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**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

Members of the Historical Commission  
City of Philadelphia  
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: 1309 Chestnut Street

Dear Members of the Historical Commission:

We represent the owners of 1039 Chestnut Street, who oppose the designation of the Property to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. In his expert report and presentation, Dr. George Thomas addresses the many reasons that the Nomination fails to pass muster. The Nominator has addressed the architectural elements, few of which remain, that he believes warrant recognition on the Register. The Nomination, however, recounts only superficially a political history that the author claims supports the Nomination. The real story is far more sordid, rife with corruption and greed and does not warrant its retelling in any form.

Perhaps the Commission can draw upon the lessons of Stone Mountain, Georgia. Stone Mountain is located just north of Atlanta and is the world's largest granite outcropping. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some folks thought it would a great idea to carve the likenesses of Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis into the Mountain. The carvings are massive. The original carver went on to carve Mount Rushmore. One might think that the work was a monument to the Confederate fallen. But that is not the story.

Nearly fifty years after the end of the Civil War, efforts began to create a monument on Stone Mountain. The carvings were born and nurtured in an effort to preserve the Lost Cause of the Confederacy as memorialized in the era of Jim Crow by Confederate symbolism. The owner and subsequent public caretakers frequently welcomed a revived Ku Klux Klan, an example of which was an initiation ceremony for new members on Stone Mountain in 1915. Carving began in 1918 and continued off and on until carving stopped in 1928.

Following the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the then lieutenant governor and successful gubernatorial candidate promised to resume the carving effort, and the Georgia legislature was only too willing to enact laws to protect the carvings forever. The Stone Mountain carvings were completed in 1972, and Stone Mountain became the symbol of Southern Massive Resistance to federal efforts to end segregation.

Now, the Atlanta History Center is left to interpret and rationalize why the mountain's face isn't just blown up. After telling a brief history of Stone Mountain, the Center writes:

Due to this history, the status quo of leaving monuments alone is not a principled option. Monuments should either be placed in historical context or removed. Only with accurate and honest historical interpretation can we understand how the circumstance of our collective past continue to shape the present and our future together.

(emphasis provided). To our knowledge, there is no and will be no similar public effort to bring Philadelphia's 20<sup>th</sup> century corruption, much of it conceived at 1039 Chestnut Street, into context by saving the building's remnant. This is not a story worth telling.

We, therefore, ask the Commission to deny the application to place 1039 Chestnut on the Register.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ *Neil Sklaroff*

Neil Sklaroff, Esquire