

March 2021

Mr. McAlevy and Board of Trustees,

I am the father of James Andrew Gadiel, a 2000 graduate of W&L. Because he was murdered in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, I write in his place to express what I know would be his sentiments regarding the proposed name change and abandonment of standards and traditions at his cherished school.

It is proposed that General Lee's name be eliminated from W&L. James recognized, as others have, that in matters of race the General was a man of his times and that to hold him accountable for views not in accord with those of our day is unjust, irrational, and reprehensible. Jettisoning the name of General Lee would be cowardly surrender to a hatred that will never be satisfied and lead only to ever more radical demands. ("Ho, ho, Western Civ has got to go;" speech codes, mandatory "anti-racist" re-education.) The end result will be just another politically correct college no different from dozens of other formerly respected universities; the uniqueness of W&L gone and irretrievable.

James was very proud of the fact that a small portion of his tuition was paid for by an endowment from George Washington. Not surprisingly, I read that one professor has called for removal of Pres. Washington's name also on the pretext that after the name "Lee" is erased the name "Washington University" would leave the school as one of many with that title. He thus admits the real goal of the complainers: total destruction of the school's historical connections, with Lee just the first step. (That professor suggests "Rockbridge" as the new name. That is appropriate. . . for a community college.)

That same group claims W&L is "on the wrong side of history." Be aware that, although not using the identical words, radicals of the extreme right and left have historically used the same rationale to eliminate opposing ideas and dissenters. In Germany the phrase used was "The New Order," in Russia "the ashcan of history."

It is said that some students and faculty do not feel comfortable at W&L, but no one is forced to attend or to teach at a school with traditions and high standards. Such people have nearly unlimited alternatives because the vast majority of schools have already caved to demands to lower academic standards and get on the “right side” of history. The invariable result has been the end of ideological diversity and the end of free speech.

Should the Board decide to preserve the W&L that so many of us love, there will be some who leave for any of the large number of lesser institutions available such as those in New Haven, Cambridge, Princeton, Hanover, etc. Surely, some disaffected W&L faculty and students will choose to depart for more comfortable surroundings. However, the result will not be a lesser pool of talent for students or staff for W&L, for while there remain very few schools that have resisted the “woke” madness, there are many applicants of the highest ability longing for an institution such as W&L has been.

I was a student in college in the mid 1960's. I have been witness to the beginnings of the radical assault on our education system in the student revolts of that era. The success of that movement has been facilitated by weak college presidents and administrators who have consistently surrendered to radical demands. The faculty members of that time admitted to their ranks leftist professors in the name of free speech and thought. Once tenured, those same leftists have used their authority to deny employment to any but fellow leftists. Thus, the continuing leftward lurch and the suppression of diversity of thought.

Regards,

Peter Gadiel

Parent of James, W&L 2000

WTC Tower 1, 9/11/01