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Open Letter to the University of Texas Community Regarding the Names of Certain University Buildings 1

University Democrats, the largest university-based democratic party affiliated organization in the state, has issued the following letter of concern to members of the University of Texas at Austin community regarding the names and histories of certain campus buildings:

Monuments, statues, and public symbols are not just heaps of welded metal and carved stone. In many cases these efiges, through their very existence, keep alive the spirit and ideals of past generations. Monuments of Abraham Lincoln for example, are synonymous with the fight against tyranny and the struggle to end slavery.

Recent years have witnessed an increase in the number of racialized and bigoted strikes of violence. We have seen minority populations targeted time and time again by individuals and groups boasting the same ideology of white supremacy.

Monuments, statues, and public symbols which revere and honor bigoted individuals or movements give weight to those same ideals currently being paraded by modern day KKK members. As an organization that regularly works to oppose racism and discrimination, we were encouraged by President Fennes' decision to remove and relocate not only the statue of Jefferson Davis, but also those of Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnson, and John H. Reagan. Statues like these have come to be viewed by extremist groups as objects to be worshiped and revered. The removal of these statues from public view is representative of the first step that we as a nation, must take if we ever hope to eradicate these archaic and bigoted mentalities and ideologies from our shores.

Public symbols such as street signs and building titles bearing the names of individuals closely associated with bigoted movements, must be carefully reviewed. We have compiled a list of nine buildings, dormitories, and symbols that we believe the leadership of the University of Texas at Austin should review and take under consideration for possible name changes. Below are the nine buildings, dormitories, and symbols along with a short description detailing why we believe they merit consideration for name change.

1. Littlefield Fountain

- a. George Washington Littlefield, the namesake of Littlefield Fountain and former UT regent, was a plantation manager who served as a major in the Confederate Army. A prolific benefactor of the University at the time, Littlefield's money and influence culminated in statues of his fellow confederate sympathisers being erected in the University's South Mall.

2. Littlefield Carriage House | Littlefield Home

- a. Littlefield Carriage House and Littlefield Home are named after Alice Littlefield, wife of Confederate Major George Washington Littlefield.

3. Robert Lee Moore Hall

- a. Robert Lee Moore, the namesake of Robert Lee Moore Hall, was a professor with a well documented background for being racist towards minorities, especially African Americans. When an African American student expressed interest in enrolling in one of his classes, Moore informed the student that the highest possible grade he could receive would be a C. Moore also once walked out of an academic lecture when he discovered that the speaker was African American.

4. Painter Hall

- a. Theophilus Painter served as President of the University of Texas at Austin from 1944 to 1952. During his tenure as President, a Texas resident by the name of Herman Sweatt was denied admission to the University due to Painter's adherence to Texas' segregation laws. Herman fought Painter's staunch adherence to segregation all the way up to the United States Supreme Court.

5. The Confederate Preamble (Life Sciences Library of the Tower)

- a.

6. Carothers Dormitory
 - a. Asenath Carothers was a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, a group whose goals include not only honoring the service of those who fought for the Confederacy, but also to preserve and make known the truthful history of the “War Between the States”.

7. William Randolph Hearst Building
 - a.

8. Roberts Hall Dormitory
 - a. Oran Milo Roberts led the 11th Texas Infantry Regiment for the Confederate Army. Following the Civil War, Roberts would go on to be elected Governor from 1878 to 1883.

9. Waggener Hall
 - a. Leslie Waggener, the namesake of Waggener Hall, served as a private in the Confederate Army before being promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. Waggener also served as adjutant of his regiment and was ultimately promoted to assistant adjutant of his brigade. Following the Civil War, Waggener was appointed to be the first President of the University of Texas at Austin and served in that capacity until his death in 1896.

These buildings, dormitories, and symbols honor and revere men and women who were not only discriminatory towards minorities, but also who supported and in some cases fought for the Confederacy.

The University of Texas at Austin’s core mission, as listed on its website, is to “transform lives for the benefit of society”. The men and women whose names are etched into the history of those buildings mentioned above, didn’t strive to bring benefit to society as a whole. The men and women whose names are etched into those buildings strove only to discriminate and keep alive racist and bigoted ideologies that have no absolutely no place on this campus.

We ask that the leadership of the University of Texas at Austin seriously consider undertaking the renaming of these buildings. They are more than just a conglomeration of rock and stone, they are symbols that tarnish the reputation of this University.

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