

DISCUSSION GUIDE



MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

A LETTER FROM TIM VAN DEN HOFF DIRECTOR, MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

Thank you for hosting a screening of *Monumental Crossroads: The Fight for Southern Heritage!*

When I read about the monument removal in New Orleans in a Dutch newspaper, I immediately wanted to go and make a film about it.

It looked like the debate about our blackface tradition of 'Zwarte Piet' (Black Pete) in The Netherlands. These Zwarte Pieten are to our Saint Nicholas, what the Elves are to your Santa Claus: friendly helpers. But of course, this figure is steeped in a history of slavery and isn't an innocent character for a children's party. Largely unaware of the racist associations, people celebrated Saint Nicholas' day for decades, till migrant groups, who recently moved to the country from the former Dutch colonies in the Caribbean and Indonesia, started voicing their concerns. Over the past 50 years, the debate about Zwarte Piet has almost become a new tradition in itself, but unfortunately one of increasingly opposed camps merely shouting at each other: 'Heritage, not Hate!'

So struck by the similarities, I went to the Deep South, only to find out how deep the American racial divide really is. I had to drop the idea of making a comparison to our Dutch pendant and instead explore this topic on its own merits. In what became a 6,000 mile road trip through the former Confederate States, my eyes were slowly opened to its history and how it continues to shape public opinion and race relations in the present day.

I hope the resulting film will be of inspiration to you and your audience!

Tim van den Hoff
Rotterdam, The Netherlands

www.monumentalcrossroads.com

MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

ABOUT THE FILM

THE STORY

Monumental Crossroads: The Fight for Southern Heritage shows the contested nature of Civil War memory across the South of the U.S. During the Summer of 2017, when numerous Confederate Monuments were toppled, this 6,000 mile 'road trip documentary' tracked the shockwave that rippled through the South, from New Orleans to Charlottesville and a lot of places in between. A myriad of supporters and opponents is met along the way: White, Black, North and South. Each with their own view on what's worth remembering and preserving. Is there a way past these crossroads?

THE CHARACTERS



Owen Courrèges, New Orleans LA

A local lawyer and vocal proponent of the monuments, who says they represent history and the removal is only symbolic. It doesn't bring positive change with regards to race relations. If anything, it's making matters worse, he thinks.



Mayor Kenneth Nail, Hanceville AL

Wrote an open letter to the mayor of New Orleans and asked to have the statues. He maintains they are war memorials, showing us the bad sides of history as a teachable moment. He shows us where he wants to put them in an appropriate spot in his (almost all white) community.

MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

THE CHARACTERS



Frank Matthews, Birmingham AL

African-American community leader, former criminal (incarcerated 30 times), now running for mayor of predominantly black city Birmingham. He spent two years trying to get a confederate monument removed. He won, but state law was quickly passed and now the monument can not be touched.



H.K. Edgerton, Asheville NC

One of the few black Confederate supporters, he started reading about the true history of the Civil War and how the South was made to look like all bad. Goes out parading with his confederate flag and telling people about how white and black used to be family during slavery.



Jarene Fleming, Richmond VA

She tends to the derelict East-End African-American cemetery, next to the pristine Confederate cemetery. Volunteers are cleaning and repairing the fallen grave stones and trying to identify where their ancestors are located. Jarene still hasn't found her grandparents.



Old farmer Bill, Red Level AL

An old-fashioned farmer living off the grid, he's a man of simple convictions. He is convinced that slaves weren't off that badly, compared to where they came from. Still doesn't like to see races mix, because that is not what God intended when he put all the people in their own countries.

MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

THE CHARACTERS



Mike Landree, Columbia TN

Executive commander of Sons of Confederate Veterans, the largest heritage organisation in the US. Tries to explain the threats of political correctness and 'cultural Marxism'. Is in charge of building a national museum to the Confederacy to teach the truth about the Civil War.



Lisa Thomas, Alcoa TN

As a local chapter leader for the United Daughters of the Confederacy, this hairdresser defends Confederate monuments like a lioness. They are there to honor the fallen soldiers and have nothing to do with white supremacy. She wants to celebrate her culture.



Tourguide Ashley, Edgard LA

At the Whitney plantation, they offer some chilling fact checks with some monuments and relics of their own. This plantation makes a point of using sculptures to convey history in a confronting way. Ashley explains how America still hasn't come to terms with its past.



Brandan Odums, New Orleans LA

Spray paint artist bMike creates big murals about Civil Rights Era leaders. He feels that the Civil War legacy is also part of his identity and even though it's a dark history of struggle, he doesn't want to lose that connection by removing the monuments.

MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

After your *Monumental Crossroads* screening, use the following questions as a starting point for your community discussion.

GENERAL REACTIONS TO THE FILM

1. What is your overall reaction to the film?
2. Were there any characters you found inspiring?
3. Were there any characters you found dispiriting?
4. If you could ask anyone in this film a question, what would it be?
5. What moment in the film made the biggest impact on you? Why?

SCENE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. What did you think of Owen's opinion that removing monuments causes division?
2. What did you think of bMike's notion of black people being 'alchemists' with their history of oppression?
3. What did you think of the big monuments on Monument Avenue in Richmond?
4. How did you feel when you saw Jarene working at the cemetery?
5. What did you think about farmer Bill's view on slavery?
6. What did you think about how the Whitney Plantation uses their memorials?
7. How did you feel when Ashley showed the slave shack?
8. What did you think of the effort of mayor Nail to commemorate all human struggle?
9. How did you feel about Frank Matthews' struggle to remove the monument?
10. How did you feel about H.K. Edgerton's sense of family in the antebellum South?
11. What did you think of Lisa Thomas' need to put up more confederate statues?
12. What did you think about Mike Landree's view on the war against confederate symbols?
13. How did you feel about the schoolchildren being taught about the Civil War?
14. What do you think about the activity of Civil War re-enactment?
15. How did you feel about the Stone Mountain laser show?

MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In addition to discussing the film and its characters in detail, you can also opt to have a debate on a more thematic level. The below paragraph was the central thought the filmmakers used while making the film. It might serve as a starting point for your discussion.

THEMATIC DISCUSSION

Society seems to be at a crossroads. A lack of mutual understanding and patience to change that, has pitted people against each other in opposing camps. Delicate conversations get reduced to easy binary one-liners: you're either for us or against us! Want to keep the monument, then you must be a white supremacist! Wanna tear it down? You're probably some cultural-Marxists bent on destroying white culture. The discussion about removing them is about more than symbolism. It's about starting a conversation about the values and beliefs shared by a community. But what constitutes a community? The nation as a whole? States? Villages and cities? Who is part of that community? And who gets to decide that? Beyond the conflict about which monuments have to go, the confederate monument debate is about the one big question: who are we today?



MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

GET INVOLVED WITH MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

Here are three ways your screening guests can get involved with the film:

HOST A SCREENING

To get started, sign up on our website and purchase the *Monumental Crossroads* Screening Kit. The Kit includes the DVD, discussion guide and public viewing license.

Sign up now at <https://monumentalcrossroads.com>

BUY THE DVD

Buy *Monumental Crossroads* and get 10% off the DVD. Just enter the Discount Code “community” when you check out and get 10% off your purchase. Buy *Monumental Crossroads* as a gift and inspire someone in your life!

Buy now at <https://monumentalcrossroads.com/buy-dvd>

SPREAD THE WORD

Share *Monumental Crossroads* with your friends and family! Buy the DVD on our website, or stream it from one the available VOD channels, and watch the film in your home.

Watch it now at <https://monumentalcrossroads.com/watch>

RECOMMEND IT TO THE (COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY) LIBRARIAN

Monumental Crossroads is available for educational streaming through Kanopy. The film is also available on educational DVD for use in educational institutions and libraries.

Tell your librarian about it here: <https://monumentalcrossroads.com/watch-at-school>

www.monumentalcrossroads.com

MONUMENTAL CROSSROADS

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are some additional resources that will help you screen the film:

LINK TO POSTER

To get attract attention to your viewing, you can download and print the official *Monumental Crossroads* poster and hang them in appropriate places.

Download the poster at: <https://monumentalcrossroads.com/poster/>

FURTHER READING

Southern Poverty Law Center has published an insightful report on public symbols of the Confederacy, that offers information on the 1,747 Confederate monuments, place names and other symbols still in public spaces, both in the South and across the nation.

Read more at: <https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>