



For Immediate Release

April 29, 2022

Media Contact: Lisa Draine

Tel: 804-924-9105

Email: swordsintoplowsharescville@gmail.com

**Confederate sympathizers' lawsuit aims to take Charlottesville's Lee statue away
from Jefferson School African American Heritage Center**

Charlottesville, VA – A lawsuit which seeks to take the Robert E. Lee statue away from the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center (JSAAHC) can move forward, Charlottesville Circuit Court Judge Paul Peatross ruled on April 19, 2022.

The lawsuit against the City of Charlottesville and the JSAAHC seeks to invalidate the Charlottesville City Council's unanimous decision of December 7, 2021, to donate the statue—which was at the center of the deadly 2017 Unite the Right rally—to the JSAAHC.

The JSAAHC is leading the “Swords Into Plowshares” project, a coalition that includes the Memory Project at University of Virginia's Democracy Initiative and UVA's Institute for Engagement and Negotiation and two dozen local arts, advocacy and religious groups as well as national organizations. The project is melting the statue to use its bronze for a new work of public art that reflects the Charlottesville community's values of racial inclusivity. The plaintiffs—a plantation museum and a Civil War battlefield—want to have the Lee statue bronze “repurposed as a Civil War cannon.”

The JSAAHC retains possession of the statue. “While we are confident that this lawsuit should not impact the Center’s ownership,” said UVA Memory Project director Dr. Jalane Schmidt, “we are disappointed that this case is being allowed to move forward. The community is not served by another unnecessary and expensive legal process. Nevertheless, we are not deterred.”

JSAAHC Executive Director Dr. Andrea Douglas added, “We continue the process of community engagement which is important to create the Request for Proposal that we will send to artists. We hope that people will participate in this step as it is as important to our goals as the outcome of the case.”

Swords Into Plowshares calls upon community members to voice their continued support for the project and the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center.

More information can be found at sipcville.com.

#