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## Memorialization of J. Marion Sims in Columbia, South Carolina

Nicole Chandonnet

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MEMORIALIZATION OF J. MARION SIMS  
IN COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

By  
Nicole Chandonnet  
(nchandonnet10@gmail.com)

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for  
Graduation with Honors from the  
South Carolina Honors College

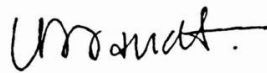
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Approved:



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Thomas J. Brown, Ph.D.  
Director of Thesis



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Lydia Brandt, Ph.D.  
Second Reader

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Steve Lynn, Dean  
For South Carolina Honors College

Keywords: gynecology, statehouse, eugenics, Lost Cause memorialization, women's clubs,  
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## Table of Contents

Author’s Note.....	3
Thesis Summary.....	4
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	5
Chapter 2: Who was J. Marion Sims? .....	7
Chapter 3: Women in Lost Cause Memorialization.....	13
Chapter 4: South Carolina Commemoration of Sims on Statehouse Grounds.....	15
1905-1925—Agitation for a Memorial Begins	
1926-1927—Revival of the Campaign and Creation of Woman’s Auxiliary	
1928-1929—Finishing Fundraising, Construction, and Unveiling the Memorial	
1930-1935—Deepening Shadow of Sims	
Chapter 5: University Expansion and Naming of Sims College 1939-1940.....	43
Chapter 6: Repeal the Heritage Act Movement, Calls to Remove Sims, and Renaming Campaign 2017-present.....	50
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	56
Appendix.....	58
Works Cited.....	59

## **Author's Note**

While I grew up in the South, it was not until I came to the University of South Carolina that I realized the way physical landscapes can shape politics and create structures of power. There is no place where this is more evident than the statehouse grounds in Columbia, where slaves and slaveowners alike are commended for their service to the state and the nation. The statehouse grounds function as a mosaic of traditional, white supremacist, Southern values alongside a progressive, more inclusive present. This thesis has allowed me to study one small part of the history of the South Carolina statehouse to explore these realities and the limitations of change.

I would like to recognize everyone who has contributed to my project in providing insight, support, and encouragement along the way. First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Brown for encouraging me to choose this topic for my thesis, providing me with countless resources, and helping me develop my research and writing skills. He has dedicated hours of his time to helping me throughout this process and has gone above and beyond in his commitment to my project. Through his guidance, I have learned skills as a researcher and writer that I will take with me in my future endeavors.

I would also like to thank the interviewees who were willing to take part in my project. A special thanks to my second reader, Dr. Brandt, who has served as an excellent resource in her recent scholarship on the statehouse grounds. Moreover, she has been an invaluable mentor to throughout the research and drafting phases of this project. Finally, I want to extend a huge thank you to Jazmyne McCrae and Claire Randall—your advocacy work and investment in a better future for South Carolina are inspiring.

## Thesis Summary

The Heritage Act in South Carolina prevents the General Assembly from changing historic names of buildings and removing war memorials from the statehouse grounds without a supermajority. This highly controversial bill prohibits altering the landscape of the state and ensures a permanent place for white supremacy. The Repeal the Heritage Act coalition formed in 2020 to challenge this legislation, and this thesis examines one of its most recent targets: the memorialization of J. Marion Sims in Columbia. To this end, this thesis studies the South Carolina Medical Association's *Journal* from 1910-1940 to study the legacy of Sims and why he was chosen as a representative of the medical field to be honored on the statehouse grounds. Moreover, this thesis studies the potency of southern women's clubs, in particular the Woman's Auxiliary of the SCMA, and examines their adoption of the eugenics movement. This movement enabled the Woman's Auxiliary's project to maintain relevance well into the 1930s and contributed to the naming of the Sims dormitory on UofSC's campus. Finally, this thesis discusses the recent movements to remove statues of Sims across the country and particularly in South Carolina to create a landscape that fosters inclusivity rather than racial violence.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

South Carolinian J. Marion Sims began his medical career in the mid-1800s and because of his medical breakthroughs, memorialization campaigns began shortly after his death. Sims is commonly regarded as the father of modern gynecology because of his discovery of a cure for a vesicovaginal fistula, a common condition that women developed during childbirth. While doctors and housewives alike praised Sims for his accomplishments, he has become increasingly controversial in recent years. This controversy has largely centered around the fact that Sims conducted many of his treatments and experiments on Black enslaved women without anesthesia—partially due to his belief that they could not feel pain and the infancy of modern medical treatments for reducing pain. South Carolinians praised Sims after his death in 1883, and the push for a memorial to him began in 1909, but it did not gain traction until the 1920s. The South Carolina Medical Association first took on the building and fundraising project of erecting a memorial of Sims, but the physicians were unsuccessful. In 1926, the Woman's Auxiliary to the South Carolina Medical Association was created, and it took on the project, which was completed in 1929 under the leadership of Daisy Lee Stuckey.

The memorial project of the Woman's Auxiliary fits into a larger historiography of Southern women's involvement in women's clubs to promote specific and often white supremacist narratives. After the Civil War, many white women became involved in women's clubs to promote education and social projects in their communities. In the South, these groups often promoted the Lost Cause narrative that began after the Civil War, and the Woman's Auxiliary, albeit an association for doctor's wives, became a part of this movement.

Moreover, the South Carolina Medical Association and the Woman's Auxiliary's identification of Sims as a cultural hero during the 1900s was a direct product of the eugenics

movement. Although women were largely excluded from the medical profession in the early twentieth century, clubwomen became deeply involved in the eugenics and sterilization movement in the South. Sims served as a hero of the eugenic movement because he dedicated his life to developing new techniques and technologies concerning women's reproductive organs. Sims's work in this field enabled him to help protect the institution of slavery and preserve the superiority of the elite white race. The potency of the eugenics movement empowered the memory of Sims, and he maintained relevance in South Carolina in the 1930s, culminating in his name being placed on a female dormitory at the University of South Carolina in 1940, despite the wishes of the female student body. At a time when more women were going to college, entering the workplace, and participating in electoral democracy, the Board of Trustees's decision to name a female dormitory after Sims sent a particular message to women about the limits of their progress.

The final piece of this thesis moves to the current efforts to remove the memorial on the statehouse grounds and rename the dormitory. New York removed its statue to J. Marion Sims in Central Park in 2018, but the Heritage Act prevents similar actions in South Carolina. Because the supermajority requirement has been nearly impossible to achieve, activists across the state have focused their efforts on repealing and/or declaring the Heritage Act unconstitutional. By keeping the Sims memorial on the statehouse grounds and his name on a female dormitory without any contextualization of his actions, lawmakers create fertile grounds for the continuation of racial violence—emotionally and physically. Societal progress begins with identifying values and icons, and thus the Heritage Act must be repealed or declared unconstitutional to remove Sims from the landscape if South Carolinians want to foster a more diverse, inclusive community.

## Chapter 2: Who was J. Marion Sims?

J. Marion Sims had a modest upbringing, and he did not develop an interest in becoming a doctor until after he graduated from college. In 1813, Sims was born in Lancaster County, South Carolina, to John and Mahala Sims. Twenty-five miles from the nearest village, Lancaster only had 1,000 inhabitants at the time. Despite their isolation, Sims wrote, “My father, feeling the want of an education himself, was determined to educate his children, and so he began with me at a very early age.”<sup>1</sup> Sims first attended school in a small log cabin before he went to the newly established Franklin Academy in Lancaster village for his secondary education. In 1830, he entered South Carolina College (the predecessor to the University of South Carolina), in Columbia, South Carolina. Because he entered with enough credits to be classified as a junior, he graduated two years later. After graduation, he moved back to Lancaster where he began to develop an interest in medicine while working under Dr. Churchill Jones—a surgeon.

Despite his commemoration in Columbia almost a century after his death, Sims was less than exceptional as an undergraduate and medical student. Sims said himself, “I never was remarkable for anything while I was in college except good behavior. Nobody ever expected anything of me, and I never expected anything of myself.”<sup>2</sup> In 1833, Sims went to Charleston to attend medical lectures at the Charleston Medical College. He believed he had “failed in [his] duty as a student in [his] college course at Columbia,” but he now felt prepared to take his studies seriously and devote himself to his calling.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after in 1834, he moved to Philadelphia to attend Jefferson Medical College, and although he did well in school, he did not distinguish himself in any particular way.

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<sup>1</sup> Early biographical information on J. Marion Sims found: J. Marion Sims, *The Story of My Life* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1885), 54-116.

<sup>2</sup> Sims, *The Story of My Life*, 113.

<sup>3</sup> Sims, 118.



After completing his medical education, Sims only returned to South Carolina briefly before making a career elsewhere. Upon moving back to Lancaster, Sims's first two patients were children with cases of cholera infantum. Both of these patients died under his care, and he became disillusioned with the harsh realities of the medical field. Wanting a fresh start, he moved to Montgomery, Alabama, in October 1835. In his autobiography, Sims denoted this time period as a “turning-point” because he developed an aptitude and passion for surgery.<sup>4</sup> In 1845, in Montgomery, Sims began working on repairing vesicovaginal fistulas—an opening between the bladder and vagina that occurs during childbirth.<sup>5</sup> Sims promoted his success in these operations through publications, and he became highly regarded as a pioneer in the medical field.

Sims’s interest in treating female patients occurred coincidentally, rather than through an academic interest in the female body. Like most other doctors in the nineteenth century, Sims had no formal training or interest in gynecology.<sup>6</sup> His interest in female patients emerged when he helped Mrs. Merrill, who had fallen off a horse and was experiencing back and pelvic pain. In treating her ailment Sims used his finger to push her uterus back into place after it had been dislodged. Suddenly, Sims could no longer touch anything, and Mrs. Merrill remarked, “Why doctor, I am relieved.”<sup>7</sup> Shortly after this a large burst of air released from Mrs. Merrill’s vagina, and he realized that this release in pressure was precisely what was needed to treat women with a vesicovaginal fistula, which he could achieve by using a speculum. Experimenting on Betsey (an enslaved woman), he wrote, “Introducing the bent handle of the spoon I saw everything, as no

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<sup>4</sup> Sims, 209.

<sup>5</sup> Sara Spettel and Mark White, “The Portrayal of J. Marion Sims’ Controversial Legacy,” *The Journal of Urology* 185, no. 6 (2011): 2424.

<sup>6</sup> Brynn Holland, “The ‘Father of Modern Gynecology’ Performed Shocking Experiments on Enslaved Women,” *History Stories*, August 29, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Sims, 233.

man had seen before.”<sup>8</sup> The speculum provided Sims with the first step in treating women with vesicovaginal fistulas, by which he would achieve lasting fame.

Sims’s medical practice in Montgomery was deeply rooted in the slave trade. He built an eight-person hospital in the middle of the slave-trading district in Montgomery. Although most slaves were treated for their medical ailments on the plantations where they worked, some of the stubborn cases were brought to doctors like Sims to ensure they could continue to have offspring (and thus produce more slaves).<sup>9</sup> To test experiments and determine an effective treatment, Sims operated on many female slaves—many of whom he purchased and kept on his property.

Sims's autobiography records several of his experiences treating Black slaves who had vesicovaginal fistulas. He wrote of Betsey, whom Dr. Harris owned in Lowndes County, Lucy of Macon County, and Anarcha, who were all afflicted with a similar condition.<sup>10</sup> He wrote that he performed 30 surgeries on Anarcha alone.<sup>11</sup> Sims knew he needed to use a speculum to effectively treat these women, but it would require much experimentation before he would develop a successful one. He described the treatment of Lucy as a particularly painful experience. He wrote, “At the end of five days my patient was very ill. She had fever, frequent pulse, and real-blood poisoning...Lucy’s agony was extreme. She was much prostrated, and I thought she was going to die.”<sup>12</sup> As he did not use anesthesia in his experimentation, it took Lucy two to three months to fully recover. Moreover, the three enslaved women Sims operated on continued to perform the duties expected of slaves. They helped the Sims’s family with their domestic needs, “cooked, cleaned, stoked and kept the fire burning during the winter, fetched

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<sup>8</sup> Sims, 234.

<sup>9</sup> Holland.

<sup>10</sup> Sims, 228.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Zhang, “The Surgeon Who Experimented on Slaves,” *The Atlantic*, April 18, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Sims, 238.

well water, wiped sweaty brows and dried crying eyes...” all while simultaneously serving as experimental patients.<sup>13</sup>

For decades, Sims’s critics have condemned him for his failure to use anesthesia on his patients despite its recent discovery; however, his reasoning was not wholly unethical. While Sims did think that Black women had a higher capacity for pain, historian Deidre Cooper Owens wrote that many medical doctors chose to not use anesthesia because of their well-founded concern that surgical patients could bleed to death during surgery.<sup>14</sup> Speed, according to both Sims and Owens, was more important to save lives, but Sims did use anesthesia when operating on wealthy, white patients.<sup>15</sup> While there are no records on whether these women consented to such treatment, Sims did not care. After four years of (mostly unsuccessful) experimentation on Black slaves, Sims began to conduct surgeries on White women with the use of anesthesia.<sup>16</sup>

Sims’s career in New York expanded his reputation from regional to national. In 1853, Sims left Montgomery and moved to New York City. He gained the respect of doctors in the city because of his article on the treatment of the vesicovaginal fistula in *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences*; however, doctors did not need him after they learned how to repair the fistula.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Sims decided to create a Woman’s Hospital—the first of its kind outside of the one he created in Alabama. The Hospital was successful, but in 1871, Sims resigned after an intense debate with the Board about the hospital treating cancer patients. Sims’s resignation led him to become instrumental in establishing America’s first cancer center: the New York Cancer Hospital.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, he was named president of the American Medical Association from

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<sup>13</sup> Deidre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Owens, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Holland.

<sup>17</sup> Sims, 267.

<sup>18</sup> Sims, 438.

1876 to 1877.<sup>19</sup> The success of Sims's Woman's Hospital, coupled with his recognition by the AMA, expanded his legacy beyond the South and gynecology—creating the foundation for his memorialization across the country.

The simultaneous rise of medical journals and the field of gynecology allowed for this new group of professionally educated doctors to promote their views about the biological inferiority of Blacks and foreigners.<sup>20</sup> Sims established his initial reputation in New York from an article he wrote in a medical journal. The publication of these types of articles allowed for his techniques and ideology to be transmitted to broad audiences. Scientific articles written by doctors such as Sims claimed to be objective, but many of them supported biological racism—evidenced through their treatment of Black and foreign patients. When men began to study gynecology, Owens wrote that they argued that their advances “should be trusted precisely because they were now leading a new medical field that was formerly considered the domain of women, who were considered inherently inferior.”<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, Thomas Wright's article in the *Baltimore Medical and Philosophical Lyceum* served as one of the first teaching guides for gynecologists and a tool for white cultural comprehension of blackness, according to Owens.<sup>22</sup> The article did not mention special attention that the physician needed to pay to enslaved women, but rather detailed his enslaved patient being dragged, dumped on the floor, disrobed, and laid out for observation. Medical journals fueled the expansion of the racist experimentation and ideology of early gynecologists.

Through his extensive publication and international career, Sims's version of the speculum and repair of the vesicovaginal fistula became well-known. Despite his unethical

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<sup>19</sup> Sims, 438.

<sup>20</sup> Owens, 100.

<sup>21</sup> Owens, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Owens, 27.

treatment of Black enslaved women and foreigners, he became a model for South Carolina doctors after his death. Although versions of the vaginal speculum existed before Sims, the one he developed had great influence among doctors and became widely used for dilation and examination. Moreover, he discovered a surgical technique to repair the vesicovaginal fistula, a previously incurable condition.<sup>23</sup> These breakthroughs earned Sims the title of the “father of gynecology,” which was first pronounced in his obituary and then became commonly accepted among the medical profession.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Holland.

<sup>24</sup> “A Famous Surgeon Dead: The Important Life Work of Dr. J. Marion Sims,” *The New York Times*, November 14, 1883.

### Chapter 3: Women in Lost Cause Memorialization

The path to erecting a memorial to J. Marion Sims on the South Carolina statehouse grounds cannot be understood without an adequate understanding of women's involvement in the Lost Cause memorialization and the formation of Southern women's clubs. After the end of Reconstruction, in an attempt to justify their actions in the Civil War, White Southern men and women began to promote a narrative that justified the Confederate war cause, promoted slavery as a benign institution, and asserted that Black people are biologically inferior to White people. This narrative is referred to as the Lost Cause, and it has changed over time in response to the social realities of the South. During the Civil War, women took on new roles outside of the home and following the war, they became heavily involved in forming memorial organizations to erect statues to male Confederate heroes. These memorial organizations made way for the formation of Southern women's clubs that conducted much of the same work.

The Lost Cause narrative developed immediately after the end of the Civil War, and women's involvement was especially pronounced in Columbia. In his book, *Civil War Canon: Sites of Confederate Memory in South Carolina*, historian Thomas Brown details the trajectory of Lost Cause commemoration in Columbia, South Carolina. As the capital of the first Southern state to secede from the union, Columbia serves as a vantage point for studying the abundance of commemorative associations, museums, publications, and monuments erected in remembrance of Confederate soldiers, according to Brown.<sup>25</sup> In the late 1860s, South Carolina women formed the South Carolina Memorial Association in reaction to the enfranchisement of African Americans; their work centered on filling the landscape with supposed Confederate heroes so as

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas J. Brown, "The Evolution of the Lost Cause," *Civil War Canon: Sites of Confederate Memory in South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 93.

to rewrite the nature of the war.<sup>26</sup> While men initially encouraged women's involvement in the Lost Cause memorialization movement, tensions began to develop during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Veterans' associations began to carry out this same work, but their celebratory war events became more popular, and they pushed women to the side and placed white supremacy center stage.<sup>27</sup> Because of their exclusion from veterans' association events, women understood the necessity to update their Confederate remembrance efforts into a new social vocabulary, and thus formed southern women's clubs like the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Woman's Auxiliary of the South Carolina Medical Association to further their goal of preserving white dominance.

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<sup>26</sup> Brown, "The Evolution of the Lost Cause." *Civil War Canon: Sites of Confederate Memory in South Carolina*, 93.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, "The Evolution of the Lost Cause," 101.

## Chapter 4: South Carolina Commemoration of Sims on State House Grounds

### 1905-1925– Agitation for a Memorial Begins

Early agitations for a monument to J. Marion Sims appeared in the *South Carolina Medical Association Journal*, which was created in 1905. A branch of the national American Medical Association, the South Carolina Medical Association became the first Southern chapter to produce such a publication. In the early volumes, many of the articles focused on medical advancements achieved by South Carolinians over the past couple of decades, always regarding Sims as the pinnacle of innovation and success. Doctors heralded Sims as a role model for their colleagues to emulate. In discussing W. C. Norwood of Cokesbury, South Carolina, in his discovery of the veratrum, L.B. Bates, another medical doctor, wrote that Dr. Norwood rated with “that other eminent South Carolinian, J. Marion Sims, as one of the world’s greatest benefactors.”<sup>28</sup> W. H. Lawton similarly lauded Sims as the pinnacle of the medical profession. In describing one of his students, Lawton remarked that he ascended “from a medical ignoramus to a Marion Sims.”<sup>29</sup> In his annual address, H.R. Black, the president of the South Carolina Medical Association, encouraged physicians to prepare and write papers about their work when they are asked to do so. Black cited Sims as an example, because even though he was a medical genius, he often did not publish papers until he was encouraged by friends.<sup>30</sup> While Sims died 20 years before the creation of the journal, his medical discoveries kept him relevant to twentieth-century South Carolina doctors.

South Carolinians began to call for a statue of J. Marion Sims a few years after the founding of the *Journal*. From the start, these agitations stressed the involvement of women. In

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<sup>28</sup> L.B. Bates, “Veratrum Viride,” *JSCMA 1* (March 1906): 300.

<sup>29</sup> W. H. Lawton, “Notes of Abortion and it’s Treatment,” *JSCMA 4* (July 1908): 355.

<sup>30</sup> H.R. Black, “Presidential Address,” *JSMCA 2* (February 1907): 447-448.



1906, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) spearheaded the installation of a memorial to former Governor and U.S. Senator Wade Hampton on the statehouse grounds in Columbia. After the construction of this memorial, talk about construction of a Sims memorial began. In July 1907, an article in the *Lancaster News* suggested erecting a statue to Sims in Lancaster, South Carolina. The article noted that New Yorkers put up a monument in Central Park to Sims in 1884, but Sims's hometown did not have a single monument or memorial dedicated to him.<sup>31</sup> Surprisingly, the Medical Association of Laurens (a town 85 miles from Lancaster) donated the first \$100 towards the construction of a monument to Sims. The Laurens physicians proposed that if other counties followed suit over \$4,000 would be raised. The editorial suggested that women could be large contributors in this effort, "as woman is the chief beneficiary of Sims's wonderful discovering and inventions, the women of South Carolina can no doubt be relied on to aid in perpetuating his memory in stone."<sup>32</sup> These men knew the extent to which women were involved in Confederate war memorialization and thought their efforts could easily translate into commemorating Sims, a benefactor of their gender.

In 1907, South Carolina doctors praised Sims for his knowledge of the female body and urged other doctors to follow his example. At the end of 1907, Rolfe E. Hughes (of Laurens, South Carolina) in his address to the Tri-State Medical Association of Virginia and the Carolinas, expressed the necessity of doctors knowing more about the female body. He stressed that because doctors are by nature closer to the female body than any other profession, they should be able to "appreciate the influence of the sex in the social state."<sup>33</sup> He noted that this knowledge is not simply medical or surgical, but rather extends to moral and psychological

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<sup>31</sup> J. W. Jervey ed., "Notes and Comments Section of 1907 Section of JSCMA," *JSCMA* 3 (July 1907): 66.

<sup>32</sup> *Lancaster News*, "Monument to J. Marion Sims," *JSCMA* 3 (July 1907): 98.

<sup>33</sup> Rolfe E. Hughes, "Medical Diplomacy: President's Address at the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Tri-State Medical Association, of Virginia and the Carolina held at Jamestown," *JSCMA* 3 (December 1907): 342.

processes. In his opinion, saving a woman's life with a hysterectomy meant nothing if a doctor harmed some part of her sensitive nature. Sims, in his opinion, possessed these perceptive qualities regarding the nature of women. Hughes wanted current doctors to adopt the same understanding and special care towards their female patients.

The Sims memorialization project did not operate in isolation, but rather in tandem in form and content with other monument constructions on the statehouse grounds. During the late 1890s, the Wade Hampton Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Columbia became potent in their promotion of a new Lost Cause narrative. As many members of the UDC were born after the Civil War, they rooted Confederate women's citizenship in productivity, rather than the sacrifices of the war years. The UDC established the Confederate Relic Room, began a college essay contest on Confederate history, and published a two-volume work describing women's work in the war efforts. Southern men pushed to establish a monument to women on the statehouse ground to celebrate their involvement in memorial efforts.<sup>34</sup> *The [Columbia] State* newspaper launched fundraising for the Monument to Confederate Women in February 1909, and the governor signed the legislation on March 3, 1909.<sup>35</sup> Simultaneously, the SCMA house of delegates elected a committee of three, consisting of Drs. T. Grange Simons, C.W. Kollock, and S. Chandler Baker, to suggest at the next annual meeting that a memorial should be constructed to J. Marion Sims. These three men would be in charge of fundraising for the construction of the memorial somewhere in the state. In his 1909 president's address, S.C. Baker noted that calls for a memorial to Sims had appeared in the columns of the *Journal* since its inception and that it had printed a large picture of the Marion Sims statue in New York in

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<sup>34</sup> Brown, 112.

<sup>35</sup> "South Carolina Monument to the Women of the Confederacy," *Historic Columbia*, 2019.

March 1907 to spark interest in this memorialization effort.<sup>36</sup> After the Committee on the Sims Memorial formed, the members had to raise appropriate funds, design a memorial, and find a suitable location for it. The simultaneous construction of the Women's Memorial and the Sims Monument is not mere happenstance, but rather deliberate to construct a specific narrative about women.

Both the Sims Memorial project and the Monument to Confederate Women exalt women for their highest calling—reproduction and motherhood. The South Carolina Medical Association wanted a memorial to a doctor on the statehouse grounds to have a representative of their profession. In choosing Sims, who made his medical career treating the reproductive organs of women, doctors claimed that they honored both the heroic doctor and women alike. In this way, the doctors only viewed women in terms of their reproductive capabilities. In the case of the Monument to Confederate Women, the women of the UDC did not want a monument dedicated to themselves, as they wanted their legacy to reside in their educational programs. The men behind the monument did not care about women's attitudes, as they were anxious about women's growing role in society. They wanted to construct a monument to cement traditional gender roles and white supremacy. In 1912, the South Carolina Monument to the Women of the Confederacy was installed at the State House and celebrated the role of motherhood as “the highest calling of womanhood.”<sup>37</sup>

The fundraising scheme of the SC Monument to Confederate Women and the Sims Memorial, as well as prominent sculptor Frederick Ruckstull's beliefs and involvement in both memorials provides further connections between the two. S. Chandler Baker, chairman of the Committee on the Sims Memorial, suggested Frederick Ruckstull as the sculptor of the Sims

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<sup>36</sup> S.C. Baker, “The President's Address,” *JSCMA* 5 (May 1909): 211.

<sup>37</sup> Brown, 121.

Memorial. Ruckstull had devoted much of his career to creating Confederate monuments across the Southern landscape to promote the Lost Cause narrative, including the South Carolina Monument to Confederate Women in 1912. In April 1910, at a meeting of the SCMA in Laurens, South Carolina, Baker mentioned that he had found a Paris-based artist (Ruckstull) who could construct the monument for \$9,000 if the SCMA placed the order before the end of the year. He reported that the Committee contacted Ruckstull, and he was going to create a memorial that highlighted the physical features of Sims and his work.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Baker also reported that the state legislature agreed to donate half of the cost of the statue if the other half was raised by the medical profession.<sup>39</sup> This plan paralleled the SC Monument to Confederate Women, for which state contributed 50 percent and men of the state contributed 50 percent. This similarity in funding arrangements underscores the relationship between the monuments. As the Committee secured an artist and legislative funding, all they had to do was raise \$4,500 for the memorial from local SCMA chapters.

As the editor of the right-wing magazine *Art World*,<sup>40</sup> Ruckstull was a militant critic of modernity and what he called “degenerate art,” the same term used by the Nazis in 1930s. Even though *Art World* only lasted 18 months, art historian Michael Lobel noted that it became the American mechanism that propagated the idea of degeneration.<sup>41</sup> This magazine was one of the most prominent places where degeneration and visual arts were linked.<sup>42</sup> In 1917, Ruckstull published a manifesto declaring that when an artist departs from the beauty of nature, he is intellectually underdeveloped. He contrasted Raphael’s *Transfiguration*, the pinnacle of high art,

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<sup>38</sup> J. C. Sosnowski ed., “The Sims Memorial Again,” *JSCMA* 7 (January 1911): 18.

<sup>39</sup> “Summary of transactions of the House of Delegates in Laurens, April 19, 1910,” *JSCMA* 6 (April 1910): 178.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Lobel, “American Degeneracy,” *ArtForum*, June 27, 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Lobel, “American Degeneracy.”

<sup>42</sup> Lobel.

with the “ugly,” “vulgar,” “vile,” “inept,” and “abnormal” modern art of Manet, Van Gogh and Degas.<sup>43</sup> It was not enough to condemn the artwork; he believed that the artist must be condemned as well. In a 1998 article, art historian Albert Boime traced the similarities between Ruckstull’s rhetoric in the 1910s and the Nazis’ form of degenerative art that appeared twenty years later. Boime concluded that Ruckstull’s writings, particularly in *Art World*, had a direct influence on the Nazis’ idea and fulfillment of the “Entartete Kunst” exhibition that displayed so-called degenerative art in 1937.<sup>44</sup> The Nazis’ adoption of Ruckstull’s terminology coupled with his construction of the women’s memorial to cement traditional gender roles showcase the dangerous implications of the Lost Cause narrative.

Ruckstull’s statement do not provide the only connection between the Sims Memorial Project and the eugenics movement; members of the initial Sims Committee advocated sterilization policies. The eugenics movement began at the start of the twentieth century by America’s wealthiest and most powerful men to assert dominance over the most helpless in society.<sup>45</sup> To this end, eugenics designated defective, feeble-minded, and unfit individuals, terms applied to anyone who strayed from the Germanic Nordic or Anglo-Saxon Protestant ideals. Benjamin O. Whitten, the superintendent of the South Carolina State Training School for the Feeble-Minded, was the most vocal advocate for sterilization in South Carolina.<sup>46</sup> S. Chandler Baker, the first advocate for a Sims Memorial, served as a member of the Board of Regents of the Training School and was an advocate for sterilization of the “feeble-minded.” *The State* reported in 1917 on a “very interesting” meeting of the Seventh District Medical Association

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<sup>43</sup> Lobel.

<sup>44</sup> Lobel.

<sup>45</sup> Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak* (Washington D.C.: Dialogue Press, 2012), 7.

<sup>46</sup> Edward Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 91.

where several papers on hereditability of insanity, feeble-mindedness, and criminal tendencies were discussed.<sup>47</sup> Baker argued for the sterilization of insane men, and H.M. Stuckey, Daisey Lee Stuckey's husband, participated in the conversation, "bringing out new points in an interesting and instructive manner."<sup>48</sup> Far before the Sims memorial project was completed, many of the men involved in the campaign had clearly expressed their support of eugenics and sterilization.

During the initial fundraising period, many doctors mentioned Sims's patients; unsurprisingly, these Southern doctors always overlooked and/or commended his brutal treatment of enslaved women. In 1910, J.C. Sosnowski, the editor of the *Journal*, wrote that he was inspired by Sims's writings about his interactions with his patients. He noted "the keen attention to every detail, the consideration of the patient, the gratitude for suggestion and help, the humble modesty, bespeak the great man."<sup>49</sup> Sosnowski conveniently disregarded Sims's descriptions of the repeated procedures that he inflicted on Black slaves. In an essay on Sims, J. H. Allen noted that "he was always a gentleman and always guided by the strictest regard for his very high code of ethics."<sup>50</sup> While Allen acknowledged the evils of slavery in his essay (an institution that had been illegal for nearly 50 years), he provided a backhanded justification for the institution by citing Sims's experimentation. He wrote, "under no other conditions could Sims, through four long years of patient experiments have had such opportunities for perfecting his experiments as on the persons of these simple, trusting slaves."<sup>51</sup> Allen noted that Sims treated these slaves as kindly as he did noble ladies in foreign countries and commented that

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<sup>47</sup> "Men of Medicine Meet in Sumter," *The State*, March 24, 1917, 2.

<sup>48</sup> "Men of Medicine Meet in Sumter," 2.

<sup>49</sup> J. C. Sosnowski ed., "The County Secretaries: The Sims Memorial," *JSCMA* 6 (May 1910): 208-09.

<sup>50</sup> J. H. Allen, "An Essay on the Life of Dr. J. Marion Sims," *JSCMA* 7 (January 1911): 43.

<sup>51</sup> J. H. Allen, "An Essay on the Life of Dr. J. Marion Sims," 46.

Sims's assistants and co-worker in Alabama affirmed his kindness, attesting to his "tenderness and faithfulness to the poor."<sup>52</sup> While it is clear that most doctors knew of Sims experimentation on Black female slaves, they did not examine his practices critically, but rather promoted an image of a gentle, loving doctor concerned only with his patients' best interests.

Doctors also recognized Sims as a representative for the medical profession broadly, not just in his area of expertise. Sims's lasting legacy as a doctor lies in his treatment and cure of the vesicovaginal fistula, but during the early 1910s, many doctors referenced his other medical accomplishments. J. H. Allen mentioned Sims's experiments on curing club foot, correcting cross-eyes and treatment of trismus nascentium.<sup>53</sup> In discussing treatment of gunshot wounds in the abdomen, Lindsay Peters wrote that Sims revolutionized this field, as he changed professional opinion from a policy of non-interference to one of surgical intervention.<sup>54</sup> Edgar Hines also wrote about Sims's successful operations of liver abscess in 1835, removal of the upper and lower jaw of a human in 1837, and amputation of the cervix uteri.<sup>55</sup> Baker underscored the necessity of the medical profession having a memorial in South Carolina, and no one better represented their community than Sims. Prior to the monument building campaign, Sims was only acclaimed for his advancements in gynecology, but the journal became filled with citations of Sims's other medical accomplishments to increase awareness and raise money for the project.

Despite the Committee's initial momentum and the seemingly strong interest of South Carolina doctors in constructing a monument, their fundraising efforts had made little progress by 1911. Baker reported that the Sims Memorial Act, which provided that the legislature would

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<sup>52</sup> J. H. Allen, 46.

<sup>53</sup> J. H. Allen, 45.

<sup>54</sup> Lindsay Peters, "Brief Remarks on Gunshot Wounds of the Abdomen, with Report of Cases," *JSCMA* 9 (June 1913): 143.

<sup>55</sup> Edgar A. Hines, ed, "J. Marion Sims (1813-1883)," *JSCMA* 10 (February 1914): 396.

allocate up to \$5,000 for a memorial if the SCMA contributed an equal amount, passed the senate and was awaiting passage in the house.<sup>56</sup> He said if every member donated \$3 to the fund, the campaign would reach \$5,000, and the project would be complete. He mentioned that while the committee tried to get South Carolina women to raise \$2,500, “they do not seem to appreciate the privilege that has been granted to them [by Sims] and so far, they’ve only raised \$60.”<sup>57</sup> Baker admonished the women for their failure to recognize the work that Sims did on their behalf. He suggested that the monument to Sims be placed on the statehouse grounds in Columbia, as it would be accessible to everyone; he hoped civilians and doctors alike would be inspired by the memorial to Sims.<sup>58</sup> Having a memorial to someone in the medical profession on the statehouse grounds seems to have arisen after the completion of the State House with the Dome in 1906, as the state started to turn its attention to the landscape that surrounded the building. The UDC’s monument to Wade Hampton was a part of this movement. After seeing a political icon memorialized on the statehouse grounds, doctors felt that they were worthy of commemoration as well, and they wanted a memorial dedicated to their profession. Baker hoped that the monument would be unveiled on January 25, 1913—the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sims’s birth.

S.C. Baker’s recommendation for the statehouse grounds stuck, but the Sims Memorial Committee efforts began to plateau. In 1912, the General Assembly passed the resolution that provided for the erection of a statue on the Columbia statehouse grounds to J. Marion Sims. Subsequently, the SCMA House of Delegates decided to create a subcommittee in each county

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<sup>56</sup> S.C. Baker, “Report Sims Memorial Committee,” *JSCMA* 7 (June 1911): 233.

<sup>57</sup> S.C. Baker, “Report Sims Memorial Committee,” 234.

<sup>58</sup> S.C. Baker, 234.



that would collect subscriptions to the *Journal* and advance the project in every way.<sup>59</sup> In dividing these responsibilities, the bulk of the fundraising would not be concentrated in one particular area, but rather it would be equally distributed across counties. By April 1913, editor Edgar A. Hines reported that the Committee had received one-third of the money for the Sims monument. The doctors had hoped to complete the memorial by the centennial of Sims's birth, but after four years of fundraising they had only achieved a little over \$1,500, not nearly enough for a memorial.

By the mid-1910s, the SCMA leadership began to close the memorialization campaign and look at alternatives because of their failure to collect adequate funds. In April 1914, no additional funds had been collected for the monument construction. Because of the waning interest, Baker suggested constructing a hospital, medical library, or a memorial home instead.<sup>60</sup> None of these ideas stuck, and by 1916, the Sims Memorial project came to a halt. G. A. Neuffer, president of the SCMA, urged the House of Delegates to end the memorial enterprises. It was clear that no one wanted to contribute anymore, and the Sims Memorial Committee did not raise enough money to construct the monument as it stood.<sup>61</sup> Many of the doctors suggested shifting their focus to constructing a monument to Norwood instead—another pioneer in the medical field.

Because of the fundraising failures of the Committee coupled with World War I, the Sims Memorial Committee closed their campaign by the mid-1920s. At this point, the SCMA was desperate to have *a* monument, and it became clear that they did not have a particular attachment

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<sup>59</sup> "House of Delegates: Minutes of House of Delegates, South Carolina Medical Association, April 16, 1912," *JSCMA* 8 (April 1912): 180.

<sup>60</sup> "Report of Committee on Sims Monument – April 14, 1914," *JSCMA* 10 (April 1914): 662.

<sup>61</sup> G. A. Neuffer, "Minutes of the House of Delegates, Sixty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the South Carolina Medical Association," *JSCMA* 12 (February 1916): 246.

to Sims. It was more important to them for a monument to be erected to a South Carolina doctor than Sims in particular. The Sims Memorial Committee agreed not to bring up the matter again until the next Legislative elections.<sup>62</sup> Despite the earlier mentions of having secured one-third of the funds to construct the monument, by 1916, the balance for the memorial was only \$50.<sup>63</sup> It is unclear where the original funds went, but in 1915, W. A. Tripp wrote a “Report of the Committee on Neurology” in which he mentioned tabling money collections until the “financial situation cleared up.”<sup>64</sup> By 1917, the memorialization campaign was—for all intents and purposes—dead. This same year, the United States entered World War I. Because the loss and hardship of the war, during which Baker died in the Spanish flu epidemic, the memorialization campaign had little potency, and there was essentially no mention of Sims or a memorialization project from 1918 until 1925 in the journal.

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<sup>62</sup> “Sims Memorial Committee Minutes,” *JSCMA 13* (July 1917): 611.

<sup>63</sup> “Report Sims’ Memorial Committee to A.M.A Read,” *JSCMA 14* (September 1918): 183.

<sup>64</sup> W. A. Tripp, “Report of Committee on Neurology,” *JSCMA 11* (February 1915): 166.

### 1926-1927—Revival of the Campaign and Creation of Woman’s Auxiliary

The revival of the memorialization efforts did not begin until the creation of the Woman’s Auxiliary to the SCMA and their adoption of the Sims Memorial project. Responding to a push from the national American Medical Association, Woman’s Auxiliary groups formed all around the country in the mid-1920s. The AMA wanted these auxiliary organizations to support state and county medical associations and give women more opportunities to become engaged in their husbands’ work. The South Carolina Woman’s Auxiliary was a part of this movement and formed in 1923.<sup>65</sup> In the SCMA Woman’s Auxiliary, membership was initially only open to the wives of the current members, but it was later extended to mothers and daughters.

Daisy Lee Stuckey, elected president of the Woman's Auxiliary in 1926, detailed the responsibilities of the new organization in her inaugural address. She was the wife of Henry M. Stuckey, a friend of S. C. Baker since their days together at Davidson College in the late 1880s. In her inaugural message, Stuckey stated that the goal of the woman’s association was to assist the medical profession to better public health throughout the state.<sup>66</sup> She noted that there were many communities and cities in South Carolina that desperately needed the work of the Auxiliary, and she cited the necessity of building more school clinics, hospital supervising committees, and hiring county and city nurses. The public health and education projects of the Woman’s Auxiliary largely mirrored those of clubwomen throughout the region. In addition to their community work, the Woman’s Auxiliary oversaw the monthly magazine, the *Hygeia*. In this same address, Daisey Lee Stuckey suggested that Baker’s efforts in memorializing Sims be

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<sup>65</sup> “Description of Women's Auxiliary of the South Carolina Medical Association Records,” 1931-1975 (Medical University of South Carolina Library).

<sup>66</sup> Daisey Lee Stuckey, “President’s Message,” *JSCMA* 22 (July 1926): 173.

revived.<sup>67</sup> The *SCMA Journal* also opened a new column this month dedicated to the Woman's Auxiliary, where the women could record their activities.

The creation of the Woman's Auxiliary to the South Carolina Medical Association was one of many Southern women's clubs established at the end of the nineteenth century. While Northern women had been involved in these types of organizations since the 1880s, White Southern women became involved at the turn of the century to participate in educational campaigns and promote the Lost Cause narrative in new ways. Northern and Southern clubwomen both studied literature and history, built libraries, and lobbied for better sanitation facilities. However, Southern clubwomen faced much greater opposition than their Northern counterparts, because many people believed that clubs disrupted the idea of traditional gender roles as women expanded their work outside the domestic sphere.<sup>68</sup> In Joan Marie Johnson's book *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region, and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930*, she traced the formation and work of clubwomen in South Carolina. She wrote that the accomplishments of South Carolina clubwomen resided not in their progressive social reform agenda, but rather in their ability to mold "Southern identity construction with social reform work and to reconcile tradition with progress."<sup>69</sup> This work was accomplished through the reworking of the Lost Cause memorialization movement.

The formation of the United Daughters of the Confederacy initially typified this new language and advocacy movement. In 1895, South Carolina women founded the Wade Hampton Chapter of the UDC (and Southern men built a monument to honor their efforts, as discussed above). The 1901 article "Problem of the Feminine," published in the statewide UDC division

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<sup>67</sup> Edgar A. Hines, "The Sims Memorial Revived," *JSCMA* 22 (July 1926): 161-162.

<sup>68</sup> Joan Marie Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region, and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 1.

<sup>69</sup> Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region, and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930*, 2.

magazine, summarized the new Social Darwinist foundations of the Lost Cause women's gender ideology.<sup>70</sup> It reasoned that while men and women were created as equal counterparts, women became permanently degraded after Eve ate the apple in the Garden of Eden. From this point forward, men's use of chivalry was the only way to elevate women, erasing all of their autonomy. Because of the changing societal norms and gender roles as a result of modernity, White clubwomen tried to promote the values and order found in the past. But, before they could champion values from the past, they had to create an appropriate version of the past.<sup>71</sup>

Through rewriting the history of the Civil War and the Confederacy, women could invent traditions, transform defeat into near victory, and promote these ideas to large audiences. This reliance on tradition provided a sense of stability in the rapidly changing new century.

Clubwomen did not keep their memorialization and historical writing efforts confined in their own circles, but rather sought to transmit their ideals of Southern and American identity to the public through memorial work, educational outreach, and the creation of libraries.<sup>72</sup>

Understanding the changing role of women, Southern clubwomen attempted to create new ideals of womanhood that embraced both traditional ideals of the "Southern Lady" and more progressive notions of the "New Woman."<sup>73</sup> South Carolina clubwomen had to walk this narrow path, as in large part white supremacy rested upon the intersection of race and sex.

Southern women's involvement in clubs and the UDC created the foundation for a new landscape with implications that extended far beyond their lifetimes. Ironically, before women were given the right to vote, they raised funds, gave speeches, wrote articles, and lobbied the

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<sup>70</sup> Brown, 107.

<sup>71</sup> Johnson, 25.

<sup>72</sup> Johnson, 27.

<sup>73</sup> Johnson, 17.

state legislature to build monuments to honor the Confederacy and white supremacy.<sup>74</sup> Johnson noted that when they looked to the past to build a New South, women clubs' efforts clearly demonstrated that the past could not simply be remembered; rather, a "collective memory had to be reinvented, reshaped, reconstructed."<sup>75</sup> Their work changed the physical landscape of Southern towns, created new holidays, and altered school curriculums to honor these newly created traditions.<sup>76</sup> Collective memory of past events creates the foundation of individual identity within a community. South Carolina historian W. Eric Emerson wrote, "Commemorations provide a vehicle for nostalgia, the veneration of events, symbols, and persons."<sup>77</sup> The implications of such memorials lay far beyond their remembrance of past events. Their significance arises from the ways in which they shape future power dynamics within a community, specifically in the control of political power.<sup>78</sup> Creating a landscape that promotes a white supremacist historical narrative clearly denotes community values and, in a way, provides fertile ground for violence against those who do not fit into this particular mold.

The inaugural Auxiliary project of the Sims Memorial arose from an address on Sims delivered by physician Sophia Brunson at the 1926 state convention for the Medical Association in Sumter, South Carolina. Brunson lamented that the present generation did not know much about Sims as there had been no visible memorial erected to him in his home state.<sup>79</sup> In her speech, Brunson casually mentioned Sims's operation on Black female slaves without

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<sup>74</sup> Johnson, 27.

<sup>75</sup> Johnson, 28.

<sup>76</sup> Johnson, 27.

<sup>77</sup> W. Eric Emerson, "Commemoration, Conflict, and Constraints: The Saga of the Confederate Battle Flag at the South Carolina State House," in *Interpreting the Civil War at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 84.

<sup>78</sup> Jonathan I. Leib, Gerald R. Webster, and Roberta H. Webster, "Rebel with a Cause? Iconography and Public Memory in the Southern United States," *GeoJournal* 52, no. 4 (2000): 304.

<sup>79</sup> Sophia Brunson, "J. Marion Sims," *JSCMA* 22 (July 1926): 174.

anesthesia.<sup>80</sup> Unsurprisingly, she did not criticize this, but rather she referred to Sims as a “God inspired man,” and she condemned the inability of the South Carolina Medical Association to construct a memorial to Sims.<sup>81</sup> She urged South Carolina women to construct a monument instead, as Sims provided new treatments and procedures invaluable to the health of women. While the men of South Carolina did not have a particular attachment to Sims, Brunson did, and thus reignited the campaign to construct a memorial.

The Woman’s Auxiliary project took off quickly, Members began fundraising, creating a memorial edition of the *Journal*, and holding local ceremonies to Sims on the anniversary of his death. The standard requested donation for the Sims Memorial was three dollars for every doctor and two dollars for every nurse and doctor’s wife; many debated whether the donations should be voluntary or mandatory.<sup>82</sup> They declared October 1926 as the Sims Memorial edition of the *Journal*, and they encouraged every local medical society to set aside a special program to Sims in their November meetings to discuss ways to promote the memorial plans. They designated November 13, 1926, the anniversary of Sims’s death, as the day to hold special ceremonies towards a proper memorial to Sims.<sup>83</sup> The Columbia association planned a big outdoor celebration on the statehouse grounds on November 13 to Sims, and the Greenville and Sumter associations followed suit. Their fundraising campaigns were largely successful, because by June 1927 they had collected \$1,000 and needed around \$2,500 to \$3,000 more to finish the project.<sup>84</sup> In November 1927, it was confirmed that the memorial would be placed in Columbia, either on the statehouse grounds or at the University, so the Woman’s Auxiliary increased Richland

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<sup>80</sup> Brunson, “J. Marion Sims,” 174.

<sup>81</sup> Brunson, 174.

<sup>82</sup> George H. Bunch, “President’s Address,” *JSCMA* 23 (May 1927): 363.

<sup>83</sup> Edgar A. Hines, ed., “Sims to be Honored November 13,” *JSCMA* 22 (September 1926): 202.

<sup>84</sup> Edgar A. Hines, ed., “Epoch Plans of the South Carolina Medical Association Under Way,” *JSCMA* 23 (June 1927): 381.

County's quota for their memorial contribution.<sup>85</sup> The Woman's Auxiliary progressed much quicker in their memorialization campaign through their mobilization and diligent accounting than the previous physicians' campaign.

As the members of the Sims Memorial Committee of the South Carolina Medical Association had ties with the eugenics movement from the beginning, the members of the Woman's Auxiliary had similar sympathies. Edward Larson noted that many women became involved with the eugenics movement at the turn of the twentieth century and in every Southern state, women's clubs competed with medical associations in providing the most eager audiences for eugenicists.<sup>86</sup> Despite their exclusion from most scientific and political work in the early twentieth century, many women were hired as eugenics researchers because they were thought to be superior observers of familial relationships, better at gathering personal information from strangers, and worked for less pay.<sup>87</sup> Women's clubs were often chosen as they had much success in passing state laws and local ordinances. In 1898, the South Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs campaigned for a compulsory school-attendance law, and the eugenic segregation of mentally handicapped children seemed like a logical addition to this agenda.<sup>88</sup> Despite Southern men's disdain for women's right to vote, men were keen to use women to promote a eugenic (and white supremacist) agenda. The promotion of white supremacy was closely tied with the sterilization campaign, particularly in South Carolina. While many Southern eugenics advocated for the segregation of mentally handicapped Blacks, Larson remarked that Benjamin Whitten was the most persistent.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Woman's Auxiliary South Carolina Medical Association, "Medical Auxiliary Holds Fall Meeting," *JSCMA* 23 (November 1927): 520.

<sup>86</sup> Edward J. Larson, "'In The Finest, Most Womanly Way:' Women in The Southern Eugenics Movement," *American Journal of Legal History* 39, no. 2 (1995): 122.

<sup>87</sup> Larson, "'In The Finest, Most Womanly Way:' Women in The Southern Eugenics Movement," 121.

<sup>88</sup> Larson, "'In The Finest, Most Womanly Way:' Women in The Southern Eugenics Movement," 122.

<sup>89</sup> Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South*, 92.



It must be noted, however, that the racism of the eugenics movement in the United States was more than a racial divide, which makes the Sims's association particularly interesting. Frances J. Galton established the foundation of the American eugenics movement, which held that Germans and Nordics comprised the superior race. Because the population of these groups were supposedly decreasing, the "unfit" needed to be sterilized to prevent interbreeding and protect the integrity of the white race.<sup>90</sup> Americans from lower-class Scottish and Irish families were deemed unfit and viewed as threats. Edwin Black wrote, "Hence from Ulster County to the Irish slums of Manhattan, to the Kentucky and Virginia hills, poor whites were reviled by eugenicists not only for these ramshackle and destitute lifestyles, but for a heredity that supposedly made pauperism and criminality a genetic trait."<sup>91</sup>

While his career began decades before the eugenics movement, Sims's treatment of Irish immigrant women in the Women's Hospital in New York mirrored his treatment of enslaved women. On their way to the United States, Irish women experienced violence, "hardly less brutal than that experienced from the masters of slave ships."<sup>92</sup> Sims treated some of these immigrants in the charity ward of his hospital. Historian Owens commented that Sims treated Irish women largely the same as he treated enslaved women. She wrote that this similar standard of care was not surprising because racial science, popular media, and racial ideas "held that Irish women were able to withstand physical pain just as black women could."<sup>93</sup> Sims's treatment of Mary Smith, an Irish immigrant, in New York resembled his treatment of Archaea in Montgomery, Alabama. He performed 30 surgeries on her without anesthesia.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 15.

<sup>91</sup> Black, 30.

<sup>92</sup> Owens, 90.

<sup>93</sup> Owens, 95.

<sup>94</sup> Owens, 96.

Many of the supporters and champions of the Sims Memorial supported similar views. In January 1928, Daisy Lee Stuckey wrote that she hoped members of the Woman's Auxiliary were "more in touch with health measures which are remaking the race."<sup>95</sup> To this end, she encouraged women to receive an annual physical examination.

Sims and later eugenicists both believed in the inferiority of Blacks, but their racism manifested in different ways. Whereas Sims did not use anesthesia in his treatment of Black enslaved women and immigrant Whites and treated both groups as experimental subjects, eugenicists directed sterilization policies towards Blacks and "unfit" Whites. Eugenicists feared that these groups reproduced more rapidly than "superior" Whites. Sims's professional emergence in the antebellum South added an important twist to the story, because although slaves were viewed as inferior people, they did not reproduce as quickly as the supposedly superior slaveholders wished. His operation on Irish women adds another layer to the story, as there was little worth attached to Irish women who birthed children. Owens commented that his operation on Irish women did not result in the total control of their reproduction in the same way that it did for enslaved women.<sup>96</sup> His treatment of these women as mere pawns and subjects for experimentation showcased his belief in their inferiority. While Sims's treatment of Black enslaved women's vesicovaginal fistula enabled them to continue to have children, his goal was the same as the eugenics of the twentieth century—the continued dominance of the superior race.

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<sup>95</sup> Daisy Lee Stuckey, "Letter to Auxiliary Members," *JSCMA* 24 (January 1928): 16.

<sup>96</sup> Owens, 98.

### 1928-1929—Finishing Fundraising, Construction, and Unveiling the Memorial

By early 1928, the Woman's Auxiliary finished their fundraising efforts, supported the passage of the Sims Memorial Act, and prepared for the unveiling of the monument. At the start of 1928, the Woman's Auxiliary asked the legislature to supplement the Sims Memorial Fund, as they were close to completing their fundraising efforts (they had \$2,500). The Sims Memorial Act passed the state senate when the project was under the leadership of S.C. Baker, but it never passed the house. In February 1928, the Legislature ratified the Sims Memorial Act. The Act stated that the Legislature would match the Woman's Auxiliary collection once the funds they received exceeded \$2,500, but they would not match anything above \$5,000.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the act confirmed that the memorial to Sims would be placed on the statehouse grounds in Columbia.<sup>98</sup> By May 12, 1928, the Woman's Auxiliary had collected \$3,150.89 in donations.<sup>99</sup> At this point, the women decided to stop their fundraising efforts, because they could erect a memorial for \$6,000, and the legislature agreed to pay for half of the cost.<sup>100</sup> The donation collection officially ended in February 1929 with the Woman's Auxiliary receiving \$3,361.61 in funds, which were matched by the legislature to equal \$6,728.22.<sup>101</sup> The Woman's Auxiliary set the monument to be unveiled in the spring of 1929. Clearly, the women did not choose Ruckstull as the sculptor, as he had proposed to charge \$9,000 in 1910.

As the memorial project advanced, its advocates compensated for Sims's abandonment of South Carolina by stressing his education in the state. Robert Wilson, dean of the Medical College of South Carolina, remarked that Sims not only came from South Carolina, but he also

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<sup>97</sup> "Sims Memorial Act," *JSCMA* 25 (February 1928): 97.

<sup>98</sup> "Sims Memorial Act," 97.

<sup>99</sup> "Contributions to Sims' Memorial," *JSCMA* 24 (June 1928): 145.

<sup>100</sup> "Report South Carolina Auxiliary to Southern Medical Auxiliary, Asheville, N.C., November 13<sup>th</sup>," *JSCMA* 24 (December 1928): 283.

<sup>101</sup> "Sims Memorial Fund," *JSCMA* 25 (February 1929): 334.

received his medical education in the state.<sup>102</sup> While Sims completed some preliminary medical coursework in Charleston, he completed his formal medical education in Pennsylvania. D.M. Douglas, president of the University of South Carolina, wrote in February 1928 that no other graduate of the university had served humanity more nobly than Sims. Douglas noted that he “always held his alma mater in loyal affection and left in his memoirs an interesting and valuable account of his student days on her historic campus.”<sup>103</sup> Sims's autobiography was an important part of his emergence as a representative of the university, as he documented some romantic events in university history, particularly the legendary duel between students James G. Adams and A. Govan Roach. By the end of the memorialization project, the University of South Carolina gained much interest in claiming Sims as its own.

The University embraced the memorial project, as evidenced through the writings of the student body president. Thomas Moore Craig, president of the student body of the University of South Carolina in 1928, expressed his excitement about the possibility of placing the Sims Memorial on campus. The Sims Memorial Act specified that the memorial had to be placed on the statehouse grounds, so it is unclear why Craig lobbied intensely to have it on campus. He wrote to Stuckey immediately after learning about the Woman’s Auxiliary project. In his telegram, he called Sims “the greatest alumnus of this institution.”<sup>104</sup> Craig wrote that he would send a petition with 1,000 names of students to have the memorial put on the South Carolina campus; a statue to him honored “this South Carolinian, who more perhaps than any other single man in the last decade has done more for humanity than anyone else.”<sup>105</sup> Partially due to the influence of the students at the University of South Carolina, the memorial was positioned on the

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<sup>102</sup> Robert Wilson, “An Appreciation of Marion Sims by Dr. Wilson,” *JSCMA* 24 (February 1928): 37.

<sup>103</sup> D. M. Dougals, “Dr. Douglas Pays Tribute to Sims,” *JSCMA* 24 (February 1928): 38.

<sup>104</sup> “Memorial to be Raised to Marion Sims,” *The Gamecock*, March 9, 1928, 5.

<sup>105</sup> “Memorial to be Raised to Marion Sims,” 5.

southeast corner of the state house grounds, opposite the state office buildings, so that University students would walk past the memorial on their way to and from downtown to become inspired by Sims's example.<sup>106</sup>

In the final fundraising period, many physicians continued to highlight Sims's treatment of slaves, still not focusing on their abject conditions, but on Sims instead. In his article "The Physician in South Carolina History," Lesesne Smith described the treatments that Sims performed on "young negro patients."<sup>107</sup> Failing to mention the feelings or attitudes of Sims's patients, Smith remarked that the anxiety and suspense that Sims experienced, coupled with the sheer amount of labor, threatened his health to the point where his family and friends protested against continuation of his medical career. Charles A. Mobley, president of the SCMA in 1932, further commended Sims's unrelenting work. He remarked that Sims persisted amidst repeated failures and refused to stop working despite his own poor health. In summarizing his achievements, Mobley said, "[Sims] was a benefactor of the entire human race."<sup>108</sup>

As men saw themselves as protectors of women in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the establishment of the field of gynecology allowed them to expand this protectorate role, particularly in racialized terms. Many white men saw themselves as the "great white fathers" of their black slaves, giving them free rein for experimentation and treatment.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, the president of the Southern Medical Association, William Bathurst commented that, "There was a time in the distant past when woman was a mere slave and chattel of man. But civilization brought to man a realization of her virtues, her grace, her depth and love of sacrifice and her

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<sup>106</sup> Ethel G. Blatt, letter to the editor, "Mrs. Stuckey Describes Long Campaign Culminating in Memorial to Surgeon," *The State*, May 10, 1929, 14.

<sup>107</sup> D. Lesesne Smith, "The Physician in South Carolina History," *JSCMA* 24 (May 1928): 117.

<sup>108</sup> Charles A. Mobley, "President's Address," *JSCMA* 28 (May 1932): 128.

<sup>109</sup> Owens, 39.

tremendous power for good as the helpmate of the individual and mother of the race.”<sup>110</sup>

Bathurst, of course, was referring to Sims, whom he believed through his own goodwill empowered slave and free women alike. The Sims Memorial, like the Monument to Confederate Women in South Carolina, served as a monument to motherhood. By idealizing motherhood, these men aimed to limit women’s life options by placing domestic responsibilities as their only purpose. Moreover, his comment, “her tremendous power for good as the... mother of the race” served as a reference to the eugenics movement and underscores the reason Sims became a hero for the movement. Sims’s work related to women’s reproductive organs provided a solution to the perceived disparity between superior and inferior people and enabled women to mother *the* race.

The Woman’s Auxiliary, under the leadership of President Daisy Lee Stuckey, unveiled the Sims Memorial on Friday, May 10, at 4:00 p.m. May 10 was also Confederate Memorial Day. The choice to use this date to commemorate Sims was a bit ironic, as he lived in New York City by 1861 and travelled to London to avoid serving in the war. However, the Woman’s Auxiliary stressed his support for the Confederate States of America, and the importance of using this holiday as the day to commemorate him. At the ceremony, Stuckey gave a speech recounting the history of the memorialization process—giving Sophia Brunson credit for the resurgence of the project. Stuckey remarked, “The Sims Memorial represents the loving devotion of grateful hearts to a great benefactor, and it is a loving shrine to South Carolina Womanhood.” She noted that Sims had an abundance of all the qualities needed to make a great surgeon, including “the heart of a lion,” and most notably, “the hand of a woman.”<sup>111</sup> Stuckey noted that he used his gifts to enhance the entire human race, but particularly women.

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<sup>110</sup> William Bathurst, “Excerpts from New Bulletin Woman’s Auxiliary A.M.A.,” *JSCMA* 24 (February 1928): 37

<sup>111</sup> Daisey Lee Stuckey, “History of the Memorial to Dr. James Marion Sims,” *JSCMA* 25 (May 1929): 375-77.



Installed May 10, 1929

Inscription on the left: “The First Surgeon of the Ages in Ministry to Women Treating Alike Empress and Slave.”

Inscription in the center: “Where The Love/ Of Man Is/There Also Is/Love Of The Art” – Hippocrates

Inscription on the right: “He Founded the Science of Gynecology. Was Honored in All Lands and Died with the Benediction of Mankind.”<sup>112</sup>

On the surface, these inscriptions appear somewhat benign in their praise of Sims’s work, but their larger context reveals important contradictions. In “University Notes” published by *The State* newspaper in 1936, Edwin Green transcribed the entire “Precept” by Hippocrates from

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<sup>112</sup> Picture and Inscription: “Monument to J. Marion Sims,” *Historic Columbia*, 2019.

which the sentence, “Where The Love/ Of Man Is/There Also Is/Love Of The Art”<sup>113</sup> was taken.

The whole “Precept” reads:

“I urge you not to be too unkind but to consider carefully your patient’s superabundance or means. Sometimes give your services for nothing, calling to mind a previous benefaction or present satisfaction. And if there be an opportunity of serving one who is a stranger in financial straits give full assistance to all such. For where there is the love of man there is also love of the art. For some patients though conscious that their condition is perilous recover their health simply through their contentment with the goodness of the physician. And it is well to superintend the sick to make them well, to care for the healthy to keep them well, but also to care for one’s own self so as to observe what is seemly.”<sup>113</sup>

Hippocrates “Precept” focused on a physician’s treatment of his patient, and the importance of being attentive to his/her unique needs. Sims has been criticized for failing to heed these admonitions as he repeatedly operated on slaves without anesthesia. As discussed earlier in the paper, Sims chose not to use anesthesia because of the necessity of speed and dexterity to ensure patients would not bleed to death. Even though the absence of anesthesia appeared to have good intentions, his repeated operations on Black enslaved women and Irish immigrants demonstrates his belief in their inferiority. It seems intentional that the one sentence that does not specifically mention patients was chosen for the monument. Even though most advocates for the memorial overlooked Sims’s unethical treatment of slaves, they were not oblivious to it. The particular phrase chosen from the “Precept” may also have to do with Daisey Stucky’s passion for music, and her satisfaction with the diversity of women who came together to erect this memorial. In Ethel Blatt’s letter to the editor praising the Stuckey’s accomplishments, she quoted Stuckey

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<sup>113</sup> Edwin Green, “University Notes,” *The State*, September 14, 1936.



saying that the memorial was a “poem in stone,” and represented a kind of “frozen music.”<sup>114</sup>

Nonetheless, the use of Hippocrates’s “Precept” centered on patient care to speak about Sims is highly ironic.

Even though the erection of the Sims Memorial marked the culmination of the efforts of the Woman’s Auxiliary and the Sims Memorial Committee, their work did not end after May 10, 1929. The State Medical Association at their annual meeting in Charleston refused to discharge the Sims Memorial Committee. Instead, the doctors voted for the women to retain their positions for life to care for the Memorial.<sup>115</sup> After the SCMA saw the passion and urgency with which the Woman’s Auxiliary operated in constructing the Sims Memorial, they granted them greater responsibilities. W.H. Nardin detailed three requests from the SC Medical Association to Woman’s Auxiliaries: 1. Each county begin historical research work of collecting and compiling information about doctors who have practiced and given service in your county as far back as information is available 2. Encourage every doctor’s wife to get a physical examination 3. Plan and undertake local projects that will afford comfortable service to your community.<sup>116</sup> The Woman’s Auxiliary responded enthusiastically to this request as they felt they had a responsibility to know of medical pioneers, and doctors were simply too busy to accomplish this work. The new responsibilities of the Woman’s Auxiliary largely reflect the activities of women’s clubs across the South in promoting the education of their community towards a particular end.

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<sup>114</sup> Ethel G. Blatt, letter to the editor, “Mrs. Stuckey Describes Long Campaign Culminating in Memorial to Surgeon,” 14.

<sup>115</sup> Daisy Lee Stuckey, “To Sims Memorial Donors,” *JSCMA* 26 (1930): 294

<sup>116</sup> W. H. Nardin, “To each and all auxiliaries of the South Carolina Medical Association,” *JSCMA* 24 (December 1928): 283.

### 1929-1935—Deepening Shadow of Sims

The lasting legacy of Sims can be seen in eugenic policies and sterilization legislation. Men and women involved in the memorialization campaign used eugenic language about Sims's work in remaking the race throughout the 1910s. In the early 1910s, the two leading national eugenic organizations, the Committee on Provision for the Feeble-Minded and the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, regularly addressed women's clubs during their trips to the South.<sup>117</sup> Physicians and child welfare advocates also spoke about restriction of marriage and reproduction from the mentally ill. Their efforts had great success, particularly in South Carolina. The State Federation of Women's Clubs shifted the focus of its efforts from building a girls' reformatory to establishing a segregated colony for the mentally ill, and in 1918 the Federation secured a State Training School for the Feeble-Minded and legislation for the medical inspection of school children.<sup>118</sup>

After the opening of the institution in South Carolina, Whitten began to advocate for sterilization—a logical extension of eugenic policy—but he was not successful until 1935, after he secured the support of the South Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs. Shortly after the opening of the institution in 1920, Whitten began to advocate for “sterilization of feebleminded, criminal, or insane persons coming under state control,” but he did not gain momentum until 1930.<sup>119</sup> The passage of the Sterilization Bill in 1935 came after a long battle with the state legislature. Despite Whitten securing a sponsor and the bill quickly passing through the state Senate, he was repeatedly met with opposition in the House of Representatives. In 1935, however, the situation began to change as several opponents of the bill did not seek reelection;

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<sup>117</sup> Larson, “In The Finest, Most Womanly Way:’ Women in The Southern Eugenics Movement,” 123.

<sup>118</sup> Larson, “In The Finest, Most Womanly Way:’ Women in The Southern Eugenics Movement,” 124.

<sup>119</sup> Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South*, 124.

two physicians who favored eugenics entered the legislature; the South Carolina Medical Association formally endorsed the measure for the first time; and the delegates at the annual convention of the South Carolina Federation of Women's Club declared the bill as one of high legislative priority.<sup>120</sup> An editorial published by Mary F. Burts in the Public Welfare department of the State Federation of Women's Clubs strongly advocated for such a law.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, a resolution in favor of sterilization of habitual criminals was sent by the Aiken chapter to the SFWC and the convention in Rock Hill endorsed "sterilization of the mentally unfit."<sup>122</sup> Understanding the influence of women in securing these gains, Whitten commented, "the Federated Clubs are becoming very much interested in the matter. I have decided that the women, the [progressive] preachers, and the social workers will be the main sources of my support for the Bill."<sup>123</sup> The involvement of women's clubs in South Carolina influenced the passage of the sterilization legislation and made the Woman's Auxiliary memorial project to Sims retain relevance and potency.

In addition, W. A. Evans, a notable columnist and eugenics advocate, commended South Carolina for erecting the Sims Monument. He called for a follow-up monument to be constructed to J. C. Nott. While Evans highlighted Nott's accomplishments in speculating mosquitoes were the cause of yellow fever, Nott also conducted much work in race and anthropometry and believed the supposed abnormal shape of the Negro head had lasting influence.<sup>124</sup> As white supremacy proved indistinguishable from the promotion of the Confederate cause, so too is the case with the eugenics movement.

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<sup>120</sup> Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South*, 125.

<sup>121</sup> "State Federation of Women's Clubs," *The State*, December 15, 1929, 36.

<sup>122</sup> "Women Are in Favor of Sterilization of Habitual Criminals," *The State*, January 5, 1934, 7; "Economy Urged by Clubwomen," *The State*, April 11, 1935, 1.

<sup>123</sup> Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South*, 128; In the third (and final) introduction of the sterilization bill, freshman senator Strom Thurmond quickly moved the bill through the Medical Affairs Committee.

<sup>124</sup> W. A. Evans, "How to Keep Well: Honors to Doctor Sims," *The State*, July 31, 1929, 4.

## Chapter 5: University Expansion and Naming of Sims College 1939-1940

The next stage of the memorialization of Sims in Columbia took place on the campus of the University of South Carolina. During the late 1930s, the University of South Carolina underwent a massive expansion because of the increase in student enrollment. In January 1940, President of the University J. Rion McKissick reported that the university had over \$1,000,000 invested in construction and completed projects on the university campus in 1939. Half of this expenditure went to the construction of a new library, and the other large sum of money went to the construction of two new dormitories (one for men and one for women). In the mid-1930s, the enrollment of female students drastically increased at the university, creating the necessity for the construction of a new female dorm. In 1938, Dean of Women Arney Childs wrote to President McKissick that women students had increased from 28 percent to 32 percent of the student body in the last 3 years, and she recommended the construction of a new dormitory.<sup>125</sup> As a result, an additional dormitory, the Marion Sims College, was constructed and completed in 1939 at a cost of \$300,000.<sup>126</sup>

Before they knew about the construction of a new dormitory, female students and faculty members at the university expressed their opinions on the name of the existing female dormitory, but their suggestions largely went unheard. An article in the student newspaper, *The Gamecock*, published in November 1935, noted that women undergraduates would invite suggestions from the faculty about the naming of the women's dormitory, upon which girls would vote and then the Board of Trustees would make a final decision.<sup>127</sup> In 1936, Arney Childs proposed an appointment or election of a group to be known as the Board of Women Councilors of the

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<sup>125</sup> Arney R. Childs, "Letter to Dr. J. Rion McKissick," University of South Carolina: Dean of Women, June 27, 1938.

<sup>126</sup> "USC Building Program Large During 1939," *The State*, January 31, 1940.

<sup>127</sup> "Girls Seek Name for Dormitory," *The Gamecock*, November 1, 1935, 3.

University to decide the name of the dormitory.<sup>128</sup> While McKissick expressed interest in this plan and read it to the Board of Trustees, where it was referred to the Committee on University Archives, the group did not come to fruition.<sup>129</sup> On the contrary, in 1936, *The Gamecock* reported that female students submitted the idea of calling the Woman's Building "Keith Hall" had been submitted to the Committee on Buildings and Grounds within the Board of Trustees, not to a Board of Women Councilors.<sup>130</sup> These women did not know that a new dormitory was being constructed, so they were referring to the existing women's dormitory. Nonetheless, they would have been happy for either dorm to be named after Keith. Although the Board of Trustees did not select Keith as the name for the dormitory, she embodied Southern feminism in the early twentieth century.

Frances Guignard Gibbes Keith, the namesake for "Keith Hall," exemplified the changing role of (Southern) women in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. In honoring Gibbes, undergraduates were highlighting a model of womanhood in her education and marriage. Frances Guignard Gibbes was the first woman who attended South Carolina College as a registered student. During Gibbes's time as a student, Southern views on the rights of women in higher education transformed from the mid-1880s to the beginning of the 1890s. In the 1880s, many articles appeared idealizing the traditional concept of "True Womanhood," which praised women's virtues only to use them as justification to declare women unsuited for higher education.<sup>131</sup> In 1883, the *South Carolina Collegian*, the student newspaper published by literary societies of the South Carolina College, wrote that "it may be said without fear of contraction

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<sup>128</sup> J. Rion McKissick, "Letter to Arney Childs," Arney Childs University Box 1930-1940, South Carolina Library, October 2, 1936.

<sup>129</sup> McKissick, "Letter to Arney Childs."

<sup>130</sup> "Sumter Street," *The Gamecock*, Dec. 11, 1936, 8.

<sup>131</sup> Mary Elizabeth Baskin Waters, "Frances Guignard Gibbes (1870-1948) and the Struggle to Redefine Women's Roles in the New South," PhD diss. University of South Carolina, 2002, 26.

that society is best and purest where the influence of true women is most apparent and most sensibly felt.”<sup>132</sup> Moreover, in 1885, a student Mc D.F. wrote the article “Results of Girls Speaking in Public,” where he warned of the dangers of women speaking in public as it could produce female politicians.<sup>133</sup> However, by 1890, another student, J.M.S., wrote “Women’s Rights to Higher Education,” where he asserted that there are no logical reasons for women to be denied the same education that men receive.<sup>134</sup> These three small examples show that the image of Southern womanhood centered around the cult of domesticity became less potent by the end of the 1890s; the post-Reconstruction South entered a new era with women gaining some of the same rights as men.

Keith embodied a new form of feminism, as she pioneered a new path for women in South Carolina. She spent five semesters at South Carolina College. She did not graduate, but that was not her goal: she simply wanted to become a better writer of poetry, prose, and plays.<sup>135</sup> Waters argued that Keith “lived halfway between yesterday and tomorrow,” as her life began when women did not have a purpose beyond the home, but by the end of her life, after Reconstruction and two world wars, women had made great gains towards personal independence and autonomy.<sup>136</sup> She was a wife, mother, and hostess, representing the typical Southern woman of her day, but she was also a poet and playwright who wrote, produced, and critiqued pieces. Keith was not a radical feminist, as she “exercised feminism in a time when women [...] were mostly relegated to working within the patriarchal system.”<sup>137</sup> However, she

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<sup>132</sup> A.W.S., “Woman,” *The South Carolina Collegian* I, no. 2 (April 1883).

<sup>133</sup> McD. F., “Result of Girls Speaking In Public,” *The South Carolina Collegian*, Volume III, no. 8 (May 1885).

<sup>134</sup> J. M. S., “Woman’s Right To Higher Education,” *The South Carolina Collegian*, Volume III, no. 2 (November 1890).

<sup>135</sup> Waters, “Frances Guignard Gibbes (1870-1948) and the Struggle to Redefine Women’s Roles in the New South,” 30.

<sup>136</sup> Waters, v.

<sup>137</sup> Waters, 136.

sought to change society in small ways by refusing to take no for an answer and crossing barriers quietly with grace. Moreover, Keith lived north of Blossom between Pickens and Bull with her husband Oscar Lovell Keith, a beloved professor at the university. By the 1930s, it seemed that the students, and particularly the female students at South Carolina, saw Keith as a role model and someone worth honoring with the name of their new dormitory. In using her name on the dormitory, they were honoring a marriage, the ultimate convergence of traditional female roles with modernity. The image of womanhood promoted by Keith in challenging the status quo and empowering women was fundamentally different from the one championed by white clubwomen across the state.

Moreover, the sudden death of Keith's husband in 1935 provides further evidence of the reasons why female students wanted to honor her at this particular time. In March 1935, Keith's husband, Oscar Lovell Keith, head of the department of Romance Languages at the University of South Carolina, died unexpectedly at the age of 52. *The Gamecock* wrote a tribute to the work he accomplished at the university and the effect he had on students and colleagues alike. Emmett Kilpatrick, associate professor of Romance Languages, wrote, "It is impossible for anyone to give more energy, time, and thought to his work than Professor Keith gave the students at the University of South Carolina."<sup>138</sup> Shortly after his death, university alumni raised \$7,700 to buy a 2.5-acre property north of Blossom Street between Pickens and Bull streets from Frances Gibbes Keith, where they lived. The school established a botanical garden, the A.C. Moore Garden on Blossom Street. Mrs. Keith was supportive of the botanical garden, and her husband expressed similar support before his death.<sup>139</sup> Keith's sudden death placed Frances Keith at the

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<sup>138</sup> "Beloved Professor Succumbs to Illness," *The Gamecock*, March 8, 1935, 4.

<sup>139</sup> "Alumni Asked to Contribute," *The Gamecock*, February 21, 1936, 1.

forefront of female students' mind when they were asked who they wanted on the name of the dormitory.

While female students at the university expressed their desire to have Keith honored on the new dormitory, the ultimate naming authority remained with the Board of Trustees, who began deliberations in fall 1936. On September 2, 1936, the new building was referred to the Committee on Buildings and Grounds for Naming. In December, at a meeting of the Committee, David Coker suggested that one of the new buildings be named for John M. McBryde, who served as president of the South Carolina College from 1882 until 1891, because he said older alumni of the University requested it. His real motivations were likely that Coker and McBryde illustrated UofSC's contributions to agriculture. He brought up the naming of McBryde in connection with the naming of the Woman's Building, but it seems as though he was committed to having McBryde named for any building, not the Woman's one specifically.<sup>140</sup> Two of his colleagues on the Board expressed their sympathies with these sentiments. Coker's wish did not come to fruition, however, as the naming process was tabled for almost a year.

In 1937, the Buildings and Grounds Committee reconsidered the naming of the woman's dormitory with Solomon Blatt as the leading voice. In March 1937, President McKissick's office submitted five suggestions for the new buildings obtained from members of the faculty. After Cyrus Shealy, a member of the Committee, read a few of the suggestions, Blatt expressed his conviction that that the Woman's Building should be named for a "prominent and financially influential woman."<sup>141</sup> The minutes from the meeting do not specify if Blatt had a particular female in mind but considering Frances Guignard Gibbes Keith's familial influence at the University, it is likely that this reference is to her. Only eight months later, Keith was a guest of

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<sup>140</sup> University of South Carolina Board of Trustee Minutes, South Carolinana Library, December 9, 1936.

<sup>141</sup> University of South Carolina Board of Trustee Minutes, South Carolinana Library, March 9, 1937.



honor at the first banquet of the Columbia alumnae of UofSC, a further illustration of her stature.<sup>142</sup> Trustee Harry Hughes agreed with Blatt, but he suggested the possibility of naming the Woman's Building for someone who had been active in extending the advantages of the University to women.<sup>143</sup> Hughes suggested that Blatt be appointed a committee of one to delve into the names of prominent and financially influential women in the state with the idea of naming the Woman's Building for one of them.

At the July 27, 1939, meeting of the Building and Grounds Committee, the members and the president approved the name of the new female dormitory. McKissick indicated that it had been suggested to him that the new women's dormitory be named in honor of J. Marion Sims, an alumnus of the University class of 1883. Although Blatt suggested they pass over this matter until later in the meeting, by the end of the meeting, the committee approved McKissick's recommendation that the women's dormitory be known as Sims.<sup>144</sup> S. R. Lucas then moved that the old dormitory for women be named Wade Hampton College in honor of Wade Hampton, an alumnus of the University who served as a lieutenant-general in the Confederate army, governor, and United States senator; the Board of Trustees passed the motion. The Wade Hampton Chapter of the UDC served as a pillar of Columbia society, particularly in their creation of the Confederate Relic Room, facilitation of collegiate essay competitions, and planting of trees across the UofSC campus.<sup>145</sup> The naming of female dormitories after Wade Hampton and Sims demonstrated the lasting influence of the representatives of South Carolina clubwomen.

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<sup>142</sup> "Cola Alumnae Meet Tonight," *The Gamecock*, November 12, 1937.

<sup>143</sup> University of South Carolina Board of Trustee Minutes, South Carolinana Library, March 9, 1937.

<sup>144</sup> University of South Carolina Board of Trustee Minutes, South Carolinana Library, July 27, 1939.

<sup>145</sup> "Lee is Honored with Magnolias: Two More Trees to be Planted by Wade Hampton U.D.C.," *The State*, February 17, 1935.

Although the Board of Trustees did not heed Blatt's suggestion about naming the dorm after a woman, his wife's relationship with Daisy Lee Stuckey might provide some explanation of his support for naming the dormitory after Sims. The two women seem to have become acquainted with one another through their membership in women's clubs. Daisy Lee Stuckey was president of the State Federation of Music Clubs from 1927 until 1930, and Ethel G. Blatt was publicity director for the State Federation during 1928-30. After the Woman's Auxiliary completed the Sims Memorial, Ethel Blatt wrote a letter to the editor of *The State* newspaper in 1929 commending Daisy Stuckey's leadership in the campaign for the Sims Memorial. "The Sims Memorial represents the loving devotion of grateful hearts and is a living shrine to South Carolina womanhood," Blatt wrote.<sup>146</sup>

At a time when the role of women, and particularly Southern women, was changing as they recently gained the right to vote and entered universities in greater numbers, it is clear that the Board of Trustees had specific intentions in choosing J. Marion Sims as the name of the dormitory. Their decision continued the efforts of the white Southern clubwomen in promoting a white supremacist historical narrative that underplayed the harsh realities of slavery. Instead of choosing a woman's name for the dormitory, the Board of Trustees entrenched university women's identity in an unethical, racist man.

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<sup>146</sup> Blatt, "Mrs. Stuckey Describes Long Campaign Culminating in Memorial to Surgeon."

## Chapter 6: Repeal the Heritage Act Movement and Renaming Campaign 2017-present

Because of the deeply problematic legacy of J. Marion Sims, recent grassroots efforts have sought to remove the memorial and rename the dormitory. Unfortunately, Sims's name on the dormitory is protected by the Heritage Act. While the statue on the statehouse could be removed without repealing the Act, the name on the dormitory cannot be changed under the current legislation without a two-thirds vote of the legislature.

In 1961, to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the Civil War, the Confederate flag was placed atop the dome of the South Carolina State House. It is not coincidental that the presence of the flag coincides with the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, as Confederate symbols continually resurface during periods of Black emancipation and progress (e.g., in 1877 post-Reconstruction, in 1960 during the Civil Rights Movement, and in the early 2000s with the election of Barack Obama). James Forman Jr., a professor at Yale Law School, noted, "The flag has been adopted knowingly and consciously by government officials seeking to assert their commitment to black subordination."<sup>147</sup> At the time, the decision did not attract much attention as civil rights activists were more concerned with voting rights and ending segregation. However, the battle over the flag reappeared almost forty years later in a long battle between the state and the NAACP.<sup>148</sup>

Ultimately, they reached a compromise to remove the flag from the Capitol dome to a Confederate soldier monument on the statehouse grounds and replace the large flag with a smaller one. As a compromise with the opponents of the relocation of the flag, the South

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<sup>147</sup> Justin Worland, "This is Why South Carolina Raised the Confederate Flag in the First Place," *Time*, June 22, 2015.

<sup>148</sup> Worland, "This is Why South Carolina Raised the Confederate Flag in the First Place."

Carolina legislature passed the Heritage Act, prohibiting the further removal of any symbol or monument to the Confederacy. A section of the Heritage Act reads:

“No Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican War, War Between the States, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War, Native American, or African-American History monuments or memorials erected on public property of the State or any of its political subdivisions may be relocated, removed, disturbed, or altered.”<sup>149</sup>

The legislation notes that the section can only be amended or repealed by the passage of an act that has received a two-thirds vote in each branch of the General Assembly. Since its passage, the legislation has only issued two exceptions—the 2004 addition of Strom Thurmond’s biracial daughter on his plaque and the 2015 removal of the Confederate flag from the statehouse grounds altogether.<sup>150</sup>

In 2000, the South Carolina state legislature understood that the state flag would be the first of many contested monuments; thus, they made the Heritage Act expansive to ensure it prevented further changes. The Act removed municipal and state authority to alter the landscape in the future. In this way, the General Assembly provided a permanent space for white supremacy in the landscape. While Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and North Carolina all have similar bans regarding changing the physical landscape, the supermajority vote required for exceptions as well as the expansiveness of the legislation is unique to South Carolina.<sup>151</sup> In addition to preventing change on the statehouse grounds, the Heritage Act removes all local

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<sup>149</sup> SC Code § 10-1-165 (2012).

<sup>150</sup> Courtney Lewis, “Banning Change: The South Carolina Heritage Act,” *Special Issue: Mobilizing Museum Anthropology*, volume 41, no. 2 (2018): 128.

<sup>151</sup> Lewis, “Banning Change: The South Carolina Heritage Act.”

control in neighborhoods and communities—preventing them from renaming streets, bridges, and schools.

While the Heritage Act has been hotly contested since its inception, the neo-Nazi display in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017 and the death of George Floyd in 2020 have given new life to the movement. After the white supremacist demonstration in Charlottesville during the summer of 2017, different cities across the country began to re-reckon with the implications of monuments and memorials on their physical landscapes. Columbia mayor Steve Benjamin joined the conversation with his conviction that the memorial to J. Marion Sims should be removed on the statehouse grounds. He said, “The most offensive statue I find on our capitol wasn’t the [Confederate] soldier, it was J. Marion Sims.”<sup>152</sup> Despite Benjamin’s convictions, the city does not have control over monuments on the statehouse grounds—the power rests solely in the state legislature, which claims it has its hands tied due to the Heritage Act. The Heritage Act only protects Confederate monuments and other war memorials on state public property. Thus, the legislature could remove the J. Marion Sims Memorial without repealing the Heritage Act. Sims is also honored as the name of a female dormitory at the University of South Carolina, and to change that, an exemption must be granted from the Heritage Act, as it reads:

“No street, bridge, structure, park, preserve, reserve, or other public area of the State or any of its political subdivisions dedicated in memory of or named for any historic figure or historic event may be renamed or rededicated.”<sup>153</sup>

The push to change the Heritage Act gained even more traction in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement in the summer of 2020, as students and alumni of South Carolina’s colleges

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<sup>152</sup> Caitlin Byrd, “Mayor of Columbia Says Statue of J. Marion Sims Should Come Down,” [Charleston] *Post and Courier*, August 16, 2017.

<sup>153</sup> SC Code § 10-1-165 (2012).

and universities created the Repeal the Heritage Act coalition. They began this movement to remove symbols of hate throughout college campuses and embolden local communities to make decisions about the future of South Carolina's landscape.<sup>154</sup>

In addition to legislative attacks on the Heritage Act, three South Carolinians have also filed a lawsuit in the South Carolina Supreme Court claiming that the Heritage Act is unconstitutional. The lawsuit states that the Heritage Act unfairly requires future legislatures to attain a supermajority to change any monument, although the act did not garner that amount of support when it was passed (only 60.5 percent of S.C. House member voted in favor for it); furthermore, it violates the Home Rule principle that gives local towns control over their community.<sup>155</sup> The three plaintiffs in the lawsuit are Jennifer Pinckney, widow of Clementa Pinckney, one of the Charleston nine killed at the Mother Emanuel AME Church in 2015; Howard Duvall, Columbia city council member; and Kay Patterson, a former S.C. House and Senate member.<sup>156</sup> Columbia attorney Matthew Richardson and state senator Gerald Malloy filed the lawsuit. Governor Henry McMaster and Attorney General Alan Wilson stand in opposition to the movement. AG Wilson believes that the supermajority clause is unconstitutional, but he says that the act contains a severability clause where part of it can be found unconstitutional while keeping the remainder of the law in place.<sup>157</sup>

The Repeal the Heritage Act Movement began in June 2020 under the leadership of Jazmyne McCrae. She believes that the COVID-19 pandemic and the reckoning with police brutality that occurred in the summer of 2020 created space for everyone to have a moment of

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<sup>154</sup> "Repeal the Heritage Act," 2020, <https://www.repealtheheritageact.org>.

<sup>155</sup> John Monk, "Lawsuit Asks SC Supreme Court to Declare Heritage Act Unconstitutional," *The State*, July 21, 2020.

<sup>156</sup> Monk, "Lawsuit Asks SC Supreme Court to Declare Heritage Act Unconstitutional."

<sup>157</sup> Laurel Mallory, "SC AG: Heritage Act constitutional, but required two-thirds vote to remove monuments unconstitutional," *WISNews10*, June 25, 2020.

reflection. She notes that this reflection is not only about issues, but also about the people we choose to “litter our landscape with.”<sup>158</sup> She hopes that the Repeal the Heritage Act movement will become tied with a legislative bill concerning hate crimes. By leaving statues standing, “we are making a landscape that is fertile ground for hate crimes,” she remarked.<sup>159</sup> The University of South Carolina’s Presidential Commission on University History has announced that it would consider renaming 16 buildings, including the Sims dormitory.

New York City set a precedent for this movement, as it began working to remove the statue to Sims in Central Park in the early 2010s. For many years, Diane Collier, Chair of Community Board 11 in New York City, had been in discussion with the Department of Parks and Recreation for a panel to contextualize the Sims Memorial on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 103<sup>rd</sup> Street. However, by June of 2016, the conversation shifted from contextualization to removal. After the neo-Nazi display in Charlottesville in August 2017, Collier was particularly moved by Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin’s comment that the Sims monument, not the Confederate soldier, was the most offensive one at the SC State House. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio ordered a 90-day-review of “symbols of hate on city property” and convened a panel that would decide the fate of the Sims monument.<sup>160</sup> The statue was removed in Central Park on April 17, 2018, and it was relocated to Brooklyn’s Green-Wood Cemetery, where Sims is buried.<sup>161</sup> It is interesting that Mayor Benjamin’s comments provided the impetus for Collier to push for the removal of the Sims Memorial, but he is unable to do anything about the memorial in his own city. With the

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<sup>158</sup> Interview with Jazmyne McCrae, Conducted December 3, 2020, Nicole Chandonnet.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Jazmyne McCrae.

<sup>160</sup> David Gonzalez, “A Reminder, in Bronze, of Experiments on Slaves,” *New York Times*, August 21, 2017, A18.

<sup>161</sup> Stephen Kenny, “A Statue of a Doctor Who Experimented on Enslaved People was Removed from Central Park,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 23, 2017 (edited April 17, 2018).

new term of statehouse legislators, the Repeal the Heritage Act coalition hopes they will seriously reconsider the Act, enabling change across the landscape of the state.



## Chapter 7: Conclusion

The road to memorializing J. Marion Sims in Columbia, South Carolina, is two-fold: at the statehouse and on the University of South Carolina's campus. Despite the 11-year gap in the two memorial projects, Southern white supremacist ideologies fueled both campaigns. The involvement of women in Lost Cause memorialization work, the formation of Southern women's clubs, and women's roles in the eugenics movement in the 1920s form the basis for the Sims memorialization campaign. While agitations for a memorial began in the early 1900s, it was not until the Woman's Auxiliary to the South Carolina Medical Association formed and subsequently adopted the project that the commemoration efforts began to materialize. As many of the women from the Auxiliary had prior involvements in women's clubs, they knew how to fundraise and craft a narrative to convince their counterparts that Sims was a figure worth honoring.

The beginning of the eugenics movement in the early 1900s formed the centerpiece upon which the men and women involved in the South Carolina Medical Association and Woman's Auxiliary came to identify Sims as a representative. American eugenicists in the twentieth century wanted to preserve the supposedly superior Nordic and Anglo-Saxon Protestant white race to ensure their dominance. While Sims's career in the antebellum South preceded the eugenics movement, his treatment of female reproductive parts made him a centerpiece for campaigns towards sterilizations. Sims's controversial treatment of Black women, however, was not to sterilize them, but rather to enhance their reproductive to ensure the survival of slavery. The potency of this movement allowed for the Sims memorial to maintain relevance into the 1930s, and it culminated in the naming of a female dormitory at the University of South Carolina after Sims, rather than Frances Guignard Gibbes Keith, the first female student at the university,

whom the female students wanted as the name of their dormitory. While seemingly insignificant, the name of a dormitory sends a message to students at the university of the individuals who are worthy of recognition. For example, Henrie Monteith Treadwell, the first female Black student at the University of South Carolina, lived in the Sims residence hall. Treadwell had overcome countless obstacles to become a student at the University of South Carolina, and when she finally got to the university, she lived in a dormitory named after a man who built his career on his belief in the inferiority of Black women. Every woman, Black or non-Black, who has lived or currently lives in Sims's residence hall should be insulted by this reality.

However, the Heritage Act continues to stand in the way preventing change. As the Sims Memorial on the statehouse grounds is not a war memorial, it is technically not protected by the Heritage Act; the road to removing it (with the Heritage Act still intact) is potentially easier than remaining the dormitory as it would not require an exemption. In June 2020, President Bob Caslen of the University of South Carolina endorsed and moved forward a resolution to rename the Sims residence hall by asking the General Assembly to grant an exemption to the Heritage Act.<sup>162</sup> The support of university administration is critical to making changes on campus, and Caslen's support provides hope for the eventual renaming of the dormitory. Nonetheless, because the Heritage Act is unconstitutional, repealing the legislation should be the General Assembly's first priority to return naming powers to local authorities. Sims's career perpetuated the subjugation of Black women and by continuing to honor him, we honor that legacy, which gives credence to acts of racial violence that occur in our community daily. To create a better, more inclusive, and peaceful future, the Sims Memorial at the statehouse must be taken down and the Sims's residence hall must be renamed.

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<sup>162</sup> "Message from President Bob Caslen," *University of South Carolina*, June 15, 2020.

## Appendix

While I think re-naming should be the ultimate goal, I drafted two signs that could be included at the statehouse grounds and the dormitory respectively to provide adequate contextualization.

Draft for a sign to contextualize Sims at the statehouse grounds:

“Born in 1813 in Lancaster, South Carolina, J. Marion Sims became one of the most accomplished doctors of his generation. His development of the speculum and cure of the vesicovaginal fistula in women earned him the title of the father of modern gynecology. Despite his accomplishments, Sims’s career was deeply entrenched in maintaining the institution of slavery and ensuring white supremacy. He operated on enslaved Black women and Irish immigrants without anesthesia because he believed in their higher capacity for pain. The Woman’s Auxiliary of the South Carolina Medical Association constructed this memorial to Sims in 1929. Their work, mirroring women’s clubs throughout the region at the time, honored Sims to further white supremacy and was a product of the eugenics movement.” (119 words)

Draft to contextualize Sims at the dormitory:

Include the above text and add—“The University of South Carolina underwent a massive expansion in the late 1930s, including the creation of a new female dormitory. The female students at the University of South Carolina selected Keith Hall in honor of Frances Guignard Gibbes Keith, the first female student at the University, as their desired name of the dormitory. The Board of Trustees had the ultimate authority to decide the name, and through personal connections and the lasting potency of Sims through the eugenic movement, he was chosen to represent the women of the University.”

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