

What If We Erase Our Past?



George Santayana famously said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Or maybe you like Mark Twain’s version better when he said, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it does rhyme.”

But you can’t remember the past if it’s disappearing right before your eyes.

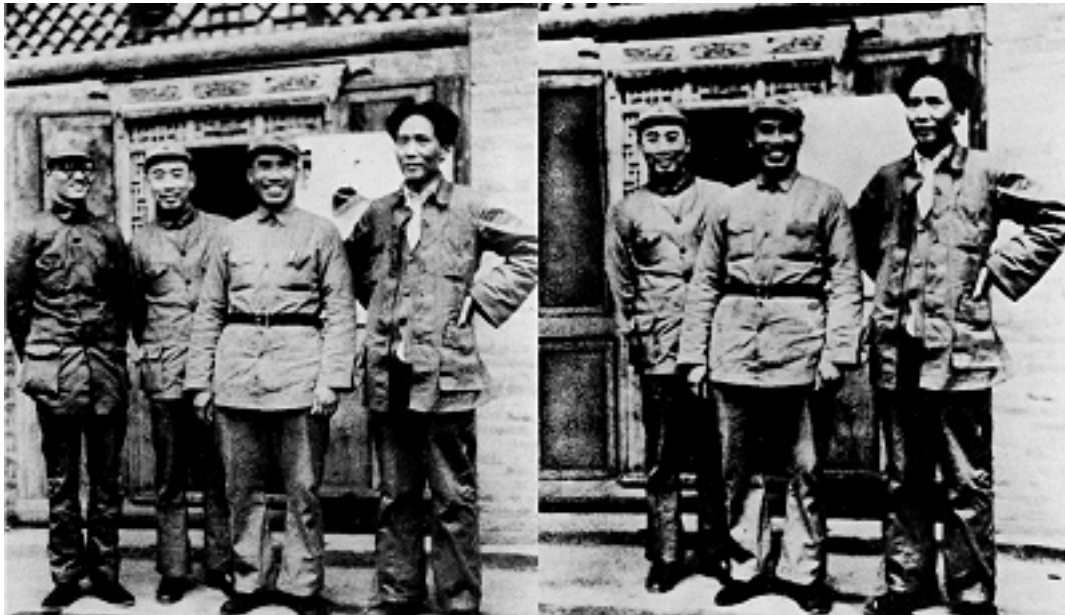
Stalin’s Communist regime was probably the first modern government to make a consistent effort to erase the photographic past, as seen in this famous comparison.



Makes you really appreciate how much harder this was in the pre-Photoshop days.

In Stalin’s case, whole Cabinets, as well as top generals, would just disappear from history. I guess this is what they mean by “Out of sight. Out of mind.” Poof! You’re gone.

And it wasn't just the Russian Communists, but the Chinese Communists too.



Bo Gu, a protege and senior adviser to Mao Tse-tung, apparently got on Mao's bad side, and Bo and bunch of other senior leaders died in a plane 'crash' in 1946. Almost immediately, Bo and the others, AND the plane crash pretty much disappeared from history.

Even Hitler got in on the act when he was mad at Joseph Goebbels about something. Goebbels also disappeared from official photographs for a while until he got the message.



At least Goebbels only disappeared from photographs, and not permanently as most did.

Even the ancient Egyptians were not above erasing a Pharaoh from history. Akhenaten, son of Amenhotep III, husband of Nefertiti, and father to King Tutankhamun, or King Tut, as Steve Martin calls him, tried to

move the populous away from the many different gods they worshiped to a belief in only one supreme god, Aten, the sun god.

Akhenaten even built a great new city dedicated to Aten called Amarna. But it only lasted about 10 years until Akhenaten's death. Then the people and the priests revolted, reinstalled their pantheon of gods, and did their best to rid history of any mention of Akhenaten and Aten. They tore down the temples to Aten, destroyed Amarna, and even removed Akhenaten from all official king lists, even going so far as to chisel his name from all monuments and stonework.

And we see the same thing happening in the same area today with ISIS, the Taliban, etc., destroying ancient Mesopotamian relics because they're not mentioned in the Koran, so they can't be allowed to exist.

And now we see this happening in America today.



There seems to be a concerted effort to erase the Confederacy, the South, and even the Civil War from present day knowledge, to the point of pulling down mountains. Or at least mountainsides.

There has been a call to remove this sculpture from the side of Stone Mountain outside Atlanta.

Depicting Confederate President Jefferson Davis, General Robert E. Lee and General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, at three acres it’s the largest high-relief sculpture in the world, even larger than Mount Rushmore. And some people want it dynamited or sandblasted to get rid of it.

And all over the South flags are coming down, and streets, parks, buildings, and even high school football teams are being renamed.

And on a somewhat more personal note, Vanderbilt University is spending \$1.2 million to remove the word “Confederate” from “Confederate Memorial Hall” that’s on one of its buildings on the Peabody campus. I say ‘personal’, because I actually lived there for about six months.



In 1957 my mother went back to college to get her teaching degree, at the then Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, TN, one of the best schools in the south. At the time we lived down in Gulf Shores, AL, where my father was in the commercial shrimping business with seven of the big ocean-going shrimp boats.

So my mother and I moved to Nashville for her school. We were supposed to be in family housing, but there was a delay due to new construction. So my mother, with the help of some college friends, snuck me into Confederate Hall.

I say 'snuck' because I wasn't supposed to be there. You see, Confederate Hall was the women's dorm – single female coed women. I kind of became a mascot, and the girls would help sneak me in and out to avoid being seen by the resident dorm 'mothers'. And yes, I do remember seeing coeds in the hall in various states of undress.

Unfortunately I was NINE!

But I digress. Confederate Memorial Hall was built in 1933 by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and donated to Peabody with the stipulation that it always bear the name "Confederate Memorial Hall". In fact early on it was reserved for the female descendants of Confederate veterans who were able to live there free.

Well, some years later Vanderbilt University took over Peabody, and since 2002 has been trying to change the name of Confederate Hall but that pesky 'stipulation' kept getting in the way. But finally this past August Vanderbilt paid the United Daughters of the Confederacy \$1.2 million (the equivalent of the \$50,000 the UDC paid for its construction in 1933) and gained the right to remove the word 'Confederate' from the building and just call it 'Memorial Hall'. Ironically they had already been calling it that in all their literature for years. So they paid \$1.2 million to chisel some stone off a building that didn't really change anything.

Is it just me, or would it not have made more sense to use the \$1.2 million for minority scholarships? Did they ask anybody, "Do you not want to see the word "Confederate" or would you like a free scholarship?" Seems a pretty easy choice to me.

Finally I'm now waiting for someone to call for the renaming of Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. You see, the name Arlington comes from the 'Arlington House' estate which passed down from George Washington's family to the wife of Robert E. Lee. Yeah, that one.

So at the beginning of the Civil War, the estate of Arlington House, and the present location of Arlington National Cemetery, was owned by Robert E. Lee. Rename it quick before it offends.

So, are we becoming too Politically Correct? If we erase all the bad things from our past, how will we know what to avoid next time. Time will tell, I guess.