

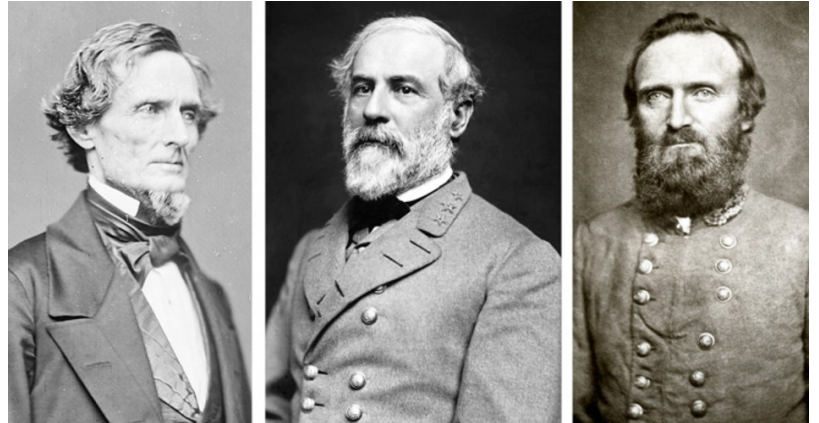


Written by [Steve Byas](#) on August 16, 2017

## Why Do They Libel the Dead?

With the recent ramped-up attacks upon Confederate monuments, particularly those representing Confederate General Robert E. Lee and other leading figures in American history, one must wonder: Why do so many people either libel the dead, or care so little about others perpetuating negative falsehoods about notable figures in history?

What must be understood, however, is that Lee, Jefferson Davis, and Stonewall Jackson are not the ultimate targets of this modern American Taliban on the Left. Their ultimate goal, once all the statues to Lee and other Confederates are destroyed, is to go after the Founding Fathers, such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison.



Some have even suggested abolishing the Jefferson Memorial.

Once the precedent has been set that Lee's memory is to be sullied, with the false argument that he "fought for slavery," what will be the defense when the same line of attack is attempted upon the father of our country (Washington), the author of the Declaration of Independence (Jefferson), and the father of the Constitution (Madison)?

The real goal then is to undermine the foundations of the Republic. If these three men can be falsely portrayed as scoundrels, then the establishment of the country as a constitutional republic is illegitimate, and can be replaced with a socialist regime.

This is what is behind the slurs on George Washington that he was not a Christian at all, but rather a deist who denied the deity of Jesus Christ. It is a large part of the campaign to destroy the reputation of Thomas Jefferson by the ugly accusation that he fathered children by one of his female slaves. Madison, of course, is tarred for having "written slavery into the Constitution," and therefore, the Constitution's principles of limited government, federalism, and separation of powers are all simply the product of yet another slaveowner — meaning the entire document is flawed.

It does not stop with the founding generation, although they are the most important target for those who would like to destroy the republic. In his efforts to attack the Democratic Party, conservative author and film-maker Dinesh D'Souza libeled Andrew Jackson in his film *Hillary's America*. In the movie, Jackson is portrayed as a rapist, forcing a slave woman to have sex with him. There was absolutely no historical basis for such an accusation. So, why did D'Souza do this? He is a highly intelligent man, so one must presume it was a case of the ends justifying the means: in an effort to discredit the modern Democratic Party, which D'Souza rightly sees as extremely dangerous to our continuation as a constitutional republic, he was willing to libel a deceased person, Andrew Jackson. Jackson was a man of substantial flaws, no doubt, but D' Souza's willingness to simply make up such a story about our seventh president in order to make his case against the Democratic Party — and the



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willingness of hundreds of thousands of Republicans to join him in doing so — is disappointing.

Conservatives are even willing to trash a fellow Republican patriot, if they believe it will advance the latest conservative cause. For example, President Warren Harding has few defenders today. Part of the reason for that has to be that when attacks began against Harding shortly after his death in 1923, the presidential election of 1924 was just ahead. Naturally, the Democrats went after the Teapot Dome scandal, as one would expect they would do, and this necessitated tarring the late Harding with the scandal, although he had absolutely nothing to do with it. What really damaged Harding's historical reputation, however, was that the Republicans joined in on the attacks upon their late president, because they wanted to place all blame for the scandals on the dead man, leaving their 1924 candidate, Calvin Coolidge, unscathed as the "Puritan in Babylon."

But perhaps the worst case of libeling a dead patriot was what has been done to the historical reputation of the late Senator Joe McCarthy. Since McCarthy rightly blamed top-ranking Democrats for having allowed Communist Party members and even Soviet spies to be placed into important jobs inside the U.S. government, it is not surprising that most members of the Democratic Party hated McCarthy. They argued that McCarthy unfairly smeared innocent people, even concocting the term "McCarthyism" to describe his supposedly nefarious actions.

Sadly, however, this term — McCarthyism — has been used for so long, and with so little opposition, that it is not surprising to see even those on the Right side of the political spectrum appropriate the term for their own purposes.

Ordinarily, the way those on the Right use the term assumes that McCarthy was wrong. Sean Hannity of Fox News, for example, has charged liberals of practicing "McCarthyism of the Left."

Writing in *Human Events*, the late M. Stanton Evans, author of the definitive book on McCarthy, *Blacklisted by History*, responded to the use of the term by conservatives. "How ironic, then, to have conservative spokesmen at talk radio shows, the blogosphere or Fox News robotically utter liberal falsehoods about McCarthy."

We can hope that TV personalities such as Hannity are simply uninformed (he does not appear to be very knowledgeable about history), but we have to suspect that many on the Right just do not care, believing it is acceptable to smear the dead man, if it advances the conservative cause.

But lies do not advance our cause. We should not be willing accomplices in this sordid use of dead patriots for some modern political gain.

Finally, in some cases, the reason that moderns like to sit around and trash historical personalities is that if they can bring them down to their level, then they do not need to rise up to the level of great men such as Washington, Jefferson, and Madison. But lying about a person does not make the liars more like great historical figures. What it does do is make the liars more like the greatest liar and slanderer in all of history: Satan, the devil, the father of lies.

*Photos: Jefferson Davis (left), Robert E. Lee (center), and "Stonewall" Jackson (right)*

*Steve Byas is a professor of history at Randall University in Moore, Oklahoma. In his book *History's Greatest Libels*, he discusses the unfair libeling of several persons in history, including Christopher Columbus, Marie Antoinette, Warren Harding, Joe McCarthy, Thomas Jefferson, and Clarence Thomas.*



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