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## Reconciling with the Past: Ana Lucia Araujo's Lecture on Coming to Terms with the Past When Monuments Are Taken Down

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# Reconciling with the Past: Ana Lucia Araujo's Lecture on Coming to Terms with the Past When Monuments Are Taken Down

## **Abstract**

On Thursday, November 2nd, Howard University History Professor Ana Lucia Araujo visited Gettysburg College to give a lecture titled "Slavery, Memory, and Reparations: Coming to Terms with the Past When Monuments Are Taken Down." The historian, author, and professor talked about the history of slavery as well as the concepts of memory and reparations. One form of reparations discussed recently has been the removal of Confederate monuments in the United States, which has been heavily debated for years. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Monuments, Slavery, Ana Lucia Araujo

## **Disciplines**

History | Military History | Public History | United States History

## **Comments**

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# THE GETTYSBURG COMPILER

## ON THE FRONT LINES OF HISTORY

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### Reconciling with the Past: Ana Lucia Araujo's Lecture on Coming to Terms with the Past When Monuments Are Taken Down

By [\*Daniel Wright '18\*](#)

On Thursday, November 2nd, Howard University History Professor Ana Lucia Araujo visited Gettysburg College to give a lecture titled "Slavery, Memory, and Reparations: Coming to Terms with the Past When Monuments Are Taken Down." The historian, author, and professor talked about the history of slavery as well as the concepts of memory and reparations. One form of reparations discussed recently has been the removal of Confederate monuments in the United States, which has been heavily debated for years.

An interesting part of Araujo's visit to Gettysburg was hearing her thoughts on the future treatment of the Confederate monuments. She believes that in many cases, the monuments are not a symbol of history, but rather a depiction of a biased memory and representation as they were built to glorify soldiers in the Confederate army instead of trying to convey an accurate portrayal of history. In some cases, monuments have become shrines that are used to organize rallies that promote hate and discrimination. During my conversation with Araujo, she even referenced the riot in Charlottesville as an example, mentioning how the monument of Confederate general Robert E. Lee was the center of a violent rally back in August during the discussion of whether or not to take it down.



*Howard University Professor Ana Lucia Araujo. Photo via [her website](#).*

While the conversation about the removal of Confederate monuments has become a widespread topic among scholars, journalists, students, and the general public around the world, Araujo thinks that the decision to remove these monuments should be made by the communities in which they are located. Araujo acknowledged the possible issues that could arise with leaving the decision up to the community such as the existence of small and underrepresented minority groups that may not have the chance for their voices to be heard. To rectify this, she advocated for the creation of councils and forums within each community so that the decision is a fair and collective one that includes as many voices as possible. Through these committees it is less likely that the thoughts of certain demographics are overlooked, which will hopefully result in a healthy discussion and inclusive decision.

Although Araujo thinks that in some cases Confederate monuments should be taken down, she proposes other solutions that can assist in maintaining an accurate memory of the past without the total removal of the monuments. One example mentioned is the addition of plaques that would contain a complete account of the specific soldier. Araujo believes that the inclusion of new plaques would help ensure that the monuments present a historically accurate description of the Confederate soldiers that details all of their actions, including the abuse and dehumanization that many inflicted upon black slaves. Additionally, Araujo also mentions the idea that the monuments could be moved and placed into a museum where they could be used for educational purposes. The proposals made by Araujo conflict with claims made by people who believe that the removal of Confederate monuments erases a part of history as she strives to make sure that their existence serves as more than a shrine for people to promote racist narratives.

Araujo's lecture provided the audience with a more nuanced perspective and voice in the discussion of monuments and other Confederate symbols through Araujo's belief that

the decision to remove monuments should be made by the communities. The idea of creating councils and forums allows everyone's voices to be heard and will hopefully reduce the possibility of violent rallies and protests. In addition, her proposed solutions offer a middle ground that would not erase a piece of American history, but rather expand on it further and ensure that the future memory is one that is impartial and accurate.