

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Weaponizing Historical Memory: Legal Battles Over Statues, Monuments, and Collective Trauma

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The article mentions the “statue of Edward Colston... thrown into the harbor,” but it omits any reference to the legal consequences or implications of this act. Please elaborate on how this action engaged the law or influenced heritage policy debates in the UK.

The claim “the article will analyze case studies from various regions...” should be supported by a brief preview of the methodology, including criteria for selecting those case studies, to clarify the scope.

The term “legal semiotics” is introduced but not fully unpacked. A clearer definition or example of how semiotic analysis was operationalized in legal judgments would enhance conceptual clarity.

When discussing Nazi-era monuments, the article should provide specific examples of de-nazification processes (e.g., Nuremberg laws or the German Monument Protection Act) that demonstrate how law intersects with memory politics.

The discussion of the Rhodes Must Fall movement lacks sufficient legal detail. Were there any specific judicial or university governance decisions? Including these would substantiate the legal analysis component.

The phrase “these conflicts illuminated the structural disconnect...” is strong, but the argument would be more compelling if followed by a legal precedent illustrating how state law overrides municipal decisions.

The phrase “emotional dynamics complicate efforts...” is compelling. Yet, the paper should specify whether these psychological responses have been empirically measured (e.g., through surveys or psychological studies).

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The discussion of “memory laws... criminalize denial of genocide...” needs clearer delineation. It would strengthen the argument to include the names or years of specific memory laws (e.g., Poland’s 2018 law or France’s Gayssot Act) and their legal ramifications.

The phrase “technologies of power” referencing Foucault is invoked abstractly. Strengthen the argument by relating it to a specific monument or legal controversy that exemplifies this concept in action.

The statement “The legal recognition of monuments... reflects an institutional endorsement of certain historical interpretations” is valuable but underdeveloped. Consider citing a legal case (e.g., U.S. vs. Charlottesville) where this endorsement was formally articulated.

The concept of “creative compromises” (e.g., relocation, plaques) is important but lacks examples. Please provide a case where such a compromise was enacted by judicial or administrative order.

The sentence “Monuments... either by encoding trauma or by concealing it...” is strong conceptually. However, an illustrative case (e.g., the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin vs. Confederate statues) would make the contrast clearer.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.