

*The Warner Museum company has made a proposal to profoundly modify the Stone Mountain State Memorial Park considerably to conform with modern prejudices of a political faction. Below are the proposals of Warner with observations and commentary below most paragraphs. To make clear which are the Warner proposals our comments are in a different red font and italicized.*

## **MAIN THEME AND THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY**

History and Memory: Memorial Hall will explore the role that Stone Mountain Park's Confederate monument has played in shaping, perpetuating, and using the South's collective memory of the Civil War and their Confederate past.

*Right from the beginning it should be pointed out (and will be shown throughout) that the proposals of Warner do not conform to the Georgia law governing the purposes of the Stone Mountain State Memorial Park.*

*Official Code of Georgia Annotated Section 12-3-191 identifies the purpose of the Stone Mountain State Memorial Park as follows:*

*(7) "Project" means Stone Mountain and property adjacent thereto acquired by the association and all accommodations, utilities, facilities, services, and equipment necessary or convenient, and all property, real, personal, or mixed, used or useful, including franchises and easements, in constructing, erecting, improving, remodeling, developing, equipping, adding to, extending, maintaining, managing, and operating Stone Mountain, located in DeKalb County, Georgia, and property adjacent thereto, as a Confederate memorial and public recreational area... [Emphasis added.]*

*Official Code of Georgia Annotated Section 50-3-1 states:*

*(c) Any other provision of law notwithstanding, the memorial to the heroes of the Confederate States of America graven upon the face of Stone Mountain shall never be altered, removed, concealed, or obscured in any fashion and shall be preserved and protected for all time as a tribute to the bravery and heroism of the citizens of this state who suffered and died in their cause.*

*None of the proposals of Warner upholds any portion of these legislative mandates.*

Since the early nineteenth century, various collective memories have been created that attempt to define the country's numerous national identities. These memories, in general, are a product of both perceived and real threats inherent in the market realities created by capitalism. [Emphasis added.] Even among the populations who have prospered – indeed, especially among them – fear, doubts, mistrust, and uneasiness have been constants. As a result, the collective memories created by various peoples in our society over the years have all been grounded in a sense of peril. Even when memories exalt triumph, vindication, or heroism, the footing rests on anxiety.

*We should be thankful to Warner for exposing its bias so early in the presentation. Right from the beginning we learn that capitalism is the foe. Deconstructing the Confederacy is merely a tool towards that end. The targets are all of traditional American history.*

## **INTERPRETIVE DIRECTION**

The interpretive themes developed for Stone Mountain will explore how the collective memory created by Southerners in response to the real and imagined threats to the very foundation of Southern society, the institution of slavery, by westward expansion, a destructive war, and eventual military defeat, was fertile ground for the development of the Lost Cause movement amidst the social and economic disruptions that followed. Using various interpretive methods, techniques, media, and public engagement, while employing the most current scholarship, we seek to create an exhibit not just about the past but about the future and place this vanquished history has in our national discourse. [Emphasis added.]

*Once again, nothing here is in the legislative mandate. The “most current scholarship” will be showcased to promote an apparently anti-capitalist narrative.*

## **1. THE STONE MOUNTAIN EXPERIENCE**

Stone Mountain, as a place, first attracted pre-historic indigenous people more than 8,000 years ago. Gradually, these peoples disappeared [disappeared?] due to maladies, famine, war, or a combination of all three. New Tribes emerged by the early seventeenth century, but European diseases followed, killing thousands. The 1821 Treaty of Indian Springs with the Creek Nation, which ceded land east of the Flint River, expelled indigenous tribes, and opened up land to white settlers.

Though most antebellum Stone Mountain Village residents were small farmers, the growth of the local granite industry enhanced by railroad development after the Civil War generated quarries where millions of tons of rock was harvested for such prominent projects as the foundation of the Georgia Capitol building, the steps of the east wing of the U.S. Capitol, the dome of the Federal Gold Depository at Fort Knox, and, ironically, the Lincoln Memorial where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., would deliver his 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech referencing Stone Mountain.

*There is nothing in the legislation about indigenous peoples, railroads, farmers or granite quarrying. And Dr. King does have his own national memorial park in Atlanta.*

## **2. GEORGIA, THE ROAD TO DISUNION, AND THE CIVIL WAR: MANIFEST DESTINY AND WINNING THE WEST**

This exhibit will contextualize and define for visitors how the country became disunited over the issue of slavery in the decades between the end of the War of 1812 and the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. Before the conflict slavery and its products, such as cotton, generated national wealth in both sections of the country. However, the very potency (political and economic) of the slave-owning system began to create fear in the non-slave-owning states. Outside slave-owning areas, the United States was largely a society of small farmers, small towns, and small businesses, and most Americans in the free states sought to keep it that way. Indeed, it was for this very reason they wageearning [sic?] already beginning to

dominate places like New England. The west, therefore, was imagined as a place where history could be [sic?]

Yet, the slave-owning states – the Slave Power – coveted this same west, and, because the plantation was a form of industrialization, the power of wealth and degradation of work represented by the slave system was seen as a threat to the hopes of many in the free states – particularly young white males who wanted to see the small-scale world of farm and shop spread west. Georgia was a major player in the slavery debate and its expansion into emerging western territories. Using primary source documents and materials from the period, including writings and speeches from characters like Robert Toombs, Alexander Stephens, and others, we will demonstrate how, up until the Civil War, the slave system was the Union’s most important and profitable recourse [*Did the author mean “resource?”*], at the same time the nation’s most divisive issue.

*While slavery was certainly an important, if not dominant issue, it was not the only cause for division between the sections. Apparently the “most current scholarship” will ignore these other topics. Tariffs, for example, don’t seem to be of any importance to Warner.*

### **3. Monuments and Mythmaking: The evolution of commemorating Civil War dead**

This exhibit area will impress on visitors how those who died during the war were memorialized during and immediately after the conflict ended. This interpretation will make use of artifacts, imagery, personal stories, and interactive technology to illustrate how monuments moving from cemeteries to the center of town as iconic statues representing the South’s reverence for the character of the Confederate soldier. It should be noted that the importance and contributions of African Americans to Union victory were overshadowed and marginalized by efforts [sic] to commemorate the valor of white soldiers.

*Apparently white Federal troops will have to take a hit as well. The African American soldier comprised about 7% of the total Union army and navy. About 25% of the Union army was immigrant; about 25% was first-generation American. Apparently, that is of less interest to Warner. Certainly, it can be said that 50% is of greater importance than 7%.*

#### **4. The Myth of Reconciliation and Reunion: Emancipation, the Failure of National Reconstruction, and the African American Experience**

Although the Federal war effort [sic] against the Confederacy was to defeat the secession movement and restore the Union, it quickly evolved into a war to destroy the slave system itself. Many factors combined to produce this transformation, but the shift was quickly enshrined in the nation's collective memory as a benevolent deliverance for former slaves, with Abraham Lincoln beautified as the Great Emancipator. Even as this memory was being created, it was divorced from the reality of Reconstruction's attempt to reorder the former slave states and the insurgency war led by ex-Confederates to regain control of southern legislatures through intimidation and violence. However, by the late 1870s, a new collective memory of the war emerged to help soothe the trauma of defeat that had little to do with national reconciliation or reunion, and at the expense of social justice and racial equality for African Americans whose own collective memory of slavery and Reconstruction became a casualty of Manifest Destiny. Black leaders, such as Frederick Douglass, battled with Confederate sympathizers over the emerging black collective memory and significance of slavery and the Civil War as a struggle for freedom.

*Once again, the Warner proposal is to enlarge the discussion beyond the legislative mandate of honoring the Confederacy to discuss issues of "social justice" and civil rights more dear to its interests.*

## **5. Remembering the War: How collective memory reshaped the cause, outcome, and meaning of the Civil War**

This exhibit will immerse visitors in the role white Southerners played in the decade following the end of regional Reconstruction in fashioning a collective memory of the war that justified secession (states' rights) and discarded slavery (a central canon of every seceding southern state constitution) as a Confederate cause. Though defeated, they refused to acknowledge they had been on the wrong side of the nation's divine history and should be recognized once more as an integral part of another emerging collective memory - the American military tradition - being brought to bear against the enemies of westward expansion - specifically Native Americans. In the 1890s, organizations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans materialized as promoters of Lost Cause ideology, using the Lost Cause memory of the war to build monuments and veterans' homes, support Confederate-based education initiatives, encouraged federal and state-mandated racial segregation and the disfranchisement of African Americans.

*Once again (I know this is repetitious), we see the Warner proposal departing from the law to discuss issues more pleasing to it than honoring Confederate heroes. We are trending into an almost religious phase here with references to "divine history." Clearly a civic religion is emerging.*

## **6. Shermantown: Living in the Shadow of Stone Mountain**

In the decade following the war, Shermantown, named in recognition of Union Gen. William T. Sherman, emerged as a small African American community at the base of Stone Mountain. Many black residents, like their white neighbors, worked as both farmers, with the railroad, or in the granite mines. It is unknown who or how many were once enslaved or who were slave descendants but many of their stories have been lost in time or have been overshadowed by Stone Mountain's descent into the abyss of post-Confederate ideology. Their collective memory of the past has taken a much different trajectory. This exhibit is an opportunity to explore the evolution of Shermantown, their distinct relationship to Stone Mountain, and

possibly make use of the 200 interviews collected by Federal Writers' Project in the 1930s with former enslaved Georgians on the conditions of the institution and life in the post-war South.

*Once again, does it need to be pointed out that Shermantown is not in the legislative mandate? Would it not be more appropriate that Shermantown be remembered in Stone Mountain city rather than the Park? I am sure that the Writer's Project oral histories will be carefully curated to only expose the parts supporting the thrust of this divine history. Much of the Project seemed to reveal a nostalgia amongst slaves for the old plantation. That can't be used, I am sure.*

## **7. Reinventing the Lost Cause: Stone Mountain and the emergence of the "American Way"**

This section of the main gallery will immerse visitors in the expanding urban environment that denied the country leading up the entry of the United States in World War I. [?] As African Americans left the Jim Crow South and new waves of European immigrants flooded American's industrial cities, the Ku Klux Klan reemerged as a national organization using elements of the Lost Cause to promote racial segregation, anti-immigration, along with anti-Catholic and antisemitic violence in not just the South but in major northern and western cities, too. Fittingly, D.W.Griffith's 1915 landmark film, Birth of a Nation, a play on protecting Anglo-Saxon heritage, helped to inspire the formation of the new Klan and served as a catalyst for the creation of the Stone Mountain monument. In the late 1920s, however, the movement lost momentum as the Great Depression transpired. The twin shocks of the market collapse and the rise of dictatorships in other parts of the world caused numerous Americans to search for a way to imagine (a new collective memory) a United States that represented a contrast to this world of failure and extremism. The result became an imagined "American Way": a narrative in which the nation represented a source of stability, order, and prosperity that made the country exceptional in a world order lost to aggression and conquest, revolution, and massive destruction.

*We travel further and further from the legislative mandate here. Sounds like another opportunity for political preaching and a generalized attack on American nationalism and unity.*

## **8. Crumble into Dust: Stone Mountain and the Civil Right Movement**

After the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of public schools in its 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision, white demagogues pledged to defy federal law and oppose the movement for civil rights. Their response also included embracing Confederate symbols. In 1956, the Georgia legislature replaced horizontal red and white stripes on the state flag [sic] with the Confederate battle flag [sic] that featured a St. Andrew's cross. The State of Georgia, who purchased the Stone Mountain site in 1958, officially resumed construction in July 1964, less than a year after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized Stone Mountain in his "I Have a Dream" speech, during the March on Washington. Eight years later the carving was completed. A dedication ceremony for the monument was held May 9, 1970, with Vice President Spiro Agnew in attendance.

*Not to be too diverted by this diversion, no mention is made of the fact that the 1950s also represented the work-up to the Civil War Centennial. Just to mention a few items: President Eisenhower created federal organizations to commemorate the occasion. The last of the Union and Confederate veterans passed away. The focus of the nation went further during the Centennial with the issuance of postal stamps marking five battles. Not everything in the 1950s and 1960s is about civil rights. Finally, once again, this topic is beyond the legislative mandate of the law.*

## **9. A Granite Canvas: The Art of Bas-relief at Stone Mountain**

As a work of art, the Stone Mountain carving is the largest bas-relief sculpture in the world and is one of the oldest types of artistic expression. Some of the earliest known bas-reliefs are on the walls of caves, carved perhaps 30,000 years ago. The most famous American relief is Mount Rushmore, the huge monument sculpture

memorializing the great American presidents, started in 1927 and completed in 1941 by sculptor Gutzon Borglum, the initial artist for Stone Mountain.

*It would seem likely that this subject will not get much coverage in the world of Warner.*

## **10. Envisioning the Future: The Redemptive Power of Civic Imagination**

To realize the full potential of our communities, build on our past, and chart paths forward, we need to be able to imagine what better worlds would look like. Civic imagination enables communities to think creatively by connecting with others in new ways and tackling challenging issues through imagination. This exhibit encourages people to share their memories, dreams, and hopes with each other. Such diverse perspectives provide the social foundation for civic life, and to talk across their differences. It explores how various peoples and cultures across the country and around the world have used the power of storytelling and imagination to envision real world spaces and places as a first step in overcoming our difference and building real-world blueprints for the communities of tomorrow. Through large screen interactive monitors that record and shares their plans, visitors, as cultural architects, and civic agents, will be able to envision their own idea of the future. This information will be gathered and available to other visitors to Stone Mountain or online through the Stone Mountain website. This project can also be administered through workshops and educational programming.

*Here we see the objective of this entire enterprise is revealed. What was intended to be a memorial to the Confederacy and a recreational area will be modified into a civil rights platform. Honoring the Confederacy is not a factor in a single proposal of Warner. Warner and its supporters clearly desire to obliterate the legacy of the Confederacy and replace it with a political and social agenda more to their liking.*

## **ADDITIONAL INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Exterior Terrace – “I Have a Dream” Sculpture Garden**

In addition to the galleries in Memorial Hall, we propose as an additional interpretive asset that involves expanding the terrace just outside the first-floor gallery to create a sculpture garden that extends into portions of the memorial lawn. The garden will feature historic African American characters who fought for social justice and whose work reached the entire nation. In the center is a sculpture of Martin Luther King, Jr., standing on Stone Mountain granite steps, not unlike the Lincoln Memorial, with Jackie Robinson, Andrew Young, John Lewis, and Julian Bond close by. The intent is to symbolically recreate King’s “I Have a Dream” speech where he references Stone Mountain. All the supporting characters are considered Georgians and were at the March on Washington, with Lewis also speaking.

Other statues of significant Georgia Civil Rights leaders in the garden include Walter White, Benjamin Mays, Grace Towns Hamilton, Bernice Johnson, Hosea Williams, Julian Bond, Vernon Jordan, and Charlayne Hunter. The garden is juxtaposed with the Stone Mountain bas-relief of David, Lee, and Jackson. The experience will allow visitors to walk among these sculptures and learn about their contributions.

*Is any further comment necessary?*