



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MISSISSIPPI

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**English**

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August 23, 2017

Dr. Jeffrey S. Vitter, Chancellor and Distinguished Professor of Computer & Information Science  
The University of Mississippi  
123 Lyceum  
Box 1848  
University, MS 38677-1848

Dear Chancellor Vitter:

The recent events in Charlottesville make even clearer what many of us have known for some time: Confederate monuments are not only an affront to a large proportion of our population, but are also a rallying point for neo-Confederates, neo-Nazis, white nationalists, and the so-called alt-right. These monuments have never been about teaching or commemorating history, but were rather raised as tools of oppression against the African-American community and symbols of white supremacy. Monuments like these were purposefully placed in strategic locations—the statue of the Confederate soldier in the Lyceum Circle very clearly warns African Americans to stay off campus and continues to alienate many members of the UM community.

We urge you to take immediate action to relocate the monument to the Confederate cemetery on campus—another public place that is a much more appropriate resting place for a tribute to fallen soldiers. In doing so the University of Mississippi would stand among other [colleges and universities](#) in the South and nationwide that have in recent days either removed, or declared their intention to remove, Confederate monuments from places of prominence on their campus to more appropriate sites. These include UT-Austin, Duke University, and Bowdoin College. More colleges and universities are assured to follow suit. Given our university's particular history on race and segregation, the University of Mississippi should do the same.

Contextualization is not enough—as long as the statue remains in such a prominent place on campus, it will continue to signify the brutalization of African Americans at the hands of white supremacists, the legacies of which continue to be felt today. It is also not enough to merely begin a dialogue on moving the statues. The move to eliminate the Confederate flag from football games, the on-field mascot “Colonel Reb,” slogans like “The south will rise again”, as well as the lowering of the state flag have taught us that decisive action is the only effective way to get rid of these hateful markers that continue to hold the University back.

Campus and statewide groups are likely to begin calling for the statues to be removed. If you allow this to become a drawn-out, public debate, UM may very well find itself in a similar situation to that of Charlottesville and UVA. If the statue isn't moved promptly in light of this new spotlight on the place of Confederate markers in our society, and especially in light of other colleges and universities doing the same, we will hand the forces of hate a victory and once again make our campus a symbol of resistance to civil rights. But if you do take

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executive action to remove the statue—much as the leaders of several colleges, universities, and cities across the U.S. (Baltimore, Annapolis, Gainesville, New Orleans) have done this past week and in preceding months—then we will send a very clear message that the University of Mississippi does not condone expressions of intolerance here or elsewhere.

We therefore urge you to immediately take all necessary executive and legal action to move the Confederate statue from the Circle and to place it in a more suitable location on campus where those who wish can reflect on its history and that of race relations at UM. Doing so will demonstrate to the country at this timely moment that the University of Mississippi is—much as our University Creed espouses—a community that truly adheres to its beliefs in the respect and dignity of each person, fairness and civility, and personal and professional integrity *and* that leads by example. The University community looks to you for leadership on this important matter.

[We should mention that alumni in particular are continuing to add their names to the letter; the following includes all signatories as of Friday, September 1.]

The undersigned members of the English Department,

*Faculty*

Ivo Kamps, Professor of English and Department Chair

Jaime Harker, Professor of English and Director of the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies

Kiese Laymon, Professor of English and Creative Writing

Ann Fisher-Wirth, Professor of English and Director of the Minor in Environmental Studies

Karen Raber, Professor of English

Deborah Barker, Professor of English and Director of Undergraduate Studies

Beth Ann Fennelly, Professor and Poet Laureate of Mississippi

Catherine Lacey, 2017-2018 John and Renee Grisham Visiting Writer in Residence

Leigh Anne Duck, Associate Professor of English

Tom Franklin, Associate Professor of Creative Writing

Adam Gussow, Associate Professor of English and Southern Studies

Cristin Ellis, Associate Professor of English

Peter Reed, Associate Professor of English

Kathryn McKee, Associate Professor of English and Southern Studies

Annette Trefzer, Associate Professor of English

Daniel Novak, Associate Professor of English

Erin Drew, Assistant Professor of English

Lindy Brady, Assistant Professor and Assistant Chair

Ari Friedlander, Assistant Professor of English

Monika Bhagat-Kennedy, Assistant Professor of English

Melissa Ginsburg, Assistant Professor of English and Creative Writing

Ian Whittington, Assistant Professor of English

Matt Bondurant, Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing

Dustin Parsons, Senior Lecturer of English

Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Professor of English and Creative Writing

Caroline Wigginton, Assistant Professor of English

Adetayo Alabi, Associate Professor of English

Jay Watson, Howry Professor of Faulkner Studies and Professor of English

Jaime Cantrell, Visiting Assistant Professor of English

Chris Offutt, Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing

Daniel Stout, Associate Professor of English

Shari Holt, Instructional Associate Professor of English

Mary Hayes, Associate Professor of English

Derrick Harriell, Assistant Professor of English and African American Studies and  
Director of the M.F.A. Program

Blair Hobbs, Senior Lecturer of English

Sarah Baechle, Assistant Professor of English

Jennie Lightweis-Goff, Instructor of English

Kate Lechler, Adjunct Instructor of English

Beth Spencer, Lecturer of English

Tim Earley, Visiting Assistant Professor of English

*Graduate Students*

Amber Hodge, Ph.D. student

Kristin Teston, Ph.D. student

Ryan Charlton, Ph.D. student

Cullen Brown, Ph.D. student

Susan Wood, Ph.D. student

Jacob Agner, Ph.D. student

Sarah Sgro, M.F.A. student

Regina Young, M.A. student

Juyoun Jang, Ph.D. student

Caitlin Turner, Ph.D. student

Allison Nick, Ph.D. student

Lara Avery, M.F.A. student

Sharon Wofford, M.A. student

Bailey Moorhead, Ph.D. student

Amie Irwin, Ph.D. student

Sarah Huddleston, M.F.A. student

Melissa Black, Ph.D. student

Sarah Heying, Ph.D. student

Will Palmer, Ph.D. student

Sara Stephens, Ph.D. student

Josh-Wade Ferguson, Ph.D. student

Eric Delp, M.F.A. student  
Jan Verberkmoes, M.F.A. student  
Andrew Freiman, Ph.D. student  
Scott Obernesser, Ph.D. student  
Andrew Dally, M.F.A. student  
Katherine Howell, M.A. student  
Chinaza Amaeze Okoli, Ph.D. student  
Isadora Wagner, Ph.D. candidate  
Catherine Albert, M.A. student  
Rossanne Arii, M.F.A. student

*Alumni*

Nathan Likert, M.A., 2017  
Molly McCully Brown, M.F.A., 2017  
Elizabeth Tran, M.F.A., 2015  
Elizabeth Rodriguez Fielder Ph.D., 2016  
Michael Martin Shea, M.F.A., 2014  
Amy King, Ph.D., 2014  
Joshua Davis, M.F.A., 2012  
Thomas Bullington, Ph.D., 2016  
Elizabeth Kaiser, M.F.A., 2010  
Sara Gabler Thomas, M.A., 2015  
Kieran Lyons, M.F.A., 2015  
Victoria Bryan, Ph.D., 2014  
Jill E. Anderson, M.A. & Ph.D., 2012

Laura Christine Godfrey, M.A., 2014

Corinna McClanahan Schroeder, M.F.A., 2011

Daniel Walden, Ph.D., 2009

Elliot Long, M.A., 2013

Rachel Smith, M.F.A., 2012

Kevin Fitchett, M.F.A., 2012

Melanie R. Anderson, Ph.D., 2009

Maegan Poland, M.F.A., 2013

Anya Groner, M.F.A., 2010

Travis Rozier, Ph.D., 2015

Mallory Blasingame, M.A. 2012

Andrew Thomas, M.A. 2015

Hillary A. H. Richardson, M.A. 2011

Troy Wellington Smith, M.A. 2015

Abigail Greenbaum, M.F.A. 2011

Marty Cain, M.F.A. 2016

Jessica Comola, M.F.A. 2014