

December 1, 2014

Dear Senator Durbin and Members of the United States Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights,

My name is Dr. Mark Patrick George and I am the coordinator of a racial justice organization called the Mary Turner Project (MTP) (<http://www.maryturner.org>). The MTP was created in 2007 in Valdosta, Georgia to research and address both historical and contemporary forms of racial injustice. It is named in honor of a 1918 lynching victim named Mary Turner who while eight months pregnant was brutally eviscerated and lynched for publicly speaking out against the lynching of her husband Hayes Turner.

For over eight years now the MTP has been conducting research and holding public events aimed at both unearthing racial atrocities and educating the public about the long legacy of racial terrorism in the United States. As an all-volunteer, grassroots organization, our current work involves three important initiatives. The first focuses on developing a free, online database that provides data on all documented lynchings that have occurred in the U.S. To date no such resource exists.

Our second initiative involves our work to digitize the 1860 U.S. Census Slave Schedules in order to create a free, searchable database ([www.slavecensus.com](http://www.slavecensus.com)) the public can use to search their ancestral names. This project was started because we have repeatedly heard that people lack the access and/or resources to see if their ancestors owned enslaved people or were enslaved themselves. Currently we have more than 30 volunteers from all across the nation working on this project.

The third and final initiative we are working on is the reason I am contacting you today.

In June of this year, and in conjunction with the Lowndes County Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the MTP launched an effort to get the state of Georgia to stop using Georgian's tax dollars to fund events, holidays, memorial sites, and other activities that glorify the Confederacy and Confederate leaders. Our launch of this initiative began with an open letter that was sent to Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal and every member of the Georgia General Assembly. To see the full text of that letter and our request (as well as relevant supporting documents) you may visit this link.

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/233692610/Open-Letter-To-The-State-About-Glorifying-Confederate-History>

In addition to providing an evidence based rationale for our request, our letter also provided historical data that a) demonstrated that Georgia joined the Confederacy in order to preserve and expand the institution of slavery and b) that Confederate leaders (now being celebrated by the state) were overt White supremacists who believed that the Creator has made White people superior to all other races.

With this evidence in mind, and having sent a second message to the Georgia General Assembly in July (after we did not receive a single response to our first request), today I am contacting you to ask you for your assistance in this matter.

Put simply, today the state of Georgia (like other southern states), with its Confederate History Month, state holidays for Confederate leaders, state memorial sites that glorify these leaders, and other Confederacy related events, is using the tax dollars of its citizens (31% of whom are African American) to glorify a government and men who wanted to preserve and expand slavery, and who espoused the belief that White people were racially superior to Black people. We contend the use of state resources for such activities, and the state of Georgia's endorsement of these activities, is unjust, racist, and constitutes a violation of the civil and human rights of Georgia's citizens. We also contend that these practices also raise serious questions about the capacity of Georgia lawmakers, who support and endorse such activities, to adequately represent and insure the constitutional rights of all Georgians as outlined in the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.

Please know that we are well aware that some Georgia lawmakers and assorted Confederate "heritage" groups argue that these activities are a matter of "heritage not hate." However, if one actually takes the time to look at the historical record and the very words of Confederate leaders one finds the opposite is in fact true. What one discovers is that Confederate leaders repeatedly articulated their deep love of slavery and their deep conviction that Black people were savages, subhuman, and worthy only of enslavement (see our open letter to Gov. Deal and the General Assembly for examples of this reality).

Please also know that while critical of these individuals and groups, the MTP respects their right to free speech. We also respect their right to adhere to any distorted, romanticized, and historically inaccurate version of American history they desire. However, we contend that the State of Georgia should not be a part of that distortion nor should it be in the business of glorifying a government, and men, who wanted to keep Black people enslaved and who thought Blacks were subhuman and savages. Moreover, we do not think the State of Georgia should be using the tax revenue of its citizens to actively distort history and glorify White supremacist Confederate leaders. As one of our members described it, "today the state of Georgia essentially taxes its citizens, many of whom are the very descendants of once enslaved people, to celebrate men and a government who thought that Blacks were savages and were lucky to be enslaved." Or as another MTP member put it, "it is not right to ask the descendants of slaves to help fund holidays and memorial sites that celebrate people who wanted to keep us enslaved."

With this situation in mind, and given the silence we have met when attempting to engage Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal and the Georgia General Assembly about this matter, we would like to request a formal investigation into these activities by your subcommittee. We make that request based on our conviction that Georgia lawmakers are actively violating the civil and human rights of a large portion of

Georgia's population with said activities. In addition to an investigation into this matter, any other form of assistance you might provide relative to it would be deeply appreciated.

In closing, the MTP holds that it is time the State of Georgia move into the 21st century, be honest about its history, and work to truly represent the interests of all of its citizens. It is also time for the State of Georgia to stop glorifying a failed White supremacist government and leaders who thought that Blacks were both "brutal savages" (Jefferson Davis, 1861) and "inferior to the white man" (Alexander Stephens, 1856), and that slavery was a "painful discipline" that was "necessary" to "lead them to better things" (Robert E. Lee, 1856). Lastly, just as slavery and Jim Crow segregation were once "normal" and just "the way things were," it is time for a new "normal" in Georgia where Georgia lawmakers stop participating in the distortion of southern and American history and begin to honor the civil and human rights of all Georgians.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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cc: Sen. Al Franken, Sen. Christopher Coons, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Sen. Mazie Hirono, Sen. Ted Cruz, Sen. Lindsey Graham, Sen. John Cornyn, Sen. Orrin Hatch