

PROTECT AND RESPECT THE BODIES

Charleston, SC

Did you know that the College of Charleston plans to disrupt the final resting place of more than 4,500 people to build student housing?

Between 1794 and 1807, the City of Charleston operated a public burial ground on Calhoun Street between Coming and St. Philip, where the city's most vulnerable populations were laid to rest. Those buried are people who could not afford or access other cemeteries, including poor adults, children, and enslaved people, including captured Africans who did not survive the transatlantic voyage to Charleston.

The College purchased the property earlier this year, and excavation of remains is slated to begin this fall with an unrealistic 2028 construction deadline.

Per state law, the City of Charleston has significant discretion to direct this process. First, the City is authorized to expend public funds to "preserve and protect" its cemeteries, meaning to "keep safe from destruction, peril, or other adversity" (SC Code 6-1-35). Second, the City must determine that any proposed removal is "necessary and expedient," and ensure that all objections are considered (SC Code 27-43).

The decision of whether these 4,500+ burials can be removed is in the City's hands, not the College's. We call on the City to assert its authority under state law to listen to the community and preserve and protect this nationally significant final resting place.

We challenge the College to drop its unreasonable timeline for exhuming the thousands of bodies beneath its proposed dorm and commit to an ethical approach to descendant and community engagement, according to its stated core values.

We do not have to keep doing things the way they have always been done.

Protect and Respect those buried here not of their will, under the bondage of slavery.

Protect and Respect those buried who faced exclusion as orphans, paupers, and outcasts.

Protect and Respect the basic human dignity of those laid to eternal rest beneath the buildings and asphalt.

Take this opportunity to use your voice to shape the future of this site and historical memory in Charleston. Please share widely.

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