THE NOT SO LOST CAUSE

HOW HISTORIANS ENDORSED A FALSE HISTORY

By Abby Echeverria and Fall 2017 HIS 470
Supported by Dr. Randi Barnes-Cox

What is the Lost Cause and how is it impacting American society?

The Lost Cause is an ideology that developed soon after the Civil War; the movement perpetuates the idea that the real causes for the Civil War have been “lost.” It includes beliefs that war was never about slavery but instead was an issue of states’ rights, that slavery was a benign institution, often exaggerates the accomplishments of Confederate war heroes and pushes for Southern advocacy. The question arose of whether the American Historical Association, the oldest and largest society of historians and professors of history in the United States, had made any statements regarding apparent complacency in the spread of the Neo-Confederate ideas that have helped fuel the former and recent white nationalist movements. There has been no apology or statement issued from the association as of date. Through the close examination of articles spanning a total of sixty-eight years, a group of students used a self-created coding system to identify the frequency of Neo-Confederacy ideas in over 80 articles published by American Historical Review (the historical journal of the AHA). The students coded for both ideas of the Lost Cause and the antithesis of those ideas in order to present statistics that could prove the AHA has published information that solidified the ideology.

“"We are not makers of history; We are made by history"  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.