



April 26, 2023

Stone Mountain Memorial Association Board of Directors  
2003 Robert E Lee Blvd  
Stone Mountain, GA 30086

Dear Stone Mountain Memorial Association Board of Directors,

I am writing to you from the Southern Poverty Law Center, the premier U.S. nonprofit civil rights organization working to counter hate and extremism. The Southern Poverty Law Center has grave concerns about the platform being given white supremacists at Stone Mountain that creates a potential for harassment and intimidation of public park visitors, the safety of public park staff, and the assurance that all non-discrimination laws are being followed. Because of these concerns we ask that you rescind the permit given to Sons of Confederate Veterans. The Southern Poverty Law Center is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people. The SPLC began tracking white supremacist activity in the 1980s, during a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and other organized extremist hate groups. Each year since 1990, we have conducted a census of hate groups operating across America, a list that is used extensively by journalists, law enforcement agencies, and scholars, among others.

It is our understanding that the Sons of Confederate Veterans' (SCV) have been granted a permit to hold a Confederate Memorial Day event on Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at the public Stone Mountain Park. The event's featured keynote speaker, as advertised by the Sons of Confederate Veterans, is John Weaver, is a prominent preacher in the neo-confederate hate movement, which is known for supporting of secession, slavery and segregation in the South. Weaver has spent years providing pseudo-theological cover for racists and antisemites in the neo-confederate movement. Providing a platform for his racist ideas at Stone Mountain helps Weaver and the movement normalize their ideas, which gives the perception that their ideas are supported by officials in Georgia.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has grave concerns about the podium being given white supremacists, the potential for harassment and intimidation of public park visitors, the safety of public park staff, and the assurance that all non-discrimination laws are being followed. Because of these concerns we ask that you rescind the permit. The SMMA has precedent for this action. In 2021 the SMMA rejected the SCV's application for a permit for the Confederate Memorial event citing the possibility of, "a clear and present danger to public health or safety." Our concerns are rooted in the evidence of past activities by both Weaver and Sons of Confederate Veterans. As a preacher, John Weaver shares a religious doctrine that was used by



the racist Southern state governments to defend slavery, and later, to reverse laws and court rulings against segregation. Weaver's racist and antisemitic sermons found on websites dedicated to Christian Identity, which is a theology that grew in influence on the racist right in the 1950s. The theology is "Christian" in name only and suggests that white people, not Jewish people, are true Israelites favored by God in the Bible. Some adherents to Christian Identity have well documented ties to acts of white supremacist terror and represents African Americans as subhuman to advocate for segregation in the United States.

During his time as a racist and antisemitic preacher, Weaver has organized with several hate groups, including the Southern Cultural Center (SCC), the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), and the League of the South. Located in Wetumpka, Alabama, the SCC minimizes the realities of slavery, champions racial segregation, and wants to separate the South from the U.S. Last August, Weaver spoke at the SCC's first annual conference. The CCC is a hate group that opposes interracial partnerships and has referred to Black folks as "animals," "savages," and as part of a "retrograde species of humanity." The white supremacist convicted of murdering nine African Americans in 2015 at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina cited CCC propaganda as instrumental to his radicalization. The League of the South is a racist and antisemitic group that seeks secessions from the U.S., advocates for the use of violence to achieve political goals and participated in the violent Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans engage in revisionist history and the Lost Cause narrative, which refers to a collection of political and historical myths that revise that slavery is the actual reason the South seceded from the union in 1861. The organization's guide on how to stop removal of Confederate statues advised a strategy of rallies, lawsuits and the media engagement. Like League of the South the [Sons of Confederate Veterans](#) members attended the deadly, white supremacist Unite the Right rally where Heather Heyer was murdered. The argument that the Confederate memorial day, flag and other displays represent "heritage, not hate" ignores the near-universal heritage of African Americans whose ancestors were enslaved by the millions in the South. It trivializes their pain, their history and their concerns about racism — of the past and of today. And it conceals the true history of the Confederate States of America and the seven decades of Jim Crow segregation and oppression that followed the Reconstruction era. More than 2,600 Confederate symbols still publicly present across the U.S. Groups like the Sons of Confederate Veterans and Weaver perpetuate the racist symbolism of these monuments and commandeer places like Stone Mountain for their gatherings. To permit this event at Stone Mountain continues this trivialization and conceals the true history of America.

The Southern Poverty Law Center thought it was important to provide you with our research on the risk that this event gives white supremacists the potential for harassment and harm to park visitors (especially Black park visitors), the safety of park staff, and an opening to disregard non-discrimination laws with implicit impunity. The event provides an opening for extreme groups to sanitize their ideas for broader public consumption. We ask that you rescind the permit.



The Southern Poverty Law Center is able to provide additional resources upon request and can be reached at: [info@splcenter.org](mailto:info@splcenter.org).

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Carroll Rivas".

Rachel Carroll Rivas  
Deputy Director of Research, Reporting & Analysis  
Intelligence Project, Southern Poverty Law Center