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Essential Documents  
in the History  
of American Higher Education

SECOND EDITION

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JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Baltimore

### 10.5: Campus Monuments and Memorials: Recognizing Race and the Dedication of the Richard T. Greener Statue at the University of South Carolina (2018)

Although American higher education had achieved, by 2010, an overarching image of prominence and prestige, the American campus had become subject to internal combustion, especially for institutional failure to deal with race relations. Most conspicuous were the 2015 events at the University of Missouri, where African American students staged a successful walkout in protest of institutional racism in the campus administration. The event permeated the campus and eventually led to the resignation of both the university president and the flagship campus chancellor. The concerns and activism demonstrated in Missouri spread to other campuses nationwide. Incidents involved removing representations and the names of Confederates and the Confederacy and other symbols of slavery and racial discrimination, such as when students tore down the “Silent Sam” statue at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2018. Such actions sparked some reactionary protests, such as the white supremacy march and violence that occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia, with diffusion into the University of Virginia, in August 2017.

Among these episodes of campus conflict over monuments and memorials, was there any common ground of heritage and healing? One landmark event took place at the University of South Carolina on February 21, 2018, with ceremonies for the unveiling of the statue of Richard T. Greener (1844–1922), adjacent to the University’s Cooper Library in the center of campus. (Thomas Cooper was the university’s second president, 1821–1833, and was known as the “schoolmaster of states’ rights” because of his support for nullification and slavery.) Education professors Christian Anderson and Katherine Chaddock (emerita) teamed with art history professor Lydia Brandt and graduate students in the higher education program to lead efforts, over the course of seven years, to recognize Greener, who was the first African American professor at the University of South Carolina, serving during the era of Reconstruction. Prior to that, Greener had been the first African American graduate of Harvard College. The monument was the result of a thoughtful, dedicated commitment to connecting past and present. Chaddock’s research on Greener’s life, told in *Uncom-*

Remarks delivered at the Richard Theodore Greener symposium and statue unveiling on February 21, 2018, by Professors Christian Anderson and Todd Shaw. Reprinted by permission of Professor Christian Anderson, Professor Todd Shaw, and the University of South Carolina Office of Media Relations.

*promising Activist: Richard Greener, First Black Graduate of Harvard College*, gave a depth of understanding to the reasons for erecting the statue.

In the fall of 2010, Chaddock discussed Greener in her class on the history of higher education. A student asked why he had not heard of Greener and what there was on South Carolina's campus to commemorate and remember him. There was a scholarship in his name with the Black Alumni Council and a portrait of him in the university president's office, but that was the limit of his visible legacy on campus. Chaddock started a dialogue her colleague Anderson and with graduate students in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Program. She invited Brandt of the Department of Art History to join the effort, and the three co-chaired the informal committee. Brandt suggested that the committee sponsor an "ideas competition," which was launched in 2011 at the Museum of Education. The idea of a sculpture won out, and after a national search and juried process, sculptor Jon Hair's submission was selected in December 2013. The dean of libraries, Tom McNally, paid for a maquette to demonstrate the proposed final product to trustees and the community. The process continued through site identification with the university architect, approvals from the board of trustees, and fund-raising. All of the work to select a site, raise money, and secure approvals from the board of trustees was championed in the end by President Harris Pastides, who helped bring the project to fruition. A symposium on Greener and an unveiling of the statue occurred on February 21, 2018. Speakers included Professor Christian Anderson, from the University of South Carolina's Department of Educational Leadership and Policies, and Professor Todd Shaw, the current and first African American appointed chair of the university's Department of Political Science in its more than eighty-year history.

### **Remarks of Professor Christian Anderson**

So why do this? Why is it important?

First, is to understand our history. After the Reconstruction Era had passed there were those who did not want us to remember a time when we had a de-segregated campus and a black professor. There were those who willfully tried to erase it. Others benignly forgot it. And most of us never simply never knew this history. But now we do. And we can use this understanding of the past as we work to move forward.

Second is that representation matters. On Saturday as we were installing the statue, there was a short period before he was covered. Three African American



Unveiling of the Richard Theodore Greener statue at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, on February 21, 2018. Sculpture by Jon Hair. Photograph by Jason Ayer, Communications and Public Affairs, University of South Carolina.

women, students here at USC, came to look on. One of them knew quite a bit about Greener and told the others some of his story. I watched as one of the student's eyes got bigger and bigger and she heard each additional detail about Greener's life. She then exclaimed, "And you put him here! Right here by the Library! Right here on the way to the Russell House—where everyone will see him!"

When I teach the course on the history of higher education, I tell my students to ask questions and then follow the data wherever that may lead them. And once they have the narrative of their story I ask that they step back and ask, "What if?" "What if someone in their historical research had turned left instead of right?" "What if an organization had charted a different course?" This does not change the facts or the historical narrative. But it does give you an opportunity to reflect and reexamine from a different perspective and to consider what might possibly have been.

**Remarks of Professor Todd Shaw**

I am joined in my gratitude by a number of communities to which I belong—the African American Studies Program, the Black Faculty Caucus, and many other allies and supporters. We all pay homage to the ancestral pathway he paved. Because he had the courage to be a pioneering professor in a “small angry place” of Columbia, South Carolina and South Carolina College during the terribly hopeful but often turbulent period of Reconstruction, he gives all of us hope that we can endure whatever current vitriolic politics and hardened-ways still confront us in these turbulent times. Because he was pivotal to the firm organization of the early university library collection, he demonstrated that we only harm the enlightened and free pursuit of knowledge if we do not assume all are capable of producing transformative truths. Because he was [an] active and vital part of efforts to ensure the equity of the laws, the full and free citizenship of African Americans in South Carolina and elsewhere, and the building of international bridges of diplomacy and understanding, he reminds us that we must be global citizens that uphold the dignity and human rights of all.

Therefore, Professor Richard Greener I ask for your ancestral spirit to come now and bless this observance of your memory. You know we all still have so much work to do. There are still monuments on this campus—silent and otherwise—that reminds us of the division and blatant inequalities, which at one time in its history, this university promoted. But today your monument joins the USC Desegregation Garden, the placards memorializing the enslaved hands that built this university, and the tribute to African American presence at USC that adorns a prominent Russell House Wall. We pray you are pleased.

Professor Greener we welcome you back home to USC as the last testament of triumph to the challenges you endure[d] while here. And we hope you see this beautiful statue as a fitting tribute to the principles of educational empowerment, full citizenship, and human equality to which you dedicated your life.