



MONUMENTS

“THE MOST RACIST STATUE IN AMERICA”

STEPHEN FOSTER AND UNCLE NED, PITTSBURGH

Emily Bingham

Pittsburgh writer Damon Young never gave a thought to the Stephen Foster monument until the white-supremacist violence of 2017’s Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, shocked the nation. He had passed it hundreds of times; surely his eyes had grazed the figure hovering at the corner of Forbes Avenue and Schenley Drive near his hometown’s grand Carnegie Library. With the racist slogans and spilled blood all in the name of preserving a monument to Confederate general Robert E. Lee fresh in his mind, Young got out of his car and gave his attention to this commemoration of the man behind such songs as “Oh! Susanna” and “My Old Kentucky Home.” This, he said, had to be “the most racist statue in America.”¹

*MONUMENTS contains fourteen historical artworks. Only two—the memorial to Stephen Collins Foster (fig. 1) and Boston’s Emancipation Group (see p. 290)—originate from outside the southern United States. Foster, the sole cultural creator represented, may seem out of place among military and political figures, yet, like the rest of the monuments on view here, this one was decommissioned by civic authorities between 2017 and 2020. America has long loaded its racist burdens onto a

benighted southland, but Foster’s presence in the galleries speaks directly to a *national* rhetoric of race that has left deep grooves in our common culture.

This monument to the “Father of American Music” from 1900 enshrined not only a talented songwriter but blackface minstrelsy, the nation’s first cultural invention and the nineteenth century’s most popular form of entertainment. The minstrel show centered on blackface caricatures; the songs were “about” Black people, typically set on plantations. As white fantasies, they performatively encapsulated conceptions of “blackness [that] aroused pity and fear, desire and revulsion, terror and pleasure.”² In commissioning this statue, Pittsburgh’s white city fathers fused the songwriter and the blackface lies that his most famous melodies essentialized, embodied in the figure of the “happy slave,” referred to as “Uncle Ned.” At the height of Jim Crow-era white sectional reconciliation, they cast into hard metal the contours of a whiteness that literally depended on a subordinate *and* entertaining Black other. Foster’s inclusion in the exhibition is relevant because the Lost Cause mythology that spawned Confederate monuments across the country cannot be fully understood without the minstrel show’s enactments of American slaves as

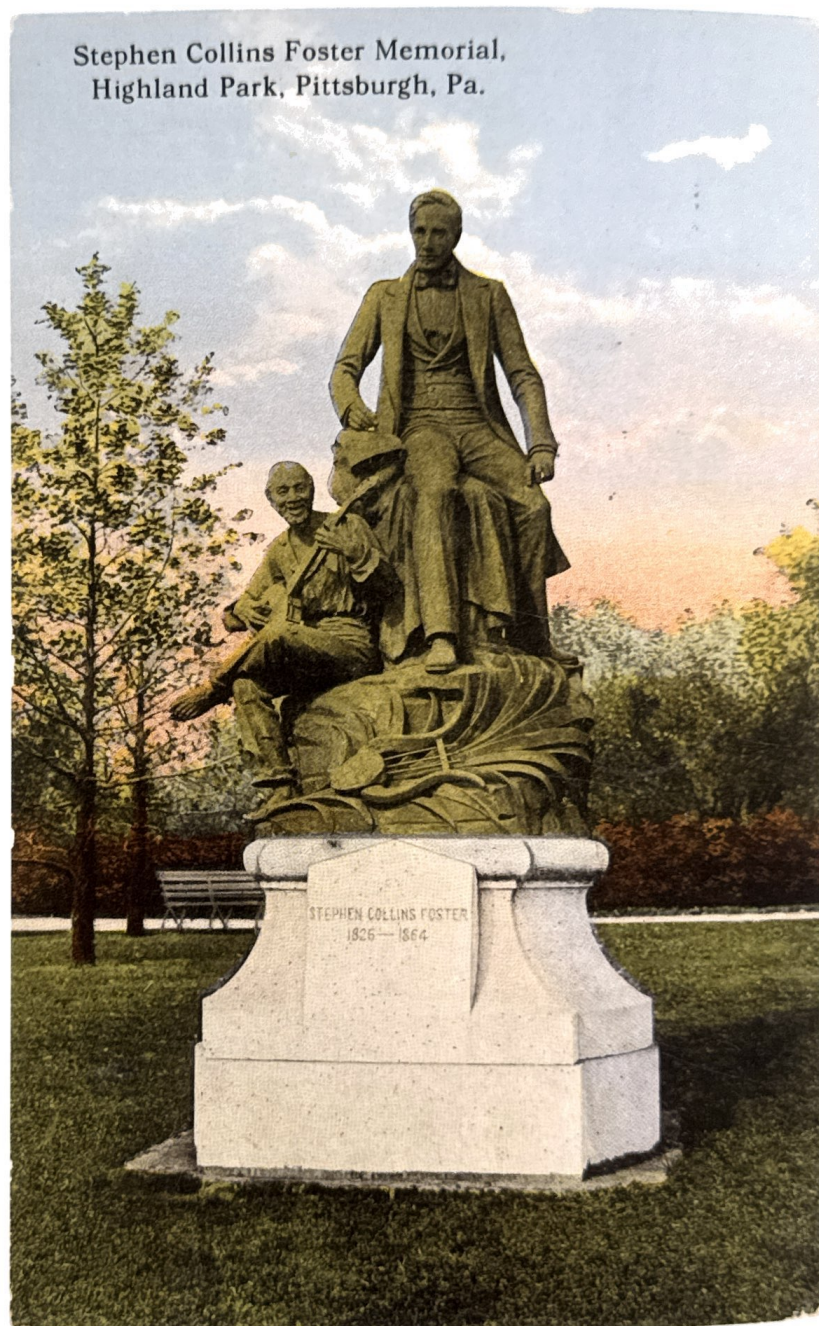


Fig. 1. Colorized postcard of the Stephen Foster monument (1900), Highland Park, Pittsburgh, ca. 1920s. Detre Library & Archives, Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh.

happy, carefree, musical people—simple, lowly, lazy yet exotic folk. The “most racist statue in America” marks a crucial hinge in the dominant white population’s obsession with what they perceive as blackness *and* the need to embody that perception.

The bronze Stephen Foster is well groomed and decked out in necktie, waistcoat, and topcoat. He perches on a tree stump, head bent slightly in a listening attitude. His right hand balances a pencil dramatically above paper that shows the title of the composition he is writing: “Old Uncle Ned.” At his knee is a grinning, gap-toothed man, barefoot in rumpled clothing, who sits cross-legged on a rough stone with a banjo on his knee. Old Uncle Ned, the title character of Foster’s 1848 minstrel song, has materialized.³ As the song tells us, his fingers are knotted like “de cane in de brake,” and he has “no wool on de top ob his head,” but “Massa” and “Missus” recall him fondly as one of the “good Niggas.” He freely releases his “dark material” to be “transmuted into unfading gold”⁴ by the literate white man whose feet rest on the lyre of classical myth. Embedded in bronze foreverness is minstrelsy’s enduring and inauthentic representation, what Matthew D. Morrison has called “a sonic and economic foundation of popular music, its industry, and notions of intellectual (performance) property”⁵ (fig. 2).

The metal figures share the same hue and sit so close they almost touch, pushing the color line in ways that deny but ultimately enforce it. The monument’s visual rhetoric contrasts them in every detail, elevating white over Black, the neat over the disheveled, respectability over crudeness, wealth over poverty, education over ignorance, youth over age, serious “art” over simple pleasure. Ned’s race is acknowledged and seen as exaggeratedly Black, while Foster’s prim whiteness is unacknowledged and assumed.⁶ They do not look at one another. There is no human connection here, perhaps because Ned is only a fantasy in Foster’s head. The composer’s hits were a white American nation’s songs to itself.

Other statues honoring Foster are nowhere near so elaborate or telling (fig. 3).⁷ How did such a richly realized expression of white supremacy arise in Pittsburgh? That story—the public responses and the silences surrounding it over the subsequent century, as well as the protests, defenses, and removal—reflects the institutionalized, all-American nature of minstrelsy and its racist tropes, and captures the dominant culture’s snail’s pace toward reckoning with the depth of its harms.



Fig. 2. Cover of *Old Uncle Ned: Songster*, ca. 1852. Philadelphia: Fisher & Brother. Winterthur Library Collection of Rare Books and Printed Ephemera, M1628 o44 S.

Stephen Collins Foster (1826–1864)⁸ was born and lived most of his life in Pittsburgh, the youngest child in a not always prospering middle-class family. He was perhaps the first American to try to earn a living as a full-time songwriter (not a recognized profession at the time). He composed some of his hits specifically for Christy’s Minstrels, the leading, Manhattan-based blackface troupe of his day. Foster died at thirty-six in New York City, separated from his wife and child, alcoholic, and in debt. These social transgressions were so embarrassing that his family burned nearly all his letters.⁹

During Foster’s youth, blackface minstrelsy dominated stages in the urban centers of the North and Mid-Atlantic—not the South. Though he composed hundreds of songs, the ones that earned him any real money were almost all minstrel tunes. White men in cork, purporting to be experts on blackness, took this music (eventually including Foster’s own melodies) around the globe, performing for Australian outbackers and European royals. At home, they entertained white working-class, immigrant, and respectably middle-class audiences.¹⁰ Presidents hosted them in the White House.¹¹ Novelist William Makepeace Thackeray wrote that a blackface singer on stage in New York in 1852 set

his "whole heart thrilling with happy pity."¹² It was fun. It was pathetic. It was cathartic. And it twisted white anxieties and guilt about race and slavery into entertainment. The blackface craze was America's most meaningful homegrown art form, and its most significant and ubiquitous cultural invention up to the advent of jazz and Hollywood films—and Hollywood found it endlessly adaptable; *Gone with the Wind* (1933) resounds with Stephen Foster melodies. The pen (and the screen) are at least as powerful as the sword.

Some have read "sympathy" for Black people into Foster's music, claiming that it "taught us [whites] all to feel with the slave the lowly joys and sorrows it celebrated."¹³ With his income depending wholly on the sale of sheet music, Stephen Foster needed to appeal to the middle-class American females

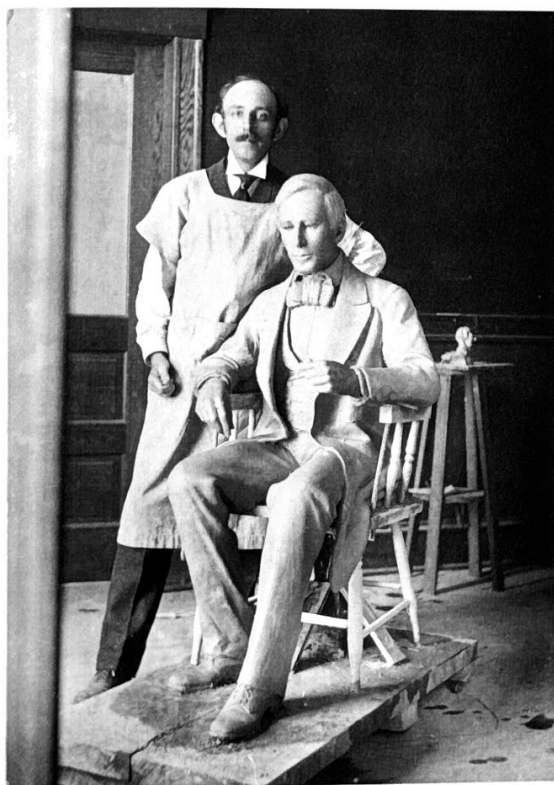


Fig. 3. Joseph Leeland Roop with his sculpture of Stephen Foster, 1906. First Unitarian Church Collection, Filson Historical Society, Louisville.

who were its biggest consumers and who wanted melodies of the moment (in the blackface idiom), preferably without slurs that might sully their parlors.¹⁴

"The sun shines bright on the old Kentucky home/ 'Tis summer, the darkies are gay," is how the 1853 hit sung at the Kentucky Derby begins. (In 1972, "darkies," which in Foster's day was seen by whites as milder than the n-word, was dropped in favor of "people.") The melody tells of a Kentucky man sold for cash, parted forever from his beloved, destined to die in the Deep South. "My Old Kentucky Home" does not invite white outrage, though; the agony of bondage is universalized, "a yearning of no race or color"¹⁵ that appealed to "all who remember a happy childhood and have drifted far from home"¹⁶ "Whatever unsettling questions" such scenes and situations roused in whites were, James Baldwin argued, "evanescent, titillating; remote."¹⁷ This is minstrelsy's dark magic, and it is the root of American pop. Pittsburgh's monument captured with stunning clarity not sympathy but what Eric Lott termed "love and theft"—the "appreciation" of a "lower" caste's "melodic genius"¹⁸ expressed by inauthentic imitations that exploited and expropriated an imagined blackness.

Despite the popularity of "Oh! Susanna" and "Old Black Joe," Foster sank into obscurity after his death in 1864. But his blackface music never went away, and in the 1890s, amid white sectional reconciliation and systematic violation of Black citizens' civil and human rights, this sound of the nation began marking public occasions like the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. There, a 2,000-voice chorus led by the director of the local symphony followed "The Star-Spangled Banner" with a tear-inducing rendition of "My Old Kentucky Home," and a rousing "Dixie."¹⁹

Another note in Foster's favor came in 1894, when Czech composer Antonín Dvořák showcased his new arrangement of "Old Folks at Home" (1851), commonly called "Swanee River." Dvořák, director of New York's National Conservatory of Music, pronounced that "The future of music in this country must be founded upon what are called the negro melodies."²⁰ This was such an expansive category that when it was pointed out that a white professional songwriter named Stephen Foster had written "Old Folks," Dvořák replied, "What matters it to me if the best negro melodies have been written by white men?"²¹

Pittsburghers took notice. Stephen's brother Morrison Foster announced that he would write a biography to introduce to

the world the man whose songs were so generally known that many assumed they were “folk” or lumped them with “negro” spirituals. And, crucially for our purposes, Pittsburgh newspaper editor Thomas J. Keenan Jr. inaugurated a fund drive for a monument to Steel City’s unheralded genius.²²

Politically, the Foster invoked by boosters of the Pittsburgh monument was fungible. At times they touted his “sympathy” for an oppressed people, occasionally suggesting—erroneously—that he was an abolitionist. At other times it was about hierarchy and the “lowly” Black sounds that required a master’s artful refining.²³ Nobody bothered about the songwriter’s anti-Lincoln politics and throwaway lines like the one in “Oh! Susanna” about the riverboat boiler explosion that “killed five hundred n—.” For a group of white Northerners aiming to burnish their city’s grimy reputation with “music that will never die,”²⁴ Foster was a man for the moment. He was good business.

After four years of fundraising, the design committee met in 1899. Morrison Foster had been consulting the sculptor Charles Henry Niehaus, who submitted a proposal based on family photographs (fig. 4). But Keenan, who had done yeoman’s work publicizing and pushing the project, criticized Niehaus’s work publicizing and pushing the project, criticized Niehaus’s concept as dull. The editor instead made a “happy suggestion” to seat Foster “catching the inspiration for his melodies from the fingers of an old darkey reclining at his feet strumming negro airs on an old banjo.”²⁵ Keenan’s idea was unanimously approved; the pairing, crowed a local newspaper, “makes a very pretty effect.”²⁶ The director of public works, credited with creating Highland and Schenley Parks, handed the commission to Italian-born Giuseppe Moretti, the “go-to civic sculptor during Pittsburgh’s City Beautiful period”²⁷ (fig. 5). Moretti’s fee was \$6,000 (\$228,000 in 2024). A larger monument might have been created had the campaign met its \$10,000 goal. Keenan’s *Pittsburgh Press* nonetheless trumpeted the “spontaneously generous” response and claimed that “newsboys and millionaires vied in doing honor” to their obscure local hero.²⁸

According to city leaders, children would ensure the bard’s future fame, and over time they became key figures in his canonization. At the monument’s unveiling on September 12, 1900, 3,000 white youth were recruited to sing Foster melodies under the baton of the conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. It was an occasion they were unlikely to forget—and their families would boost attendance.²⁹ Starting in the 1920s (and continuing until the statue’s removal), local schools

joined Allegheny County’s Civic Association to celebrate “Stephen Foster Day” each January on the anniversary of his death.³⁰ Despite protests from Black parents, classrooms across the country taught his (and other) blackface tunes as innocent songs of the nation, a kind of kinderwashing that helped naturalize traditional racial hierarchies.³¹ Following a congressional resolution making January 13 Stephen Foster Day, President Harry Truman proclaimed that the songwriter’s works embodied the “national expression of democracy” and “the unity of mankind.”³² Over generations, the singing slaves of Foster’s songs shaped and affirmed white Americans’ misunderstanding of the reality of slavery. Music can be mind control.³³

What of Pittsburgh’s Black citizens? Through the century, the renowned, Black-owned *Pittsburgh Courier* maintained a “deafening silence”³⁴ regarding the monument and Foster Day exercises. Such a strictly enforced editorial policy required careful calculations respecting the costs of speaking out in any way against the “Father of American Music” or representations of him, no matter how obnoxious.

The *Courier* held mum after “vandals” (whether pranksters or protesters is unknown) crept to a “secluded hillside” in Highland Park one spring night in 1936 and pried the pencil from Foster’s fingers and the banjo from the Black man’s arms (fig. 6).³⁵ The white-owned *Post-Gazette* called the minstrel “Old Black Joe” instead of “Uncle Ned.” Foster had not really humanized his subjects as some liked to believe; one old singing uncle was as good as another. All told, the pencil was stolen six times, the banjo twice.³⁶ Police never recovered the implements of Foster’s trade, though they were replaced, and we are left to wonder where they are today. In 1944, to better showcase and protect the monument, the city moved it to Schenley Park, at a busy interchange of art and knowledge between the Carnegie complex (Library, Music Hall, Museum) and the University of Pittsburgh. The Black press ignored this as well.

Pittsburgh activist Florence Bridges attended high school near Schenley Park in the 1940s, and she never could abide the statue of Stephen Foster and “Uncle Ned.” In 1990, she called on city officials to remove a piece of public art that “fully shows” Black citizens in “our place”³⁷ (fig. 7). The parks department condescendingly replied that Foster had been “a caring, sensitive and outspoken individual” who “did much, through his music, to change this nation’s perceptions about slavery.”³⁸ In 1994, the Coalition of African Americans for Justice renewed



Fig. 4- Charles Henry Niehaus, Plaster model of proposed design for Stephen Foster monument, ca. 1899.



Fig. 5- Giuseppe Moretti with model for Vulcan statue, ca. 1903. Birmingham Public Library Archives.

Bridges's demand.³⁹ The "academic community" was tasked with finding a resolution.⁴⁰ None came. Three years later, the mayor formed a committee to study what a Pitt student blasted as "the grinning, subservient, yassaboss image of a banjo plucking" minstrel.⁴¹ Once again, "nothing happened."⁴²

With its centennial nearing in 2000, a low, steady beat of negativity reverberated around the monument. Calls came and went to "contextualize" Moretti's controversial work. Robert Perloff, professor emeritus of business and psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, recommended placing an explanatory plaque nearby.⁴³ Similar efforts to address objections to Confederate statues were running aground in Southern states; no one could find language that satisfied both critics and defenders. Some called out the monument's design for misrepresenting Black people *and* promoting the myth of a racially benign songwriter.⁴⁴ Bridges didn't want to split hairs. So long as it stood, plaque or no plaque, the monument's message was clear to her: "This will be the permanent configuration of our community—white supremacy and black suppression."⁴⁵ Again, nothing happened.

Black law students at the University of Pittsburgh protested the monument during the 2016–17 school year, taking their complaints to the chancellor. Another committee was formed. The wheels of academe were slowly turning when, on August 11, 2017, white-supremacist violence in Charlottesville shifted the context for dealing with monuments that many Americans up to that point understood as benign historical markers or perhaps as "heritage not hate."⁴⁶ Videos seen around the world documented the venom spewing from defenders of Robert E. Lee's equestrian statue. A counter-protester was killed and others were beaten bloody. Whatever the heritage, the hate was too visceral, too visible to ignore.

This is when Damon Young drove to Pittsburgh's Oakland "Arts District" to check out Stephen Foster. "The Most Racist Statue in America" featured, he wrote in *The Root*, the "Most Ridiculous Magical Negro You Will Ever See."⁴⁷ Forty members of the University of Pittsburgh's Department of History of Art and Architecture chimed in with a letter to the city's Art Commission. The monument with its "delusional stereotype" was "one of the most outrageous racial representations ever erected in public space in this nation. There is truly nothing quite like it anywhere." In response to those who defended Foster with claims of his and his songs' alleged "sympathy," the signers added that they didn't think "white people deserve congratulations for realizing that

enslaved people are in fact people."⁴⁸ The rush to "do right" almost wholly obscured just how such a statue was ever erected in the first place.

Pittsburgh's Art Commission gathered public input at hearings; then, on October 26, 2017, it voted unanimously to remove Moretti's work. Mayor Bill Peduto accepted the decision. On

Old Black Joe Loses Banjo



—Post-Gazette Photo.

Vandals are at it again in Highland park. The latest piece of property to fall into the hands of the public's enemy is the bronze banjo that rested on the knee of Old Black Joe in the statue of Stephen Foster character in Highland park. The statue is shown above as it now appears.

Fig. 6. The banjo held by the Uncle Ned figure is stolen from the Stephen Foster monument, as reported in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 16, 1936.



Fig. 7. Florence Bridges, 1977.

a chilly April morning in 2018, the monument that set Foster and whiteness over minstrelized blackness was dismantled and placed behind a privacy fence in an obscure part of Highland Park. Schenley Plaza's most prominent remaining sculpture is a fiberglass *Diplodocus* affectionately known as Dippy the Dinosaur.

Pittsburgh's leadership in 1900 claimed civic space to enshrine more than a talented American artist. Their monument affirmed what America and the world had embraced: "feel-good" blackface minstrelsy, a white imaginary that in the 1840s and 1850s diluted the political and moral problem of slavery by delivering a comforting portrait of Black people's lived experience. By 1900, Stephen Foster's minstrel songs were a nostalgic soundtrack, held up as patriotic, sympathetic, and picturesque, even as the rights and bodies of Black citizens were willfully violated by segregationist laws and racial terror. White America as a whole created, consumed, and kept alive blackface with its hideous dehumanization of Black people; indeed, the racial caste

system the monument men of 1900 accepted assumed the name of minstrelsy's earliest character, Jim Crow. Blackface made swallowing the lies of the Lost Cause easy—all one had to do was remember those old songs and crude yet endearing enslaved characters like "Old Uncle Ned." While the Daughters of the Confederacy wrung pride and pennies from defeat to erect their statues in Southern courthouse squares and capitol grounds, Pittsburgh's monument makers embodied American power, wealth, and taste. Giuseppe Moretti executed a baroque racist fantasy handed him by banker Andrew W. Mellon, the director of the Carnegie Institute, Library, and Institute of Technology; the city's director of public works; the director of the Carnegie Art Gallery; a representative of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company; and the current Republican political boss. Blackface and minstrel stereotyping so thoroughly penetrated the nation's cultural DNA that Foster and Uncle Ned stood for almost 120 years, long after white officials knew how offensive the monument was.

And it would almost certainly still stand today if Charles Niehaus's restrained original design of Foster seated alone had been executed. The racist hubris of Pittsburgh's "pretty" configuration laid bare a force that through song and story contorted the memory of slavery in ways that directly and indirectly absolved the nation of collective responsibility for the oppression of Black people. "Fantasies," Claudia Rankine has written, "cost lives."⁴⁹ The enduring, offended silence and decades of brushed-off protests against the statue from Black citizens indicate how righteously Americans cling to white-supremacist culture; the shock of bloodshed at the Unite the Right rally finally dislodged a city's confidence that no harm was meant or done.

Removing America's "most racist statue" from a place of pride will not undo the past wrongs and ongoing impact of blackface minstrel entertainment. But placing Stephen Foster and Uncle Ned in a museum alongside the partisans of the proslavery Confederate States of America forces us to grapple with the connections between minstrelsy, political ideologies, and racial inequities.⁵⁰ It is past time to reckon with the damning cultural legacy that has yielded so much pleasure and profit—and inflicted so much pain.

**At the time of this essay's writing, the exhibition included a monument to Stephen Foster from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and the Emancipation Group from Boston, Massachusetts. Both of these objects ultimately did not appear in the exhibition.*

- 1 Damon Young, Very Smart Brothas media group, "The Most Racist Statue in America Is in... Pittsburgh, and It's the Most Ridiculous Magical Negro You'll Ever See," *The Root*, August 17, 2017, at <https://www.theroot.com/the-most-racist-statue-in-america-is-in-pittsburgh-1797950305>.
- 2 Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 27.
- 3 For another image of the Foster monument, see p. 296 in the present volume.
- 4 "Stephen C. Foster, Master of Old Time Melodies," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 25, 1911.
- 5 Matthew D. Morrison, "Towards an Inclusive Musicology: Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse," *The Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72, no. 3 (2019): 795.
- 6 Steven Hoelscher, "Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, no. 3 (September 2003): 662.
- 7 J. L. Roop's plaster model of the seated composer from 1906 was unveiled at a Stephen Foster Day celebration in Louisville. Funds were never secured to cast it in bronze, but the model was seen by generations at the Louisville Free Public Library. In 1936, a life-size work by Arthur Ivone was installed in Cincinnati—the songwriter worked there for his brother in the late 1840s. A marble bust of Foster by Walter Hancock was placed at the Library of Congress on Stephen Foster Day, January 13, 1953.
- 8 Foster used the middle initial "C." on printed sheet music for his melodies "as sung by" the Sable Harmonists, Ethiopian Serenaders, or Christy's Minstrels. Foster and/or his publishers may have wanted to avoid confusion between the songwriter and the New England abolitionist lecturer and author Stephen Symonds Foster (1809–1881).
- 9 Deane L. Root, "The 'Myth-Story' of Stephen C. Foster, or Why His True Story Remains Untold," *American Music Research Center Journal* 15 (2005): 7. For biographies of Foster, see John Tasker Howard, *Stephen Foster, America's Troubadour* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1934), and Ken Emerson, *Doo-Dah! Stephen Foster and the Rise of American Popular Culture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998).
- 10 Blackface pushed against boundaries of respectability, matching dancing and instruments with African associations to catchy European-inspired melodies. "Oh! Susanna," for instance, is a polka. See Emerson, *Doo-Dah*, 106.
- 11 On blackface minstrelsy, see, for instance, Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Brian Roberts, *Blackface Nation: Race, Reform, and Identity in American Popular Music, 1812–1925* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Yuval Taylor and Jake Austen, *Darkest America: Blackface Minstrelsy from Slavery to Hip-Hop* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012).
- 12 William Makepeace Thackeray, "Charity and Humor" (1852), in *The Complete Works of William Makepeace Thackeray* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1889), vol. 22, 456.
- 13 Robert P. Nevin, "Stephen C. Foster and Negro Minstrelsy," *The Atlantic Monthly* (November 1867): 616. For years, this lone article on Foster was quoted. For a critique, see Jennie Lightweis-Goff, "'Long Time I Trabble on de Way': Stephen Foster's Conversion Narrative," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 20 (June 2008): 150–65.
- 14 Emily Bingham, *My Old Kentucky Home: The Astonishing Life and Reckoning of an Iconic American Song* (New York: Knopf, 2022), 24–28.
- 15 *Old Kentucky Home Celebration in the Schools*, instructional pamphlet prepared by the Old Kentucky Home Commission, 1921, My Old Kentucky Home State Park archive.
- 16 Young E. Allison, *The Old Kentucky Home Immortalized by Stephen C. Foster: Its Song and the Story* (Bardtown: My Old Kentucky Home Commission, 1923), 30.
- 17 James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel," in *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948–1985* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 31.
- 18 "Stephen C. Foster, Master of Old Time Melodies," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 25, 1911. Bob Dylan, an admirer of Foster's songwriting, lifted the title of Lott's *Love and Theft* (1993; see note 11 above) for his 2001 album, which won a Grammy for best new folk record in 2002.
- 19 *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville), October 9, 1893.
- 20 Dvorák interview, *The New York Herald*, May 2, 1893.
- 21 "Dr. Dvorak's Year in America," *New York Evening Post*, September 30, 1893, quoted in Douglas W. Shadle, *Antonín Dvořák's "New World Symphony"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 109.
- 22 Christopher Lynch, "From Obscurity to National Icon: Memorializing Stephen C. Foster in the 1890s," *American Nineteenth Century History* 24, no. 3 (2023): 315–37.
- 23 Christopher Lynch, "Stephen Foster and the Slavery Question," *American Music* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 1–38; Kathryn Miller Haines and Christopher Lynch, "Why We Don't Celebrate Stephen Foster Day Anymore," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 13, 2022.
- 24 "Forgotten Genius," *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), June 13, 1897. This article appeared (possibly at Keenan's behest) in papers across the country during that summer. See also Lynch, "From Obscurity to National Icon."
- 25 "How the Portrait of Foster Was Obtained," *Pittsburgh Post*, August 23, 1900 (thanks to Christopher Lynch for

- this citation): Bill O'Driscoll, "The City's Most Prominent Memorial to Stephen Foster Continues to Offend Many," *Pittsburgh City Paper*, April 15, 2010; Keenan quoted in Vernon Gay, *Discovering Pittsburgh's Sculpture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), 174. Damon Young mused in 2020 that he wished he'd come across the phrase "negro air" in time to bestow it on his daughter.
- 26 "Tribute to Foster," *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*, May 10, 1899, quoted in Lynch, "From Obscurity to National Icon," 325.
 - 27 Jennifer Willard, "Giuseppe Moretti," *Alabama Heritage*, no. 20 (Spring 1991).
 - 28 "Unveiling of Foster Memorial at Highland Park," *The Pittsburgh Press*, September 12, 1900.
 - 29 Only white children were included. When a local minister asked about having Black children in the ceremony, he was turned away. Lynch, "From Obscurity to National Icon," 329.
 - 30 Haines and Lynch, "Why We Don't Celebrate Stephen Foster Day Anymore."
 - 31 Bingham, *My Old Kentucky Home*, 93–94, 159; Katya Ermolaeva, "Dinah, Put Down Your Horn: Blackface Minstrel Songs Don't Belong in Music Class," *Medium*, October 30, 2019, at <https://gen.medium.com/dinah-put-down-your-horn-154b8d8db12a>. See also Kennedy Johnson, "Tracing the Origins of Blackface Minstrelsy in Children's Folk Music," at <https://www.sutori.com/en/story/tracing-the-origins-of-blackface-minstrelsy-in-children-s-folk-music-TzfmfoAmWojtwmsNP5dfZ2G4>. At an NAACP conference in 1952, the contralto Marian Anderson, who had to perform Foster songs during her early career, called for schools to "relieve the children of all races from Stephen Foster songs" (see Bingham, *My Old Kentucky Home*, 176).
 - 32 *United States Statutes at Large, Containing the Laws and Concurrent Resolutions Enacted During the First Session of the Eighty Second Congress of the United States of America*, 1951 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), vol. 65, 659–60.
 - 33 Kara Walker commented along these lines in *The Katastwóf Karavan*. Ted Loos, "After a Blowup, Kara Walker Lets Off Steam in New Orleans," *The New York Times*, February 21, 2018.
 - 34 Kirk Savage, "No Time, No Place: The Existential Crisis of the Public Monument," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 15, no. 2 (Winter 2018): 150.
 - 35 "Old Black Joe Loses Banjo," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 16, 1936; "Stephen Foster, Uncle Ned to Move to a New Home," *The Pittsburgh Press*, March 24, 1944.
 - 36 Gay, *Discovering Pittsburgh's Sculpture*, 175n2.
 - 37 Florence Bridges to Mona N. Generett, October 9, 1990, photocopy, monument binder, Center for American Music, University of Pittsburgh.
 - 38 Mona N. Generett to Florence Bridges, October 19, 1990, photocopy, monument binder, Center for American Music, University of Pittsburgh.
 - 39 Coalition of African Americans for Justice to Deane L. Root and Faith Gallo, August 5, 1994, photocopy, monument binder, Center for American Music, University of Pittsburgh.
 - 40 Minutes, Art Commission Special Hearing Regarding Stephen Foster Statue, Wednesday, October 4, 2017, 3.
 - 41 "Stephen Foster Memorial and Statue an Insult to Blacks," *The Pitt News*, November 7, 1994, photocopy, monument binder, Center for American Music, University of Pittsburgh.
 - 42 Steve Was, quoted in Charles Rosenblum, "It's High Time to Conclude a Long-Unresolved Debate Over Oakland's Stephen Foster Statue," *Pittsburgh City Paper*, August 23, 2017.
 - 43 Minutes, Art Commission Special Hearing Regarding Stephen Foster Statue, Wednesday, October 4, 2017, 3.
 - 44 Rosenblum, "It's High Time"; Brian O'Neill, "Stephen Foster Statue: Wrong Place or Wrong Time," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 30, 2000.
 - 45 O'Neill, "Stephen Foster Statue."
 - 46 Savage, "No Time, No Place," 151.
 - 47 Young, "The Most Racist Statue in America."
 - 48 Letter from Kirk Savage and Shirin Fozi to the Art Commission, City of Pittsburgh, October 9, 2017, in Ben Ogrodnik, "Remembering or Erasing the Past? The HAA Department Responds to Stephen Foster Memorial," *Constellations*, October 27, 2017.
 - 49 Claudia Rankine, *Just Us* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2020), 329.
 - 50 The U.S. caste system's performative demands on Black people, rising largely from minstrel stereotypes, has left a constricted pathway to prominence. An outsize proportion of the wealthiest African Americans have been entertainers or athletes. Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020), 137. Some of the most potent critiques of blackface and its toxicity have been satirical. See Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* (2000), Mel Brooks's *Blazing Saddles* (1974), and Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* (2015).