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ENGL 1101 N4: Afterlives of Slavery

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*The Silent Truth of Stone Mountain: Artist's Statement*

Between Stone Mountain Park's joyful family events, state regulated commodities, and beautiful sights visible year-round, the park's friendly appearance cleverly deceives visitors from all across the world who come to gaze at the largest exposed piece of granite on Earth.

Unbeknownst to many, behind the park's contemporary and welcoming culture lies a cruel, continuous, and controversial history. Mrs. C. Helen Plane sparked this history in 1912 with her idea to carve Confederate Army leaders onto the face of Stone Mountain. With the distinctive Confederate carving, Stone Mountain Park has served as a sight to promote racial violence, social unrest, and frightening hatred by Americans for over 100 years.

The video takes viewers through a journey up and down Stone Mountain. Not only is it a physical journey, but also a historical and possibly an emotional one. Overlaid on scenes of the mountain are pictures of the KKK, who form a substantial and dark piece of stone mountain's history. A particular clip in our video focuses on the flags flying at the base of the mountain, which is one of the first things visitors see when walking up. The clip shows four different confederate flags, with the American flag in the center, and overlaid on the clip is a picture of KKK members holding the same flags. A melodious bell is also heard over the clip, as well as the flags waving in the wind. We specifically darkened the clip and increased its contrast to stand out against the black and white clips of our walk up the mountain. The darkness in the clip

represents a dark part of the history of the mountain, and is meant to evoke a reflective and somber reaction from the audience. Many other clips representing the mountain's history are shown later in the film, but this one clip stands out from the rest.

Stone Mountain is best known as a confederate memorial. Before it was a landmark, it was home to various Native American tribes. In 1821, the Treaty of Indian Springs opened the area to European settlers. Over time, Native Americans succumbed to diseases brought by the settlers. The Europeans increased the industrialization of the area with railroads and attractions. One of Stone Mountain's main points of history is the second founding of the Klu Klux Klan. William Simmons and other members of the new KKK lit a flame atop the mountain to signify their awakening. Later, a confederate memorial was proposed to be carved into the side of the mountain. During the civil rights era, white southerners were outraged by the events in support of desegregation, so the memorial was finally constructed. The carving contains depictions of Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Jefferson Davis.

From the carvings of the soldiers on the side of the mountain to the confederate memorial surrounding the museum, it is evident that traces of slavery and our nation's dark past still remain at Stone Mountain. This memorial reminds tourists of the racial violence that characterized the United States' past, and continues today in our country. Stone Mountain shows how the afterlife of slavery affects modern America: slavery has departed from the country physically, but still impacts our society today.