

SCLC women's group to make visit to defaced civil rights monument

By Alvin Benn
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LOWNDESBORO — This year's tour of Southern civil rights shrines by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Women will include a stop at a defaced monument here.

SCLC Women President Evelyn Lowery said Tuesday that she and her top aides will hold a 10 a.m. news conference at the monument to Viola Liuzzo, who was slain by Ku Klux Klansmen in 1965 at the end of the Selma-to-Montgomery march.

The stone marker, located just off U.S. 80 about a mile from this little Lowndes County community, was defaced last week by someone who sprayed a Confederate Battle Flag across the front. It was the third defacement of the marker, which was paid for and erected by

Mrs. Lowery's organization.

"This terrorist act is another of continuing assaults on black institutions, churches and voting rights, but we, at some point, will repair the marker," said Mrs. Lowery.

She said this year's stop at the Liuzzo monument will be a "bittersweet" experience.

Alston Fitts, who helped organize the biracial group One Selma, said it has raised \$1,300 to clean the marker, but "we've been told it will be left the way it is for a while."

"We have been told that (the SCLC Women) will accept the money," Dr. Fitts said.

Lowndes County Probate Judge John Hulett, who plans to attend the news conference, said Tuesday that the defaced monument to Mrs. Liuzzo should remain "just the way it is for awhile."

"It will be a reminder of the hatred some people have in this country," said Judge Hulett, who served as Lowndes County's sheriff for 20 years before winning his current position.

Judge Hulett said he would oppose any effort to encase the marker or try to protect it from vandals "because you can't shield people away. If they want to do something, they can take a sledgehammer to it anytime they want."

The judge said he has no reason to believe any organized effort from any "hate group" was behind the latest defacement. He repeated his belief of last week that the act of vandalism was done locally.

"I don't think that Confederate people had anything to do with this," said the sheriff. "I do know a lot of people around Lowndes County are not happy with what has happened."