Progressive Commemoration: Public Statues of Historical Women in Urban American Cities

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PROGRESSIVE COMMEMORATION:
PUBLIC STATUES OF HISTORICAL WOMEN IN URBAN AMERICAN CITIES 

by 

Melanie D. Chin

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Women and Gender Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Women and Gender Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Progressive Commemoration:
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Melanie D. Chin

Advisor: Julia Wrigley

Women who made notable accomplishments are underrepresented in commemoration. Some American cities have brought women to the forefront of becoming visible through commemoration in statues. This thesis compares the commemoration of historical women in four different American cities. Stakeholders hold the key to implementing and changing public policy to increase the visibility of women and people of color in public monuments. Cities which lack representation of women and people of color may learn from and follow the efforts of a leading city to achieve lasting and effective change in representing those who historically been underrepresented.
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“You can neither lie to a neighbourhood park, nor reason with it. 'Artist's conceptions' and persuasive renderings can put pictures of life into proposed neighbourhood parks or park malls, and verbal rationalizations can conjure up users who ought to appreciate them, but in real life only diverse surroundings have the practical power of inducing a natural, continuing flow of life and use.”

-Janie Jacobs  
Author, The Life and Death of Great American Cities, 101

1. Introduction

Why the need for women’s statues in progressive commemoration? Putting up such statues allows communities to preserve the memory of accomplished historical women by providing them visibility. Notable women are rarely recognized in statue form. If they are remembered at all, it is more often it is only in textbooks. There is no real representation of women in monuments because the country’s hierarchy primarily recognizes White males as being noteworthy.

In recent years, women’s commemoration has become more of an issue than it was in the past. Women have broken though obstacles and have not only gained a voice in the political arena but also in the private sphere. The longstanding resistance to women’s visibility in statues has been at least partially overcome, through with more notable results in some cities than in others. Those commemorating women in statue form have overcome an implicit policy against such recognition, even though no written policy has ever mandated such limitations.

The lack of commemoration of women or people of color in statues is particularly striking in the United States, given the oft-stated democratic commitments of the country. There are actions being taken by different groups to reduce White-dominated representation on American soil and to push for representation of the women and people of color. These issues have arisen in New York City, Boston, and Honolulu, as well as many other sites across the United States and have acquired particular visibility in the aftermath of clashes between White
supremacists and counter-protestors over the removal of Confederate statues. The symbolic value of statues has become more apparent in the public consciousness, as Southern statues of the military and political leaders of the Confederacy have become targets of political activists.

Approaches to monuments policy play an important role in society and history. They serve as reminders of those who are esteemed at the time the statues or monuments were erected or, at least, of those who were esteemed by the powerful in the society of the time. Monuments or statues constructed of stone or metal can last for a great many years, so there is often a long time period in which societal changes can occur and there can be a rethinking of who most deserves this form of public recognition. There are no specifications that White males who served as public figures will be the most frequently represented, although in practice it has worked out this way in cities and towns across the country.

This thesis compares the commemoration of women as historical figures in four cities, New York, Boston, Honolulu and Richmond (Virginia). Several of these cities were major cities of warfare, Richmond was the capital of the Confederacy and critical Civil War battles were fought in its environs. Honolulu was the site of the Pearl Harbor attack that triggered the United States entry into World War II. Japan had joined the Axis Alliance of Italy, Germany, and parts of French Indochina. Japan at the same time had limited natural resources and more than half of its imports came from the United State (Attack on Pearl Harbor, 2014). Following the Pearl Harbor attack, Congress immediately declared war on Japan. Women played a limited role in the aftermath of the attack, service as nurses and other medical workers to help the wounded.

In Richmond and Honolulu, won the site of longstanding strife over slavery, and the other with a history decisively affected by being the home of a huge naval base, military conflicts have loomed large. This has meant that historical commemoration has taken note of military leaders
and those who lost their lives or were wounded in the war. Importantly, the majority of the military consists of men. The lack of women in the military leaves little room for them to get recognized. Although women served nurturing roles in the military, there was few who served at the front line for defense. Unfortunately, a focus on military commemoration often leaves women largely invisible as they attend to private sphere duties. In all professions, but the military more than most, remembrance of women and people of color is a commemoration issue.

New York City and Boston, in contrast to Richmond and Honolulu, had distant roles in the American Revolution, but have not been sites of warfare since the country’s birth. This has reduced the role of military commemoration in the cities histories. This in turn allows for a broader comparison of the four cities, with their distinctive histories and differing focal points for their commemoration of those they wanted to honor. These differences will be explored in this thesis.

2. Scholarship Methodology

This study relies on secondary sources such as periodicals, books and reports from federal, state and local governments and municipalities which initiated and finished projects. It also rests on the work of scholars and activists who have sought changes in who gets represented in statues or monuments. Touring New York and Boston gave direct experience on how historical women who made societal accomplishments have been represented.

3. What is a Statue?

Some might have questions as to what can be defined as a statue. A statue can be defined as “a object made from hard material, especially stone or metal, to look like a person or animal (Cambridge.org, 2017)” A statue must have life-like realistic qualities that are human or animal
on a life-sized scale or larger. It is important to note that the word statue is partially interchangeable with the words sculpture or monuments.

4. Where does statue-funding come from?

Funding for statues can come from local, state, federal, or private sources, or can come from a mixture of such sources. Those sponsoring statues may use negotiations and trade-offs to secure private funding for the representation of individuals they seek to honor.

5. Public Space: Parks and Plazas

Statues are often situated in public space, including particularly, in parks and plazas. Why? For one thing, tax dollars are allocated and generated by the public for the public. Public monies are allocated for various reasons, including the creation and placement of statues in public places where everyone has access to them. The problem is that monies are not allocated equally in all demographics. For instance, in coastal cities or other urban areas there tend to be more statues of historic figures than there are in suburbia. In suburbia there is less commemoration because of their highly residential character, as opposed to urban areas, which often contain large plazas or other highly visible public spaces. Most of all, coastal cities have historically been profitable because they are trading ports and often contain major public parks and plazas, a combination of factors which has given rise to more statues and monuments that are often found in less affluent cities or those without major historical roles.

6. Brief Background

In every era, many women have been fighters for equality and against patriarchy. There have been many notable women who have left their mark and yet are only barely mentioned in standard American history sources. The failure to recognize women and people of color is crucial to how patriarchy became a normative standard that often rendered those other than
White men invisible. Despite male dominance, women are still challenging and changing the world.

7. Approaches to Making Progressive Commemoration Visible

Dr. Lynette Long of Equal Visibility Everywhere (EVE) has dedicated her energies achieving gender equality in commemorative representation in public spaces. As a not-for-profit, non-partisan and non-political organization, EVE addresses the lack of visible commemoration of women. The project areas that Dr. Long has taken on are Washington, D.C.’s National Statuary Hall, stamps, streets, buildings, celebrations, museums, monuments, memorials, currency and media.

According to Dr. Long, women’s commemoration appears most visibly in United States postal stamps. But why are women not represented in higher numbers? This could be in part because stamps are supposed to represent commemorative acts at the broadest level national symbolism. Hence, the U.S. Postal Service target is not only women, but encompasses all aspects of commemoration, adopting an historical approach towards commemoration as an educational tool.

History professor Dr. Gail Dubrow at the University of Minnesota has researched the increasing visibility of women in monuments. She suggests that women are becoming more visible in public spaces through a step-by-step process (Dubrow, 1992).

Identifying these landmarks, however, is merely the first step in claiming public space for women's history. Historians, preservationists, environmental designers, educators, and artists all have a common interest in making the significance of these places publicly visible. Strategies from the fields of preservation planning, public art, and public history have the potential to increase public awareness of the women's history associated with historic sites and buildings. Dolores [Hayden’s] Power of Place project in Los Angeles offers perhaps the best example to date of how these approaches might be combined to illuminate a city's multicultural history.
Dubrow examines Dolores Hayden's Power of Place project in Los Angeles as a model. The model outlines urban changes over time and how this affects urban landscapes and public commemoration. The Power of Place is a nonprofit organization that encompasses walking tours, public meetings, artists’ books, architectural preservation and sculpture. The Power of Place also relies on urban planners and designers who honor African-American, Asian American and Latino people who have experienced living in a historic landscape (Dubrow, 1992).

My own proposals for increasing the public visibility of places significant in Boston women's history stem from research I undertook in 1987-1988, which was the first comprehensive survey of sites and buildings associated with women's history in that city. The process of identifying places with previously unexplored potential for commemorating Boston women's history required more intensive historical research methods than are used in the typical preservation survey.

Using scholarly methods as a way to convey a spectrum of study targets opens the discussion of gaps in women’s representation. Dubrow notes that intensive study is needed to identify gaps, with historical research that can be done through surveys, preserved documents, archeology and oral histories.

8. Dolores Hayden’s Power of Place

Yale professor Delores Hayden holds a master’s degree in architecture. Her initial proposal to develop a positive approach to commemoration is reflected in her work in Los Angeles. Her groundbreaking article, entitled The Power of Place: A Proposal for Los Angeles, focuses on minority and women’s production in urban history. A short version is presented in an article that explores how production and inclusiveness is lost in a “melting-pot” city that relied on immigrant workers for cheap labor. Another article narrates how slave women’s production paved the way to independence, but recognition of their role was lost due to racial oppression and gentrification. Latina factory workers in Los Angeles also experienced both gender and racial oppression that confined them to low-paying jobs in harsh conditions.
In 1987, Power of Place won two National Endowment for the Arts grants, which allowed Hayden to complete two projects. One project consisted of reclaiming the history of the life of a free female slave, who used her knowledge of the medical field to aid her community. Hayden researched the lost history women whose legacies had been long forgotten and restored them to visibility. Hayden helped women gain empowerment and used remembrance as a social construction tool.

Hayden’s first project involved restoring the Bridget “Biddy” Mason Homestead to public awareness. Mason was born a slave in Mississippi in 1818 and was never given a surname at birth, so she gave herself one. Mason and her three children were taken by their owner, Robert Marion Smith, a convert to Mormonism, to Salt Lake City in 1848. Three years later Smith took Mason and her children to San Bernardino, a town east of Los Angeles, to establish a Mormon community there. Smith did not take account that California was a free state and not a slave one. Technically, when the Smiths moved to California, the Masons would become free people. The California constitution stated that “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude unless for the punishment of crimes shall ever be tolerated in this state.” Due to a lack of options and ignorance of her rights, Mason continued working for the Smith Family (Meares, 2017). Her situation changed, though, when the Smiths wanted to take her and her children to Texas, as the Smiths feared they would lose their slaves in California.

Mason’s friends in the free black community, helped by a local sheriff, helped rescued her when Smith tried to take her and her children to Texas, a slave state. They stopped the Smiths wagon train and kept him and his family leaving from California. Following advice from her friends, Mason sued for her freedom in 1856. Mason met with Judge Hayes inside his chambers since Blacks were not allowed to testify against Whites in court. “I have always done
what I have been told to do,” Mason told the judge. “I always feared this trip to Texas since I first heard of it. Mr. Smith told me I would be just as free in Texas as here.” When the judge explained that, due to a state law, her minor children could not be taken to a state where they could become enslaved, Mason replied, “I do not want to be separated from my children, and do not in such case wish to go” (Meares, 2017). Judge Hayes ruled in her favor, “All of the said persons of color are entitled to their freedom and are free forever” (Meares, 2017).

As a freed slave in Los Angeles, Mason organized meetings and functions for the First African Methodist Church. Having worked as a skilled slave, she had learned the importance of women’s health issues (Hayden, 1988). Mason became a nurse and a midwife who devoted herself to helping people in need in her community. She did not discriminate and set an example of helping for others.

In the Biddy Mason project, Hayden discovered the land and the modern brick and mortar house that Mason had owned and lived in with her three children. Mason’s property consisted of a building housed her grandsons’ businesses and land that she used for agriculture. Before Hayden discovered the history of the property, it had been turned into a parking lot; later the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (LACRA) proposed building a ten-story multi-use building on the land. Hayden reconstructed household structures and opened a museum that exposed the hard life that Mason had lived as a free woman in her community, which she loved (Hayden, 1994). Hayden’s five-tiered project was undertaken with the help of colleagues, volunteers and UCLA students. Project elements included a short tribute and biography, rubbings of leaf vines that represented heaven where Mason was buried, posters welcoming newborns into the world, a chronological history of Mason’s life with midwifery tools, and documents and photographs. Hayden also contributed an article, “Biddy Mason’s Los
Angeles, 1856-1891” that appeared in *California History* (Hayden, 1994). This exhibit showed the community its early history and explored the life of a free slave who had overcome many obstacles to become a community leader.

The second project was led by a UCLA graduate student of urban planning, Donna Graves and dealt with Latina garment workers in the 1930s. These women worked long and strenuous hours with little pay. The majority of these women were single breadwinning mothers who wanted to become independent from men. The labor union regulated what women could do, including how many hours a day they could work, but it also helped them fight for equality against their male counterparts. “It suggests how an existing architectural landmark can be reinterpreted in terms of its importance to women’s history, labor history, and ethnic diversity” (Savingplaces.org, 1995). In 1914, the Embassy Theatre was a gathering place for community organizations and labor unions, including secular Russian Molokan walnut shellers and Latina and Russian Jewish garment workers. Between the 1920s and 1950s, women’s unions met with the Spanish Speaking Congress (El Congreso) at the theater. The workers met regularly with organizers of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU), the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers, and El Congreso. Meetings generated a high level of controversy because these labor unions were battling against one another as well as against employers.

In her project Graves underscored the importance of the unions with a poster that was created by artist Rupert Garcia, which displayed the faces of organizers such as Rose Pesotta, Luisa Moreno, and Josefina Fierro de Bright for the “La Fuerza de Unión” workshop. Students, volunteers and union presidents with their representatives also attended. After the workshop, artist Cecilia Alvarez Muñoz, compiled a book, *If Walls Could Speak*, which told the story of
what walls would say if they could narrate music, machines, and the voices of women factory workers. Muñoz wrote the striking line that, “As a young child, I learned my mother had two families. One with my grandmother, my aunt, and I. The other at la fábrica, the factory.” Simultaneously, a proposal was made for architect Brenda Levin to restore the Embassy Theatre. This would represent and build on the themes of machines, hammers, spools, sculptures of workers, and would also entail union logos embossed in the walls.

Both projects in the center of Los Angeles tell the stories of minority women who left their legacies and were not expected to become notable. These projects challenged conventional city planning and focused on the importance of women as workers and community activists. The projects became significant in a city where more than half the population was female and people of color. This project also highlighted the need for society to acknowledge women who pave the way for those who followed them.


In 1865, French politician, Edouard de Laboulaye, proposed that a statue be given to the United States to celebrate its freedom centennial. The statue would reaffirm freedom and democracy won in the Civil War. Laboulaye would use the gift from France to help try to create stronger democracy in the United States (The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Inc., 2017). Gifted by France in 1886, The Statue of Liberty became a symbol of freedom and a gateway for immigrants coming to America, making it their new home. The Lady of the Harbor lies on manmade Ellis Island in New York City Harbor. “Lady Liberty is one of the United States' most famous symbols. But this female personification of freedom and hope stands virtually alone in a sea of male-centered monuments that dot the American landscape” (Peled, 2017).
The symbol of an oversized statue of a woman in the middle of the New York City harbor is crucial to making women visible in public space. The placement of the Statue of Liberty suggests that everyone is welcomed and evokes a connection with nature. Her bird’s eye view over the harbor suggests that her main duties are to nurture and protect those she oversees. She stands boldly while cradling a tablet in the left hand. This is significant because the date of the Declaration of Independence of 1776 is inscribed. In her raised right arm she holds a torch. “Originally conceived as an emblem of the friendship between the people of France and the U.S. and a sign of their mutual desire for liberty, over the years the Statue has become much more” (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2017). Today the statue symbolizes universal freedom.

Frances’s gift has brought women greater visibility in the public sphere, but still the Statue of Liberty connects to a wide range of social expectations for women. For example, the figure in the statue is depicted as a White woman who holds hierarchal power, which implicitly regulates those from other groups to a secondary status. The Statue of Liberty is also depicted as marked wearing a crown. The power that she holds be can referred back to France’s 1468 monarch, Margaret of Burgundy (Margaret of York before marriage) and the wife of Charles the Bold. English professor, Sharon L. Jansen of Pacific Lutheran University describes the daily duties that Margaret preformed (MonstrousRegimentofwomen.com, 2015).

In Burgundy, Margaret of York played an active role not only in court life but in politics and government as well. Just as Charles's mother, for example, had acted as regent of Burgundy, had functioned in the administration of the duchy, had negotiated treaties, and had helped to formulate policy, by 1472 Margaret herself was also involved in the administration of Burgundy.

The queen acted as Prime Minster and a liaison for the king. The crown that The Statue of Liberty wears proudly indicates her position in the ruling class.
10. Commemorated Women in Coastal Cities

In New York City public spaces, women are often depicted as angels and mythical creatures, which can play into fantasies of male dominance. Courageous women who fought for equality made their mark on society by breaking norms. Women’s inequalities became more visible through such activism. An example is Joan of Arc. Born in 1412 in France, later nicknamed “The Maid of Orleans,” she became a heroine in her own right for helping lead France to historic victories while masquerading as a male soldier during the time of war. In 1491, Joan of Arc was burnt to death at the age of 19.

In 1915, the Joan of Arc Statue Committee in the City of New York arranged for a statue of Joan of Arc to be erected; she was depicted mounted on her horse in battle gear with her sword in her right hand (Meir, 2015). The statue of Saint Joan of Arc, which was placed in Riverside Park, was the first statue of a woman to be placed in New York City. Hence, 484 years after of her death she was commemorated in an American city. In 1920, she was canonized as a saint in Paris by Pope Benedict XV.

In 1923, a second statue was erected to a woman, Gertrude Stein, in Bryant Park in New York City. Stein, an American poet, playwright, novelist and art collector, was noted for being a breakthrough author, which put a woman’s voice at the front of liberation (Meir, 2015). The majority of her work had homosexual themes that emphasized that sexuality is a liberated choice, a message more openly conveyed today.

Sixty-one years later, in 1984, Golda Meir was honored by a statue at the intersection of 39th Street and Broadway near Hell’s Kitchen (Meir, 2015). Meir was the fourth prime minister of Israel and the first woman to hold that position.
The 32\textsuperscript{nd} First Lady of the United States, Anna “Eleanor” Roosevelt married her fifth cousin once removed Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who later was elected to four terms as a U.S. president. She devoted her life to public service. By being one of America’s First Ladies and due to her own strong commitment to a progressive political vision, she became deeply involved in politics. Ms. Roosevelt, like her husband, had extramarital affairs. Little is known about her bisexuality with her journalist lover Lorena Hickok or about her affair with her bodyguard Earl Miller (Corrigan, 2010). In 1996, she was commemorated with a statue New York City’s in Riverside Park (Meir, 2015). A wealthy and liberated Mrs. Roosevelt became renowned with her public decisions; her personal choices, which were considered taboo at the time, also later became noteworthy and became a point of interest to use as a platform for feminism.

An oversized bronzed casted statue of Harriet Tubman was erected in 2007 at the intersection of West 122\textsuperscript{nd} Street, Fredrick Douglass Boulevard and St. Nicholas Avenue in central Harlem. This Black noble and accomplished woman helped slaves escape from the south to the north through the Underground Railroad with the aid of a network of supporters. Those slaves who made it to the north became free and prefigured the Great Migration era. Tubman’s legacy still lives on today as a pioneer for equal rights for all races. To remind students of the societal role Tubman played elementary school children are taught about her starting in grammar schools, but she seems to disappear in textbooks as a child’s education advances.

Even though it took decades for important women to be recognized, the erection of statues to honor some who played a specific role in liberation conveys a message that they will not be undermined and that they resisted patriarchy in an historical context. This was the
beginning of women gaining control of their lives and being accountable for their own decisions. For their good deeds, they finally received a platform that commemorates their accomplishments.

Great women are hidden figures behind patriarchal law. These advocates initiated progressive change for future world citizens. Only limited numbers of women have been so honored, though. Moreover, for the forefathers of the free world, their belief in equality only pertained to the rights of prestigious White men while ignoring the rights of any human they considered inferior to them.

Located in the center of Monument Square, Our Lady of Victories statue in Portland, Maine was erected in 1891. “The 14-foot bronze female figure symbolizes unity and was modeled after Minerva, the goddess of wisdom and war. She holds a sword in her right hand and a shield and maple branch in her left hand” (Mainetoday.com, 2015). Our Lady of Victories was erected in the memory of five thousand Portland soldiers who lost their lives in the Civil War. She stands depicted as a Roman woman wearing a dress ready for combat in warrior gear complete with a leaf crown and shield. Our Lady of Victories not only protects the Yankees, but also joins them.

Minorities have also made great strides and contributions to American society. Asians who were and still are constantly targeted for being “different” and who were treated as quasi-slaves while building the First Transcontinental Railroad are not recognized for the hardships that discrimination and prejudice have placed upon them. They were horribly oppressed and exploited, but they were not owned as the Black slaves had been. Their children were not born into slavery. Many minority groups were and are coerced into labor that they were not accustomed to and that led to their harsh oppression by employers and others.
Korean “Comfort Women” sculptures are responses to the extreme oppression experienced by these women during World War II. They served as prostitutes and sex slaves to Japanese soldiers, comforting soldiers in their time of sexual desires and needs (Frayer, 2017). Sculptures of sitting Korean women with an empty chair next to them serves a specific purpose in a public space or plaza. The intention of the empty chair is to show respect to Korean “contract” prostitutes and sex workers by listening to their pain (Berteaux, 2017). The majority of the women were rape victims under patriarchal power that left them without a voice. Only a few of these sculptures exist in coastal cities, with most found in cities in California and Korea because of the ties between the state and the country.

The statue is clearly supported by South Korean War Veterans. This statue is situated in front of the Japanese Embassy in South Korea, which implicitly asks everyone who enters the building to show their respect to all Korean women. No woman should be used as a sex object because it is inhumane and without morals or ethics. With activism and protests over the last few years, Comfort Women are visible due to efforts of feminists.

11. Stakeholders Make Public Policy

Stakeholders who invest money into a municipal government can secure major influence over urban planning. Hence, in return there are trade-offs in jurisdictions on who decides on what in policy making. Governments rely on this because without these monies, political leaders
might not be able to win elections and stay in office. Political influence within a municipality can affect who gets commemorated by government officials within that jurisdiction.

Stakeholders play an important role in progressive commemoration. Supporters from four states discussed below have different perspectives on the value of inclusive commemoration. There is no solution on how to implement law on a national level, with each city or state deciding on how to maintain and secure its prestigious heritage. The websites of the four cities below mention the need for women’s commemoration.

**New York, NY**

Our Administration is committed to finding innovative ways to support the women whose contributions in our homes, places of work, and communities help shape our City.

**Boston, MA**

...I encourage anyone who knows the women who are being highlighted to take a moment to show them gratitude for what they do for our community.

**Honolulu, HI**

The mission of MOCA is to promote the value of arts and culture, a community environment that provides equal and abundant opportunity for exposure to culture and the arts in all forms, and to encourage and provide opportunity for the development and perpetuation of the culture and the artistic talents of the people of Honolulu.

**Richmond, VA**

Virginians were very pleased about the Monument honoring the contributions of Virginia women, and see this project as visible progress.

Stakeholders of New York City (Official Website of the City of New York, 2009), Boston (Official Web Site of the City of Boston, 2016), Honolulu (City and County of Honolulu, 2013) and Richmond (Commonwealth of Virginia, 2016) all agree that inclusive commemoration is needed. Women need to be supported in homes, places of work and communities. Honoring
will show appreciation and will set the standard for future projects. Much progress is needed to ensure women have a place in history.

12. Devoting Public Space to Progressive Commemoration

Each statue needs a dedicated public space. Although spaces vary from small to large areas in parks and plazas, there is always room for commemoration. To erect and maintain large-scale monuments significant funding needs to be allocated to projects. Therefore, funding is crucial for the representation of women in statue form, along with the necessary space. The lack of women statues in cities is partly due to stakeholders having neglected this critical aspect of commemoration.

New York, NY

One of the most diverse cities in the world, New York City, is recognized for its superior historical enrichment. New York City is constantly changing as immigrants from different countries arrive. What stays consistent is that White masculinity has remained a dominating factor in shaping New York’s physical presence.

Central Park is one of the most recognized parks in the world. Thousands of tourists make it a priority to visit the park because it is aesthetically pleasing. When walking around for long enough one will come to realize there are only White male statues. There is also a bronze statue of a husky named Balto, located near the Tisch Children’s Zoo. “Back in 1925 Nome, Alaska was stricken with a horrific diphtheria outbreak. Not enough antitoxin was available to treat all the sick until teams of mushers and sled dogs battled a blinding blizzard and traveled 674 miles to deliver the medicine” (Centralpark.com, 2017).

In Figure II, shows the General Tecumseh Sherman statue, which is located on Fifth Avenue between 58th and 60th Streets. The monument is a bronze statue with new gold leaf on
the surface. Centralparknyc.org states that there is no indication of what the feminine angelic figure represents. This monument along with the plaza constructed around it, was estimated to have cost about $2 million (Pogrebin, 2013).

Coline Jenkins, of The Property Management Company, is on a campaign to battle against the bronze patriarchy in Central Park. Jenkins is close to bringing honor to two famous women of American history, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Jenkins’ great-great-grandmother), and Susan B. Anthony. These women were pioneers of the Women's Suffrage Movement, who had strong ties to New York during their time. There are only twenty-two statues of historical figures in Central Park. The majority of them are of men who were historically important in their time, either nationally or in New York specifically. Selected White males who were considered historically notable were commemorated though statues of them being erected in Central Park. These notable figures included Danish sculptor Albert Bertelsmann Thorvaldsen (1770-1844), nineteenth-century American writer Fitz-Greene Halleck and King Jagiello of Poland in the fourteenth century. The small statues scattered around Central Park that look like women do not in fact depict real women, but fairies and angelic beings. The need to correct the gender imbalance in Central Park is evident.
In 2013, Myriam Miedzian, a former philosopher and public intellectual who has written extensively on gender issues, and her husband assembled a committee of fund-raisers who created a list of forty-four women candidates to be considered for commemoration by erection of a monument. The committee settled on a dual tribute to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Miedzian contacted Jenkins because of her experience in finding homes for statues. In May, 1997, she had helped relocate an eight-ton marble bust of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia Mott from an obscure area of the Capitol building to the building’s Rotunda. The move required two acts of Congress to be put into effect.

According to the New York Times, there are roughly eight hundred permanent monuments in New York City's parks system. Of these, 250 are statues, with 125 of the statues honoring historical figures. The great majority of these statues represent White males, with only a small fraction representing women or minorities. A great proportion of park monuments and statues represent animals, or are tablets and arches to honor people and animals who helped shape America (Official Website of the New York City Parks & Recreation, 2017). Sculptures resembling women within Central Park tend to depict fictional female characters rather than historical figures. The parks department determines who will be memorialized and who will be depicted in sculptural form in the park. In May 2016, the department granted conceptual approval to erecting a statue dedicated to Stanton and Anthony at the West 77th Street entrance to Central Park. The site lies adjacent to the mighty bust of eighteenth and nineteenth century Prussian naturalist, Alexander von Humboldt. While a noted figure in his presence would not be as recognizable as of the pioneers of the women’s suffrage movement. Near the site is the epic sculpture to Theodore Roosevelt at the entrance to the American Museum of Natural History.
For the installation to progress and be implemented, the department requires a $400,000 to $1 million endowment to cover construction, installation and maintenance. Fund-raising is important, but so is the actual design of these monuments: the design will be chosen through a competition and then must be approved by the city’s Public Design Commission. At the dedication of the statue’s future site, Jenkins’ quoted a letter by Stanton to then President Theodore Roosevelt (Moore, 2015).

Surely, there is no greater monopoly than that of all men in denying to all women a voice in the laws they are compelled to obey.

White men have such privilege that even after they die millions of dollars are invested commemorating at least some among them. Women and minorities sometimes receive such commemoration, but the disparity between their being so honored and White men being honored is very great. Representation of women in democratic places such as parks is more than warranted, but decisions about who should be so commemorated should not lie with park officials.

What activists should take away from the action undertaken by Jenkins and Miedzian is that we should not remove the memorials that have been established, but should create more representations of women. Jenkins and Miedzian are continuing fundraising for the first commemoration of historic women in Central Park.

Organized methods devised by these women relating to the representation of women in parks can be used on a larger scale to help confront the larger issue of White dominated male American society. Steps must be taken in this linear society to create a historical dialog. This is critical as history in both its positive and negative aspects helps shape the present and helps determine future challenges that may arise.
Boston, MA

The Boston Women’s Commission, a body of thirty city leaders dedicated to the advancement of women, has celebrated the women’s contributions to the city’s history. Among those celebrated have been Abigail Adams, Lucy Stone and Phillis Wheatley. These women were committed to social change and helped start women’s fight for equality against hierarchy, with their writings helping to strengthen their legacies. Together these three women helped break barriers blocking women advancement, although they had different lifespans and lived in somewhat different eras, (Adams, 1744-1815; Stone, 1818-1893; and Wheatley, 1753-1786). All three helped overcome prevailing prejudices, which made women reluctant to voice their opinions and hesitant to authority of the breadwinners of their families. Shown in Figure III, these three pioneering women have a dedicated space in the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, named The Boston Women’s Memorial.

![Image of The Boston Women's Memorial](image)

Figure III: The Boston Women's Memorial in Boston

Imagery and the symbolism contained in the portrayal of these women are important aspects of these pieces of art. First Lady Abigail Adams and Lucy Stone were both White women suffragettes. Besides fighting for women’s rights Adams also fought for the freedom of slaves. In 1791, Mrs. Adams wrote to her husband that she had placed a young free slave in a local school in Philadelphia (National Archives, 2017). She clearly, states why a young man should be educated.
This Mr. Faxon is attacking the Principle of Liberty and equality upon the only Ground upon which it ought to be supported, an equality of Rights the Boy is a Freeman as much as any of the young Men and merely because his Face is Black, is he to be denied instruction? How is he to be qualified to procure a livelihood? ... I have not thought it any disgrace to myself to take him into my parlor and teach him both to read and write.

Education was important to Adams. She rejected racism and saw it as a threat. Even though she wanted to take the free slave and educate him, she had to face the politics of racism in the home and as a public figure.

Stone was the first woman from Massachusetts to earn a college degree. She organized of the 1850 Worcester First National Woman’s Rights Convention, held in Massachusetts and assisted in the initiation of American Woman Suffrage Association in 1869. Stone also opposed slavery. She was a modern woman before her time and a pioneer on gender issues.

Phillis Wheatley, an African-American slave, was one of the first suffragettes and was also the first published African-American female poet. In 1773 her book, Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral, gained fame in England and the American Colonies. President George Washington admired her work. The Wheatley monument has several inscriptions. According to an Internet archive, Black Art Depot Today (2013) Wheatley’s Imagination poem is inscribed on the monument and reads as follows:

Imagination! Who can sing thy force?
Or who describe the swiftness of thy course?
Soaring through air to find the bright abode,
Th’ empyreal palace of the thund’ring God,
We on thy pinions can surpass the wind,
And leave the rolling universe behind:
From star to star the mental optics rove,
Measure the skies, and range the realms above.
There in one view we grasp the mighty whole,
Or with new worlds amaze th’ unbounded soul.

Wheatley clearly states that she wants to be free from slavery. She wants to speak openly
without anyone one judging her and has dreams of living in a color-blind society.

Placement of these statues raises a question about women’s power compared to that of men. While a statue of President Washington is situated straddling his horse on Commonwealth Avenue and Arlington Street in the Boston Commons, the Boston Women’s Memorial is situated far from the area’s main attraction. It is positioned six blocks away on Fairfield Street in the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, which is not central or in the immediate area commonly visited by tourists. Even in their eternity, Adams, Stone and Wheatley are faced by oppression.

The ladies are placed in the famous Back Bay, which was used for fishery and trade. “The Commonwealth's threat to take this land under public health laws motivated business and city government to agree on a plan to fill and create the 580 acres of the Back Bay in Boston. Nine train cars loads of gravel arrived every 45 minutes, day and night for nearly fifty years. This created the land that Trinity Church and all of Copley Square now sits on” (iBoston.org, 2001). The wealthy entrepreneurs living by the water were able to have luxurious private housing complete with servants. Hence, urban planning often starts by ports and then branches outward to expand land for living and profitable businesses.

It is important to note that the artist conveys that these women want to have a conversation with the audience. Adams is the focal point because she is placed in the middle, staring at spectators and making a statement with her bold facial expression while holding her feminist stance, Stone and Wheatley are having a conversation with each other while each is holding a quill pen, writing their famous feminist works.

These women clearly expressed their commitment to political changes in Boston and won their commemoration as a result. Women’s empowerment made a difference in everyday life. In the realm of freedom, race was obsolete. However, the pioneers in the fight for justice should
be honored in a more suitable position than where their statues are located. Their statues could be physically moved and placed in the center of Boston Commons where they could draw more attention, which would give them visibility and authority suitable to their historical contributions.

Honolulu, HI

The Reciprocity Treaty of 1875 was negotiated and enforced by President William McKinley within the free trade agreement of Hawaiʻi. In 1893, The Kingdom of Hawaiʻi was overthrown with the House of Kalākaua by United States troops. As a result of the treaty, in 1898 the Spanish-American War was in part a fight to gain Hawaiʻian territory. In 1959, President Dwight Eisenhower signed Hawaiʻi into statehood. The former kingdom became the fiftieth state to join the United States union, which still carries the heavily traditional Hawaiʻian culture as a reminder of the country’s heritage (History.com, 2010).

Hawaiʻi’s first queen, Esther Julia Kapiolani, played a role in women’s healthcare. During her time there was little to no healthcare for women and children. Queen Kapiolani became the founder of Kapiolani Medical Center in Honolulu in 1980. The modern hospital now provides intensive care for infants and children, air transport, 24-hour emergency pediatric care, women’s health services, high-risk perinatal care, and maternal-fetal medicine (Hawaiipacifichealth.org, 2016). As a result, Queen Kapiolani has been honored with a statue in Honolulu. A Hawaiʻian tourist website explains the good she did for the people (Hawaiiforvisitors.com, 2017).

Queen Kapiolani, the wife of King David Kalakaua, was a beloved philanthropist known as the queen who loved children. She founded Kapiolani Maternity Home in 1890 to care for disadvantaged Hawaiian mothers and mothers-to-be. The facility later became the Kapiolani Hospital for Women and Children. Today, a hospital, a community college, a prominent boulevard, a large park and countless businesses bear her name.

Clearly, Queen Kapiolani was a kind person and an advocate for women’s equality. She
made healthcare an issue by giving access not only to women and children, but to all who needed care. It was also her civic duty to take on issues that no one had set policy for. Queen Kapiolani made a statement gracefully without saying a word standing firmly. As a matter of her civic duty, she also took on issues for which no polices had been developed. With her bearing, Queens Kapiolani could make a statement gracefully by standing firmly without saying a word.

The state capital of Honolulu displays public figures such as Queen Lili‘uokalani on a pedestal, remembered for being the first queen, last reigning monarch and also as the woman who changed Hawai‘i’s gender role power relations. Figure IV shows Queen Lili‘uokalani’s statue. It was erected in 1982 and located between the State Capital Building and Iolani Palace in downtown Honolulu (Honolulu Star Bulletin Local News, 1999).

![Figure IV: Queen Lili‘uokalani’s statue in Honolulu](image)

Her symbolic and iconic figure depicts a fearless woman as a leader. Queen Lili‘uokalani is immortalized and stands tall protecting her indigenous people. She is adorned with native flowers representing Hawai‘ian heritage. The placement of the statue between two government buildings helps symbolize the stand for justice for Hawai‘ians and American citizens. She protects her country while standing proud in the midst of institutions dedicated to justice.
Richmond, VA

Virginia’s Women’s Monument Commission has taken the initiative to put women at the forefront of visibility. The state has taken care to recognize women who have contributed to its history. Shown in Figure V, the commission has explained the importance of their mission to recognize women through monuments:

![WOMEN'S MONUMENT COMMISSION INITIATIVES](image)

**Figure V**: Women’s Monument Commission Initiatives of Richmond

There are six categories that commemorative women could fall under. Each category has a targeted audience. This strategic plan is to diversify recognition of the role that women have played in the political arena throughout Virginia history.

The criteria for Virginian women to be placed in honor can be found at the website of the Virginia’s Women’s Monument Commission. shows, the criteria that have to be met before nomination.
Figure VI: Women’s Monument Commission Initiatives: Submit Nominations of Richmond

Each Virginian woman nominated for notability must meet the criteria. To sustain Virginia’s women’s heritage, the nominee must be a native Virginian or have lived much of her life in that state. She must have made significant contributions receive the honor of being placed on a pedestal. The period in which the women lived is important because they could have been in the forefront of women’s rights or achievement in a particular era which required them to go against the grain. Name commemoration through a statue’s inscription will provide recognition of the achievements of multiple women.

The Richmond Times-Dispatch states there has been a designated site for the placement of women’s statues. This is rare because most cities do not cluster women’s statues in one area. The symbolization of the park symbolizes that women’s place belongs to nature (Whipple, 2014).

“Women of achievement from throughout Virginia history will be honored in a monument on the grounds of the Capitol in Richmond," according to a commentary in the Richmond Times-Dispatch. "Last year the design for the monument was chosen and announced during Women’s History Month. Called 'Voices from the Garden,' from the team of StudioEIS and the 1717 Design.
Group, the winning design was chosen unanimously by the **Women’s Monument Commission** after a long selection process that began with more than 30 submissions.”

There will be twelve statues placed in the ‘Voices from the Garden.’ Each woman chosen has met the criterion of making historical changes in Virginia. Each woman left on society that is still valued today.

**13. Evaluation of Alternatives**

Shown in Figure VII, are the criteria for a woman and public space to be nominated for inclusive commemoration and also for the type of commemoration chosen. The leading example will be used as a model for other cities to follow.

**Criteria For Woman and Public Space Nomination in Progressive Commemoration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>New York, NY</th>
<th>Boston, MA</th>
<th>Honolulu, HI</th>
<th>Richmond, VA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Deeds</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated Public Space</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groupings of Two or More Women</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within a Popular Public Space</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Resources</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure VII: Chart by author*

Virginia’s Women’s Monument Commission is the best alternative for bringing about women’s commemoration. The Women’s Monument Commission meets all criteria. New York, Honolulu and Boston lack one criterion that must be addressed when nominating a person for commemoration. Increasing awareness of commemorative women by making them visible will be a great historical achievement itself.

**14. The Depletion of Commemoration in Statues and Plaques**

As government spending becomes a vital component of running public spaces, the depletion of commemoration as whole has become an issue in the attempt to create a more
inclusive form of commemoration. As a result, heroic iconic figures are forgotten for the markers that they have left behind in society.

After the era of erected statues, remembrance evolved to contain a less visual aspect due to the cost of creating statues and securing public land for them. Therefore, plaques became more popular as they were a fraction of the cost to produce and took up minimal space. These plaques were fixed to a stone or on the ground, which made them easier to move or remove than a statue. As funding diminished, so did the statues and plaques that commemorated courageous pioneers in many fields of endeavor. Recently, statues of noteworthy confederate racist White men have been dismantled for their negative value in a modern society. Statues should not be dismantled because there is a history behind the person they represent. Sanitizing history gives leeway for it to repeat itself. What should be done instead is to provide an explanation besides the statue to have a concrete narrative of why it is still standing. The government could implement a policy that landmark law sanctions all monuments that are standing. On the other hand, constituents do not come to parks and plazas to see art nor recognize great people, but for relaxation and various activities that interest them. There can be conflicts between happiness and remembrance.

If purchasing land is in question to erect statues, this could mean that negotiations would have to be conducted for land acquired through eminent domain or alternatively, the government could decide not to invest in land because it would not entail profit. Moreover, currently commemoration has become a part of the Internet; this form of commemoration costs less than constructing a statue and securing land to place it on with the proper government support.
15. Maintaining Memorials is an Issue

Education and awareness are the keys to understanding what has happened with issues of the past. It is shameful that with new social construction ideologies existing memorials are being dismantled to fit into the modern world. These visual reminders will no long exist and their disappearance will give the opportunity for history to be repeated. The point of a statue is to honor someone who is noteworthy in an era. It needs to be remembered that statues will tell a history for future generations. Presently, the removal of historic statues has become a greater issue than it was previously. If we as a society erase history, there is no history.

Where there is an open and empty lot that used to house a commemorative statue, it usually gets forgotten over time. Constant persistence and perseverance in the face of pressure to dismantle statues is not necessarily required but leaving an existing statue and describing what role the person commemorated played in history and why it is still standing fosters civic education. Offending others by ideologies that are no longer popular is often not welcomed, but history holds a place for spectators, including those who learn from seeing who was commemorated in the past.

Since there is less statue and plaque commemoration today and little pressure for more, a comprehensive public plan to maintain historical markers is needed. This proposed plan could help change and widen a historical vision that would educate learners who have little knowledge of accomplishments made by historical women (and men). Most importantly, the federal government should provide funding to enable the development of a national register of historical markers of all kinds, including statues, plaques, and more abstract forms of commemoration. The national register should be available online and should be searchable. This would enable interested parties to ready see, for example, which women have been commemorated and where
and in what forms. It would also enable people to see a full list of many Confederate statues and memorials, as this would provide a vivid way of illustrating the reassertion of Southern White power after reconstruction.

Local cities and towns would compile their own lists of historical forms of commemoration and submit them for inclusion in the national register. The website would also provide information on philanthropic groups trying to raise funds to maintain existing statues or other forms of commemoration or to establish new statues or other memorials. Each philanthropic group could describe its own purpose and those which had been approved by municipal committees could be listed in the national register.

16. Conclusion

Women are still not fully recognized in cities due to the continued power of a hegemonic hierarchy. There is urgency to ensure that progressive commemorative approaches are pursued. Stakeholders do recognize that equality is at the forefront of the problem. The commemoration situation in New York City, Boston and Honolulu shows that women are largely still invisible. Virginia, however, has gone much further in commemorating notable women. There is limited progress in other areas. New York City has established a commission on women’s issues that encompasses historic preservation. Boston and Richmond have devoted public space to women who made enormous contributions to society.

The depletion of commemoration as a whole is a major problem that needs to be addressed in order for it to be revived. Other than that, progressive commemoration has come a long way. No longer is commemoration based on hegemonic, patriarchic and male domination. Historical figures has a right to be displayed in a park or a plaza that is not based on creeds. Diversity is what the United States is based upon, yet it still is a problem in an inclusive world
that revolves around outdated practices. As a society, there has to be a consistent and precise public policy that requires recognition of the forgotten, people who have received little public recognition but who may have done a great deal to change society for the better.
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Autobiographical Statement

Melanie D. Chin is a graduate student majoring in Women and Gender Studies at The CUNY Graduate Center. Previously, she has studied Women and Gender Studies/Urban Studies and Studio Art earning two bachelor’s degrees at Hunter College of CUNY. Melanie has also earned an associate in Fine Arts at LaGuardia Community College of CUNY. Her studies have focused on areas related to women and gender studies; music and black masculinity, and women and minorities in inclusive commemoration in a framework of urban planning.