**Press Statement**

**ACLU of Mississippi and Simpson Thacher & Bartlett sue Lafayette County, MS for Censoring Speech about Confederate Monument and Recent Protests**

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Jackson, Mississippi. The American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi and the law firm Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP represent plaintiff John Rash, a documentary filmmaker, photographer, visual artist and educator based in Oxford, Mississippi.

As part of the annual Oxford Fringe Festival, John organizes PROJECT(ion), which exhibits artworks through projection of images. John applied for a permit to project images on the Lafayette County Courthouse and on the confederate monument that stands on its lawn.

When Lafayette County realized that some of these projections may reference the confederate monument and recent protests in Oxford over that monument, they changed the policy to use the County Courthouse grounds, closing them from dusk till dawn. This closure effectively prevents projection artwork, which requires darkness to be seen. Lafayette County then denied John’s permit.

“This is a textbook First Amendment violation. The government silenced speech with which it does not agree,” said Joshua Tom, Legal Director at the ACLU of Mississippi. “Instead of restricting speech during this time of national reckoning, Lafayette County should protect the rights of its residents to safely assemble, protest and exercise their right to freedom of speech.”

“Mr. Rash seeks to engage in political and artistic expression in a traditional public forum – the grounds of a historic courthouse. That is exactly the type of speech that is protected by the First Amendment,” said Jonathan Youngwood, Partner at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP.

For more about the ACLU of Mississippi, go to <https://www.aclu-ms.org/en>. For more information about Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP, go to <https://www.stblaw.com/>.