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December 13, 2019

To the UNC Board of Governors, Interim System President Roper, UNC Chapel Hill Board of Trustees, Interim Chancellor Guskiewicz, and Provost Blouin:

The voting faculty of the History Department of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has unanimously approved the following statement condemning the settlement agreement between the UNC Board of Governors and the organization known as the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and calling for its immediate revocation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin C. Waterhouse".

Benjamin C. Waterhouse
Associate Professor and Grauer Scholar
Acting Chair, Department of History

Statement by Faculty in the Department of History, UNC-Chapel Hill, December 2019

Response to the UNC System’s Board of Governors’ Decision to Give the “Silent Sam” Confederate Monument to the Sons of Confederate Veterans and Establish a \$2.5 Million Charitable Trust to Care for the Monument.

The History Department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill condemns the Board of Governors’ (BOG) agreement to give \$2.5 million to the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) for the long-term custody and maintenance of the Confederate Monument known as “Silent Sam.”

In addition to its major financial expense, the agreement carries even higher costs for the University’s commitment to fact-based knowledge and for our efforts to confront the historical legacies of racist ideologies and institutions.

Historically accurate accounts of past events are based on facts and historical documents. The SCV ignores overwhelming historical evidence about the causes of America’s Civil War, the centrality of slavery to the Confederacy, and the white supremacist system of the Confederate government. Its false historical narrative states that the “preservation of liberty and freedom was the motivating factor in the South’s decision to fight.”

Historians reject this lost-cause mythology. Empirical evidence from Confederate policies, political leaders, and military officers demonstrates that the Confederacy was established to defend the continuing enslavement of millions of people. To deny this evidence is as wrong as to deny the evidence for the Holocaust. To give our University’s money to an organization that promotes historical falsehoods contradicts our professional commitment to teaching, research, and public service.

The History Department therefore calls on the BOG to rescind the settlement. Establishing a UNC-funded “charitable trust” for the SCV goes against our core values as historians and faculty members. The settlement harms the people of North Carolina, undermines historical understanding, and damages the national and global reputation of our University.