attend his murder trial. As she traveled, with the help of the NAACP, she spread the word in speeches to crowds along the way, leading to a massive increase in membership and donations. Later that same year Rosa Parks told Mamie that she was thinking of her and Emmett when she refused to

give up her seat on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama. The Till legacy continues today when in March 2022 the Emmett Till anti lynching act was signed into law by President Joe Biden.

However, the more things change the more they remain the same. This is evidenced by the photograph shown below of the Emmett Till memorial that is currently full of bullet holes. A fitting metaphor for the reality of ongoing white supremacist ideology.

When is it going to be enough? How many young black bodies have to fall victim to this oppressive system before there is serious work done? Why is it that when there is a push for racial justice, that this push for change isn't led by white people, those who have historically reaped all the benefits. But the legacy of a single black body can only go so far. In a society that is white supremacist you need the vocal support of white people to advocate for change.

### Pictures/Illustrations



**Emmitt Till after the brutal murder<sup>1</sup>**

# THE MURDER OF TRAYVON MARTIN

## DATE(S) :

February 26, 2012

## WHO WAS INVOLVED:

Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman

## WHERE DID THIS OCCUR:

Sanford, Florida

## SUMMARY OF EVENT:

On the night of February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin was killed by George Zimmerman. Martin, a black 17-year-old high school student from Miami Gardens, FL was visiting his father in Sanford, FL. Zimmerman was a 28-year-old insurance fraud investigator, a part-time student, and a local neighborhood watch captain in a gated community. Martin was cutting through Zimmerman's neighborhood on his way back from a local convenience store. Zimmerman confronted Martin and after some type of confrontation and scuffle, killed him. Details are unconfirmed as there were no eyewitnesses to the shooting. Zimmerman claimed he acted in self-defense. Zimmerman was detained by the police but not charged and was released. Zimmerman was later charged with second-degree murder but was acquitted. The murder led to national media coverage which precipitated protests across the country, including the Million Hoodie March.<sup>1</sup> The events are also credited with generating the spark that led to the formation of Black Lives Matter in 2013.

## ANALYSIS & IMPLICATIONS:

"[some] Americans see the tale as a colorblind tragedy. In their view, Zimmerman, a good-natured, aspiring police officer, simply took his responsibility as a community watchman a bit too seriously on a fateful night. While they acknowledge that Zimmerman may have inappropriately confronted Martin on the street that evening was Martin's unexpected, violent, and aggressive response questioning that precipitated the tragedy that occurred".

I cannot believe that this is a tale of a "colorblind tragedy". If Travon Martin was white and confronted George Zimmerman with an " unexpected, violent, and aggressive response" Zimmerman would have gone through all his training procedures: talking calmly to reassure the suspect, trying to understand where they are coming from and their side of the story. But, this is not what happened. There is a reason black people and people of color fear law enforcement. They disproportionality arrest them, and treat them as second-class citizens. Martin's murder and the subsequent acquittal of George Zimmerman ignited the Black Lives Matter movement, which remains a very big racial justice movement to this day. As the Black Lives Matter movement gains mainstream attention and support, it is my hope that soon changes will be made to policing, media, and attitudes toward African Americans.

### Policing

Current policing tactics have led to an imbalance in incarceration rates in American prisons. African Americans make up approximately 38% of the prison population but only about 13% of the overall United States population. This translates to roughly 768,000 African Americans behind bars. Police in the United States need rigorous de-escalation training to help calm suspects down but also so the police officer doesn't resort to shooting them. Law enforcement needs to be better at identifying suspects without racial profiling. After training, if individual police officers continue to use racial profiling, then they should be dismissed from the force. The bottom line is that law enforcement needs to stop treating all black people as criminals. Continuing to do so will only further the divide between black communities and the police.<sup>4</sup>

### Media

In the modern era, the media encourages the persistence of white supremacist ideologies in the United States. When people watch the news or view any modern media, they believe that what they are viewing is 100% truthful and honest with all its reporting. Modern media discourages the typical viewer from being a critical thinker, but rather to just absorb what they are being told to think. Viewers are encouraged to simply accept information as it is presented, along with the spin and alternative facts.

Following the unjust and unwarranted murder of Trayvon Martin, various media outlets shifted the narrative to be in line with how Americans as a whole, view young black men as criminals. This view towards young African American men put forth by politicians and the media is largely why George Zimmerman was acquitted on all charges.

News pundits and [white] conservative politicians often say 'all lives matter' with the excuse that black lives are not more important than others. They do not want to say that black lives have an equal value to white lives. In their eyes, black lives do not have value, they do not matter. The group's name "Black Lives Matter" is an attempt to be on equal footing with white people but not in any way better or more important than white people.

As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."5

To continue this fight, white people, the ones who for so long have been raking the benefits that those of darker complexion cannot receive, need to be more involved in the promotion of racial injustice.

For this country to grow and heal we need to all come together and have real talks about how to unite people. This country's political ideologies are still very polarizing. There needs to be a middle ground and less selfishness. Politics should be a job that you do completely to aid and assist others. But many powerful career politicians only care about lining their pockets with lobbyist contributions.

PICTURES/Illustrations:



Former neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman who fatally shot Trayvon Martin in a 2012 confrontation with the teenager in Florida. Photo: AP

“Former neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman Who fatally Shot Trayvon Martin in a 2012 confrontation with the teenager in Florida.”<sup>14</sup>



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# Endnotes

1. [Donald Trump Announcement Speech](#)
2. [Showing republicans have become more conservative](#) (figure 1)
3. [Order of the Confederate States seceding from the union](#)
4. [The confederate identity](#)
5. [Feb-20th Marjorie Taylor Green Tweet](#)
6. [13th amendment](#)
7. [prison population by state](#) (figure 2)
8. [I was bullied for my race](#)
9. [monumental cloth](#)
10. [a man was lynched by police yesterday](#)
11. [First design of the Confederate battle flag. 'Southern Cross'](#)
12. [Southern states and mass incarceration](#)
13. [People holding signs and American flags protesting the admission of the 'Little Rock Nine' to Central High School, 1959.](#)
14. [Zimmerman escapes federal charges for the shooting of black teenager Trayvon Martin](#)
15. [Alexander Stephens Vice president of the Confederacy](#)
16. [Emmitt Till after the brutal murder](#)
17. [Elaine Massacre, Deadliest racial massacre](#)
18. [Marjorie Taylor Green holds gun in political ad](#)