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Report: 110 Confederate monuments removed in US since 2015

By Jay Reeves

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) - It took generations to erect all the nation's Confederate monuments, and a new report shows they're being removed at a pace of about three each month.

The study - released Monday by the Southern Poverty Law Center - shows that 110 Confederate monuments have been removed nationwide since 2015, when a shooting at a black church in South Carolina energized a movement against such memorials.

The number - which includes schools and roads that have been renamed in California, a repurposed Confederate holiday in Georgia, plus rebel flags and monuments that have been taken down in Alabama, Louisiana and elsewhere - represents a relative handful compared with the more than 1,700 memorials that remain to hail the Southern "lost cause."

But the change is notable considering that removing such memorials wasn't widely discussed until the killing of nine black people at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, said Heidi Beirich of the Southern Poverty Law Center, a liberal activist organization based in Montgomery that monitors extremism. White supremacist Dylann Roof has been sentenced to death for the 2015 attack.

After the Charleston shooting, photos surfaced of Roof posing with the Confederate battle flag, helping to change the national dialogue.

"I think it kind of signifies something monumental," said Beirich, director of the organization's Intelligence Project. "I think people are finally willing to confront the history and come to terms with it."

Many of the Confederate monuments that are now controversial were erected in the early 1900s by groups composed of women and veterans. Some honor generals or soldiers; others bear inscriptions that critics say wrongly gloss over slavery as a reason for the war or portray the Confederate cause as noble.

The Old South monuments are supported by groups including the Sons of Confederate Veterans, which is erecting new memorials even as others are removed.

"They're taking them down, and we're putting them up," said Thomas V. Strain Jr., commander in chief of the organization. He said the group isn't tracking monument removals or name changes, but to him, 110 "seems a little high."

Members have raised two giant Confederate "mega-flags" on private property and erected four monuments in Alabama alone this year, Strain said, and they're asking to place a new Confederate monument outside the courthouse in Colbert County, in northwest Alabama. Commissioners are considering the request.

The organization also is building a new headquarters that will include The National Confederate Museum in Columbia, Tennessee. The organization, on its website promoting the project, said the museum will counter attempts by opponents "to ban any and all things Confederate through their ideological fascism."

The museum will tell the "Southern side" of the war, Strain said.

"It's not just dedicated to the soldiers, it's dedicated to the wives and children who had to endure that five years of hell also," he said. "We'll have Southern uniforms there, not Union uniforms. We'll have Southern artillery shells, not Northern ones."

Beirich said the law center's list of monument removals was compiled through news accounts, tips and crowd-sourcing sites that let people make online reports.

Both in tallying removals and remaining memorials, the group counted only monuments that "glorify" the Confederacy and didn't consider historical markers that denote specific events or sites with a link to the past, such as information signs at battlefields, Beirich said.

While the organization lists 1,730 Confederate monuments nationwide, Beirich said there's no doubt a lot more exist.

"I am sure we have missed many," she said.

Without statewide consensus, partial judicial remaps advance

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) - Republican lawmakers are advancing fragments of a statewide remapping of North Carolina's judicial election districts in hopes of passing them before candidate filing for judges begins in just over two weeks.

A House committee voted late June 1 to expand a measure approved this week by the Senate that redrew Mecklenburg County judicial districts to include changes in Wake County and two Wilmington-area counties. The same panel also agreed to separate legislation reworking judicial or prosecutorial districts covering more than a dozen other eastern and southern Piedmont counties.

A Senate committee also scheduled a meeting for Monday to consider another judicial district measure.

House and Senate members have studied since last fall potential rewrites of election boundaries for Superior Court and District Court seats, as well as the county groupings for elected district attorneys.

Although the full House approved a statewide plan last October, Republican lawmakers from both chambers have since struggled to agree on the finer details. And some senators have been more inclined to consider doing away with the traditional head-to-head judicial elections, but there's also no agreement on what should replace them.

Rep. David Lewis, the House Rules Committee chairman considering the legislation June 1, said he anticipated neither a statewide redistricting bill nor a "merit selection" measure would move before this year's session ends, likely this month.

Rep. Justin Burr, a Stanly County Republican and the chief proponent of statewide redistricting, shepherded changes to the smaller counties in Friday's (June 1) committee.

"Rather than the big bite of the apple that we've been pushing for, this takes some smaller steps, but it continues to update and modernize and invest in the courts," Burr said.



Period cooking demonstrations will be part of the Juneteenth Program at Stagville.

Historic Stagville Celebrates 153rd Anniversary of Emancipation for Juneteenth

More than 900 people were freed at Stagville Plantation, one of the state's largest, at the end of the Civil War in 1865. Visit Historic Stagville Saturday, June 9, noon to 5 p.m., to discover the story of the end of slavery in North Carolina. The Juneteenth celebration will include performances, historic cooking demonstrations and interactive activities for all ages.

Cheyney McKnight, historian and founder of Not Your Mama's History, will lead a historic cooking demonstration. She will recreate festive meals cooked by freed people in celebration of their freedom.

Visitors can visit original slave quarters, and see how families renovated and transformed those houses in freedom. Civil War reenactors of the 2nd Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops, will capture the spirit of those who fought for freedom. Historic interpreter Caroline Evans will perform dramatic stories about the origins of Juneteenth and the reunion of families separated in slavery.

Visitors can try woodworking, fence building, or gardening, and see how craftsmen used their skills in freedom. Children can make a fingerprint medallion to take home, just like the fingerprints enslaved craftsmen left in the Stagville bricks.

The Friends of Oberlin Village will present artifacts and stories about the freedmen's community in Raleigh, including their connection to the Stagville plantation. Educators from the Historic Russell School will share the story of African American education after 1865, and highlight the history of the local Rosenwald Schools. For a hands-on lesson in school history, experience a schoolhouse lesson in one of the historic houses. Learn what education would have been like for freed families eager to learn!

Although slavery ended in April, Stagville celebrates Emancipation at Juneteenth, the traditional June 19 holiday that commemorates when the last enslaved people in Galveston, Tex., were informed that they were free.

For additional information about this event, please call (919) 620-0120. Historic Stagville is located at 5828 Old Oxford Highway, Durham, N.C., and is part of the Division of State Historic Sites within the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

12 protesters arrested at North Carolina statehouse

By Jonathan Drew

RALEIGH (AP) - Twelve protesters were led away in zip ties May 29 as part of a demonstration calling for social justice on issues ranging from gun control to poverty relief at North Carolina's legislature.

About 100 people gathered near North Carolina's statehouse to hear a speech by the Rev. William Barber, leader of the revived Poor People's Campaign. After the speech, 12 demonstrators were arrested and charged with misdemeanor trespassing after marching into a nearby building where lawmakers were debating the state budget, General Assembly Police Chief Martin Brock said.

Barber used a wide-ranging speech to decry North Carolina legislators' budget priorities as part of his campaign's third week of demonstrations at statehouses around the country. Barber gained nationwide attention for his nonviolent protests as head of North Carolina's NAACP before moving on to head a revival of the campaign, which was first launched during the civil rights era.

"They are more interested in arresting protesters and blocking the voice of the people - they are more interested in that - than they are interested in providing health care," he said of North Carolina lawmakers. "They are more interested in arresting protesters than they are in providing living wages."

After the speech, dozens marched into the Legislative Office Building nearby, where a joint House and Senate committee was holding a hearing on tax portions of the state budget. Barber wasn't among those who went inside.

After a few demonstrators made it into the hearing, the rest of the protesters stood in the hallway and recited loud chants including: "What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!"

The protest caused a delay of about 20 minutes in the committee hearing.

Soon, several protesters were led out of the hearing room, one-by-one, in white zip ties by police officers. An officer then used his bullhorn to warn those in the hallway to disperse. More were led away in zip ties after repeated warnings, for a total of 12 arrests. The rest of the protesters eventually left peacefully.

In two prior North Carolina protests this year, about 60 people were arrested while demonstrating against Republican policies in the state. The Poor People's Campaign plans a total of six weeks of nonviolent demonstrations at statehouses around the country and in Washington, D.C.

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