

This is a pre-print version of the Madison Jones and Jacob Greene webtext “Augmented Vélorutionaries: Digital Rhetoric, Memorials, and Public Discourse” published in *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy*, 22(1), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/22.1/topoi/jones-green>.

“MEmorials”

Voice-Over Narration: “If you’ve ever walked through a major American city, you’ve probably come across various monuments, statues, or historical markers that honor the sacrifices made by a certain individual or group of people. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall in Washington, D.C., for instance, honors the lives of United States service members who fought and died in the Vietnam War. Similar to other war memorials and monuments in Washington D.C. and throughout the United States, these monuments serve as a public acknowledgement of the sacrifices that a nation has made to uphold a shared value such as freedom or equal rights for its citizens. Societies also erect other, more personal, monuments. On highways and busy intersections across America, for instance, people place flowers, wooden crosses, and ghost bikes at places where loved ones have been killed by a vehicle. Although such memorials function to honor the lives of those who have been killed, Ulmer points out that they do not operate in the same way as more public memorials, such as statues or war memorials. That is, they do not often explicitly acknowledge this specific death as a sacrifice on behalf of a value. In the case of traffic fatalities, these deaths are no more accidents than the sacrifices made by soldiers are ‘accidents.’ Rather, they are both sacrifices made on behalf of a shared value. However, in the case of traffic fatalities, this shared value is not an explicit national ideal like freedom, but a more mundane right to own and drive a vehicle at high speeds. For Ulmer, addressing a pressing public problem like traffic fatalities is impossible until these deaths are acknowledged as public sacrifices rather than individual, isolated accidents.”

Ulmer Interview: “Take the nation-state or any empire or any collective political body. It monumentalizes certain things. There are certain things it wants to remember. It acknowledges those things that are important to it. For example we have the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C., the most important place where we display so many of our monuments. On it are displayed over 58,000 names, and these are the individuals killed in action in Vietnam. The wall is there to memorialize the fact that these deaths are not accidents, they’re not wasted; they were spent on behalf of a national value. The way the nation is remembering it is that these are the honored dead. So, we take these individual deaths and promote them as a sacrifice on behalf of a collectivity.”