

ISSUES FORUM JACKSONVILLE

About This Issue Guide

The purpose of this issue guide is to help us talk productively about a difficult issue that concerns all of us.

Deliberation & Discernment

It's not a debate. It's not a contest. It's not even about reaching agreement or seeing eye-to-eye. It's about looking for a shared direction, guided by our concern for supportive relationships among our neighbors, friends, and acquaintances.

It's about examining the costs and consequences of possible solutions to daunting problems and finding out what we, as dedicated citizens of Jacksonville and Northeast Florida would or would not accept as a solution.

HOW SHOULD WE CONVEY THE HISTORY OF JACKSONVILLE? MONUMENTS, PARKS, & PEOPLE



Introduction

In August 2017 a White Nationalist Rally in Charlottesville, VA erupted into violence with loss of life. This tragic event stimulated community leaders across the nation to think critically about the messages monuments in public spaces represent. In the American South the presence of Confederate statues is particularly challenging. Citizens and elected leaders are lobbying to retain, alter, remove, or replace monuments. In Baltimore, Austin, and New Orleans, monuments were dismantled and removed in the middle of the night. Richmond, with its Monument Avenue, is one of many Virginia communities embroiled in controversy. This dilemma is not lost on Jacksonville as city leaders are raising concerns about the Hemming Park Confederate Soldier statue and a Confederate Park monument that remembers the sacrifices of Confederate women during the Civil War.

What roles do monuments play? Statues are static, yet citizens and a city's population are dynamic and diverse. Are some historic events more important than others?

How might monuments and public spaces speak to a city's hospitality? These and other questions are being asked, but what does the public think?

Jacksonville and Northeast Florida citizens are invited to participate in small-group discussions that will not only deliberate the presence and influence of Confederate monuments but also discuss how public space is used to define the city. These deliberative forums will also include a post-forum questionnaire to be used to craft a summary report of the public's voice with recommendations for city leaders. This dialogue resource draws on the writing of Jacksonville historians James B. Crooks, Emeritus Professor of History, University of North Florida and Madison Cates, a University of Florida History PhD candidate who prepared a document entitled *Confederate Monuments: Whose History?*

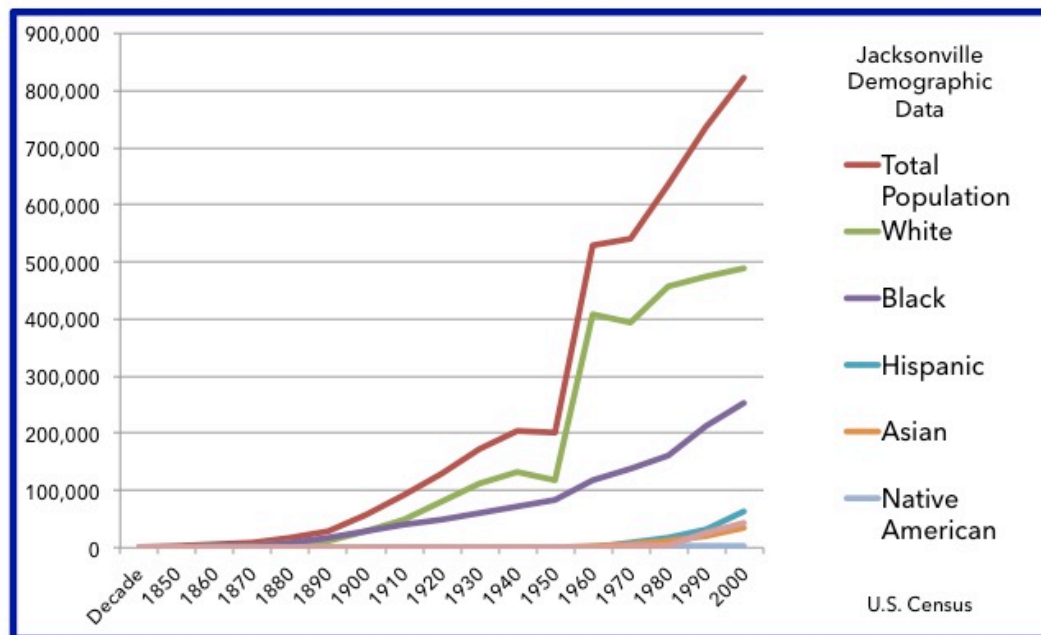
The deliberative forum offers participants three distinctive options for considering the issue. They speak to altering, removing, or leaving the monuments alone. Each option offers specific actions that could be taken as well as corresponding drawbacks or tradeoffs people would need to accept. The three options are:

- 1. Value Jacksonville History with Monuments and Plaques.**
- 2. Change Public Space.**
- 3. Leave the Monuments Where They Are. Recognize Jacksonville African American History.**

Ground Rules for a Forum

- Listen to understand. Keep an open mind.
- Everyone is encouraged to speak. No one or two individuals should dominate.
- Consider the options and actions fairly.
- Disagree respectfully with others' ideas.
- Move toward greater mutual understanding.
- Endeavor to identify the common good.





Jacksonville became a city in 1822 and mid-19th Century census data indicates that white and black residents comprised fairly equal portions of the population until 1920 when a shift toward higher percentages of white citizens over blacks occurred. In 1960, whites made up 58.8% and blacks 41.1%. These percentages held relatively steady. Today, the demographic make-up is 52.3% White, 30.3% Black, 9.4% Hispanics, 4.4% Asian, and 3.6 other ethnicities.



How Should We Convey the History of Jacksonville? Monuments, Parks, and People

Option #1 Value Jacksonville History with Monuments and Plaques

This option calls for a diligent effort to convey Jacksonville's rich history by retaining the placement of current monuments, adding historical narrative and installing new historical markers that reflect the city's entire history. In 1898 the sixty-foot high Confederate Soldier statue was erected in Hemming Park, and in 1915 a Confederate Park monument followed. A third monument is located in the Old City Cemetery.



Although white and black citizens shared leadership positions during the Reconstruction Era, by 1889, the political winds of change and fear of "negro domination" resulted in the State of Florida revoking the Jacksonville city charter, an action that removed elected and appointed leaders, especially African American leaders. These leaders were replaced with people favorable to white rule. New Jim Crow laws disenfranchised African Americans and what progress had been made in developing a bi-racially led city was dashed. Tensions resulted and the ensuing decades brought limited opportunities to people of color.

Historians reveal that whoever wields political power controls the dominant narrative. In 1915, with blacks having lost the franchise and removed from leadership positions, the city of Jacksonville proclaimed a "half-day holiday" to unveil the redesigned Confederate Park, recognizing white women and their support of the South's war effort. Over the course of the 20th century much of Jacksonville's African American history has been obscured, including the bulldozing of the LaVilla neighborhood once called the Harlem of the South. The history of the performing arts, labor and voting rights advocacy, and civic leadership was diminished.

Since 1985, the Jacksonville Community Council, Inc.* annually asked citizens, "Do you feel racism is a problem?" The results across the decades revealed a consistent concern among all citizens about less than positive race relations and corresponding issues of affordable housing, economic opportunity, educational attainment, and crime.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio created a commission after the white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Va. Historians and artists reviewed city monuments reflecting many historical periods and recommended contextualizing, moving, removing, leaving the monuments in their current locations or adding new pieces.

* JCCI ceased to operate in 2016

Questions to Consider

1. How should we tell Jacksonville's story through words, statues, and art? How might history give meaning and hope to current citizens?
2. What could be done to make Jacksonville public parks more inclusive?
3. Who could provide additional historical context for public spaces?

EXAMPLES OF WHAT COULD BE DONE	DRAWBACKS OR TRADE-OFFS
Create a commission to review what could be done with each monument and park.	Not everyone will have an opportunity to participate.
Retain and alter monuments by providing additional historical context on plaques.	Interpreting history is difficult and subjective.
Add new monuments or statues to shine light on the city's history and leaders.	Choosing events to memorialize will be difficult.
Create a video history of Jacksonville.	History is always subjective.
Are there other ideas?	



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Option Two: Change Public Space



Public spaces and central parks often define the character of a city or town. This option would have the monuments removed from their current locations. We are a nation built on the principle of “the commons” where all citizens have rights, privileges, freedoms, and can speak openly, even critically about public issues. They are the “front porches” of schools, libraries, and government buildings and places where farmers’ markets, art exhibits, social gatherings, and concerts happen. We exercise our bodies and minds and make new friends in parks.

Hemming Park was created in 1868 and first referred to as Isaiah Hart’s “public square.” Hart was the city founder and the property’s original owner, and he left the land to the city in return for a \$10 payment upon his death. It subsequently was called the “City Park” or St. James Park for the city’s most prominent hotel. It was not until 1898 that Charles Hemming, a Jacksonville native, Confederate veteran, and then wealthy Texas banker raised the idea and paid for a Confederate monument in the city’s main square. The United Daughters of the Confederacy and United Confederate Veterans organizations supported Hemming’s efforts. And in 1915, in honor of the women of the Confederacy, Dignan Park was renamed and dedicated as Confederate Park on Hubbard Street. The Florida United Veterans of the Confederacy (UVC) and the Florida Legislature raised the funds.

There are sad moments to be remembered. Jacksonville and nearby MacClenny experienced several lynchings in the 1920s. Segregated spaces such as the 1921 railroad depot pictured above were ubiquitous. Ax Handle Saturday on August 27, 1960 offers another vivid reminder of racial tension when whites asserted their dominance over blacks in a Hemming Park conflict. The struggle for freedom, opportunity, and equality continues to this day for many Jacksonville citizens.

Consider how public spaces look and are used in Jacksonville, especially those spaces where Confederate monuments are located.

Questions to Consider

1. Should changes be made to the city's public parks and spaces?
2. Are there ways to use these spaces differently to reflect the current Jacksonville culture and its citizens' hopes?

EXAMPLES OF WHAT COULD BE DONE	DRAWBACKS OR TRADE-OFFS
Create a "history park" and relocate the Confederate statues.	The project would require securing park space.
Install public art that reflects the city's history, culture, and diversity.	This would require leadership and resources.
Re-name and re-purpose Confederate Park to complement the Springfield Historic District.	Founding organizations and sympathetic citizens would resist this action.
Are there other ideas?	



Option Three: Leave the Monuments Where They Are. Recognize Jacksonville African American History.

Monuments are static. People are dynamic. The third option recommends leaving the monuments where they are located and investing significant effort to recognize the rich history of the city's African American citizens.

Jacksonville's African Americans deserve more than an annual Black History Month; rather, this option seeks a 365-day-a-year focus using a variety of creative measures.

People favoring this might say, "Two or three monuments that recognize a particular historical period should not conceal nearly 200 years as a prominent Northeastern Florida city with settlers of African American and European American descendants."



Local historian James B. Crooks gave a series of lectures entitled *Structural Racism in Jacksonville*. "Structural racism occurs when organizations – government, business or nonprofits – implement policy decisions that *intentionally or unintentionally* discriminate against minorities and women." (Crooks) His account speaks to examples of structural racism in inequitable land use and development that favored some portions of the city over others, especially the north side where many African Americans reside. The historic LaVilla neighborhood was once a cultural center for African Americans, but after many of the structures were razed, little of the past is recognized. Crooks described the tensions associated with desegregation and closing neighborhood schools, consolidation, and difficulties in relationships between citizens and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. Concerns with the latter were born out in 2017 as over 200 citizens deliberated how to reduce community violence with 98% people agreeing with the statement: "*We urgently need to increase understanding and mutual respect between police and people of color.*"

Crooks spoke to the positive efforts of former mayors and public officials. In 1968 Jacksonville was consolidated and while this was viewed as a positive decision by many, African Americans felt disenfranchised. In spite of progress among African American entrepreneurs and community leaders, Jacksonville remains a "a tale of two cities," one white and the other black.

South Africa addressed its history of apartheid by creating a *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* to pursue understanding and healing among the citizens who share the city

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culture and history and create a “common history.” Should city leaders do the same?

Questions to Consider

1. What will it take to recognize African American history and transform Jacksonville into a city of courage and compassion?
2. Are there particular ways local nonprofit organizations, art communities, and historical legacy groups could work together?

EXAMPLES OF WHAT COULD BE DONE	DRAWBACKS AND TRADE-OFFS
Build an African American museum in the downtown core.	This would create competition with the Ritz Theater and Museum and the Eartha White Museum.
Expand the Jacksonville Public Library African American Collection to include circulation materials, exhibits, programs, and artifacts.	This would require funding of materials and staff.
Develop a Jacksonville History curriculum for public, private, and charter schools.	Additional or revised instructional time would be necessary.
Establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to pursue understanding and healing among citizens who share Jacksonville culture and history.	Some citizens would resist developing a “common history” while preferring to maintain their distinctive backgrounds and practices.
Are there other actions or ideas?	



Reflection, Agreement, and Next Steps?

After deliberating through each of the approaches and considering many of the specific actions and corresponding tradeoffs, participants are encouraged to discern some common ground. In this final portion of the forum, participants will transition from sharing personal opinions to seek agreement on what can be done as a community to understand and convey the history of Jacksonville. Consider the following questions:

1. Can we detect any shared sense of direction or any agreement?
2. What did you hear the group saying about tensions in this issue?
3. Are there any particular values we hold in common?
4. Are there next steps we might want to take?
5. What do we still need to talk about?
6. Who else needs to be here? What voices were missing?

POST-FORUM SURVEY - : <https://survey.sogosurvey.com/r/okMeM7>

Jessie Ball duPont Fund

This issue guide was prepared for the Jessie Ball duPont Fund in collaboration with the Charles F. Kettering Foundation and National Issues Forums Institute. The dialogue resource is available to citizens and organizations desiring to conduct civil discourse and arrive at recommendations to convey to elected leaders.

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Structural Racism in Jacksonville: James B. Crooks, Emeritus Professor of History, University of North Florida

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Forum Hosts

The Jessie Ball duPont Fund works to expand access and create opportunity by investing in people, organizations and communities that were important to Jessie Ball duPont. The Fund values acting with compassion, working for justice, and championing the rights of all people to share in the wealth and health of our nation. The Fund believes that communities are stronger and healthier when citizens, neighborhoods, and organizations work across boundaries that divide us and that citizens have both the right and responsibility to participate fully in public debate about the distribution of resources, opportunities, and assets intended to serve the common good.

Leadership Jacksonville educates, connects and inspires diverse leaders to build and strengthen their communities. By promoting the values of shared commitment to ethical leadership; awareness and understanding of complex community issues; diverse leaders sharing and challenging their perspectives; cultivation of strong relationships among participants; creation of a shared community vision; and action taken for the greater good, LJ is the catalyst for vibrant, connected communities where diverse perspectives are valued and encouraged for the greater good.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

*How Should We Convey the History of Jacksonville?
Monuments, Parks, and People*

Now that you've had the chance to participate in this forum, we'd like to know what you think. Your opinions, along with those of others who participated in these forums, will be reflected in a summary report that will be available to all citizens, including those who took part in these forums, as well as officeholders and members of the news media.

1. Do you agree or disagree with the statements below.	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
a. The Confederate monuments should remain in their current locations with no additional historical information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. The public would benefit if the monuments included more historical context on plaques.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Additional markers or statues that reflect other periods of Jacksonville history should be installed and located in Hemming Park.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Jacksonville would benefit by having a walk-in, downtown Visitor Center with historical artifacts, photography, and a video documentary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. The city should identify land for a "history park" for statues, monuments, art, and historical markers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. The city should rename Confederate Park.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. An African American Museum located in the city center would be an attraction for residents and visitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. K-12 teachers and students should teach and learn Jacksonville history.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. The City Council should establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to pursue understanding and healing among the citizens who share the city culture and history.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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2. Are you thinking differently about this issue now that you have participated in the forum? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please explain.

3. In your forum, did you talk about aspects of the issue you had not considered before? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please explain.

4. What could citizens working together with elected officials and nonprofit organizations do to address this issue?
Please explain

5. Gender Identity? ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Non-conforming ☐ No answer

6. Are you ☐ African American ☐ Asian American ☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ American Indian or Native American ☐ White/Caucasian ☐ Other (please specify)

7. How old are you? ☐ 17 or younger ☐ 18-30. ☐ 31-45 ☐ 46-64 ☐ 65+

8. What is your Zip Code? _____

**Please give this form to your moderator or mail it to the Jessie Ball duPont Fund,
40 East Adams Street, Suite 300, Jacksonville, FL 32202-3302**

