FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 31, 2020

Statement from
National Trust President Paul Edmondson
and White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin
In Response to Protests at Washington, D.C.’s Lafayette Square

During last night’s protests on Lafayette Square, a number of buildings near the White House were damaged by protesters. One of those buildings, originally constructed in the early 19th century as a slave quarters, was covered with graffiti, including the statement “Why do we have to keep telling you black lives matter?” This important building is a part of Decatur House, a historic site owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and operated by the White House Historical Association as the David M. Rubenstein Center for White House History.

The National Trust’s president, Paul Edmondson, and the White House Historical Association’s president, Stewart McLaurin, issued the following joint statement:

“The juxtaposition of history, place, and current events is poignant and powerful, and a new and meaningful chapter of the history of Decatur House was written last night.

“The preservation and interpretation of buildings like this play a critical role in acknowledging and healing the divisions in our nation. This place, where people were held in bondage within view of the White House, has particular meaning in this time.

“The National Trust for Historic Preservation and the White House Historical Association honor this by telling the full story of our history, by elevating and preserving the enormous and important contributions African Americans have made to our nation, and by carrying that powerful legacy forward.

“Our mutual commitment is reflected in the work of both organizations, including the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, created by the National Trust in response to the tragic events in Charlottesville in August of 2017, and the Slavery in the President’s Neighborhood project of the White House Historical Association.”

###