



Written by [James Murphy](#) on June 21, 2020

“Bring That Sucker Down”: Popular Mechanics Publishes Guide on How to Topple a Statue

Unfortunately, it’s not a parody.

Last week, longtime science and technology magazine *Popular Mechanics* actually published an [article](#) that gives very specific instructions on how to how to topple “problematic monuments” with science. The piece tells readers how to “bring that sucker down without anyone getting hurt.”

The author of the piece, James Stout, explained:



Should you happen to find yourself near a statue that you decide you no longer like, we asked scientists for the best, safest ways to bring it to the ground without anyone getting hurt — except, of course, for the inanimate racist who’s been dead for a century anyway.

For the brute force approach, mechanical engineer Scott Holland recommends that for the average statue, vandals should recruit at least 70 friends and use 4X4 recovery straps, since they are far less cumbersome than ropes or chains. To get the proper leverage, Holland suggests placing the straps “around the head or neck” of the statue.

Lacking 70 vandals, Holland suggests heating the statue in order to cut it’s strength so that a smaller group of criminals might be able to pull it down. “You could use a butane torch,” Holland suggests. “But it would be much quicker with a propane torch. Those burn hotter. You’ll be there for 15 or 20 minutes, but it’s a lot easier.”

If it’s just a few vandals looking to topple a monument, *Popular Mechanics* suggests using dangerous chemicals to accomplish the job. San Diego State chemistry professor Chris Harrison suggests using a highly volatile thermite reaction as a quick and easy way to get the crime done.

“The formula is very simple,” said Harrison. “It’s 3:1 by mass of rust and aluminum powder. You mix those together and use a piece of magnesium to use as a high temperature fuse. And if you don’t have one, you could use a sparkler.”

Harrison gives specific instructions on how to use the thermite, too: “You could pack the thermite around [the statue’s] ankles using a plastic or metal bucket with the base removed,” Harrison said. “You could invert the halves of the bucket and place them on either side of the feet, and then pour in the thermite, packing it down as best as possible. The more open space there is, the less efficient the reaction will be.”

Should you lack a piece of magnesium (or a common sparkler) to ignite the thermite, Harrison suggests securing some liquid nitrogen, drill holes into the ankles of the statue, fill those holes with the liquid nitrogen, which will super cool the ankles of the statue causing them to shatter.

The liquid nitrogen option has one “fun” bonus effect according to Harrison. The liquid nitrogen will almost certainly turn into a gas and seep out of the drilled holes, causing a high-pitched squealing



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sound.

“One could imagine it sounding something like the sound a Confederate general would make if their feet were on fire,” Harrison joked. Because setting a person on fire is funny these days, apparently.

Predictably, the article prompted outrage among those to the right of Karl Marx. Liberal American author and philosopher Christina Hoff Sommers took to [Twitter](#): “Popular Mechanics goes full Taliban. Several engineers chime in on how to destroy statues. I always thought Popular Mechanics was about building things.”

Conservative talk-show host Ben Shapiro suggested that more helpful hints for terrorists might be on the way. “I look forward to *Popular Mechanics* putting together a primer on how to make a Molotov cocktail.”

Laughably, *Popular Mechanics* presented a disclaimer along with the article claiming that it is only sharing the “physics and mechanics” of statue toppling, not endorsing the behavior:

This article is being presented only to describe the physics and mechanics of removing statues in light of national attention being drawn to the removal of Confederate monuments and statues. *Popular Mechanics* is not encouraging anyone to remove any statues. There is a risk of injury whenever you try to remove or destroy a statue, even if you were to apply information presented in this article.

So, they’re not encouraging the removal of statues, they’re just telling vandals how to do it in the most effective and safety-conscious way. Isn’t giving criminals advice on how to commit their crimes stretching the intent of the First Amendment?

Popular Mechanics was once a great magazine, sharing science and engineering information in language that the laymen could understand. It has since become a journal of [climate-change propaganda](#), [UFO](#) and Bigfoot conspiracies and how to [avoid police weapons](#) should you engage in rioting. Now, sadly, it’s become a “how to” guide for how to easily commit vandalism.

Photo of statue at Manassas National Battlefield Park: jim Schlett/iStock/Getty Images Plus

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