

Kazimierz J. Herchold '68: Letter to Washington and Lee University President Dudley and Board of Trustees

Mr. Herchold keenly describes the crossroads where President Dudley and the Board of Trustees have left only one of two choices by which to decide the future of the University - there is no middle ground. Will they choose to pander or preserve?

Subject: A Binary Choice

Dear President Dudley and Washington & Lee Trustees:

With respect, you and the Board completely misunderstand the situation which confronts you. Based on your latest memorandum, you believe that a series of concessions, appeals to civility and rational discussion, as well as pay offs involving faculty hires and financial giveaways to students of color, will somehow defuse the looming conflagration.

Unfortunately, you face a binary choice: capitulation (either in an accelerating cadence to constantly escalating demands, or immediately, on the premise that a quick surrender may save most of the physical plant, excepting statues of course). Or, you can draw the line, and muster the courage and fortitude to declare that faculty, administration, and students who find the place and its history abhorrent can and should leave immediately. Presumably, the faculty and students who consider the University so discomfiting are there only because they were unable to secure better or more lucrative placements. You get what you pay for, and you have far too many mercenaries and careerist opportunists to quote their hero, Lenin. I'm reminded of a recent Rhodes scholar who waited until he had graduated and had benefited from fulsome financial aid before penning an op-ed castigating the University. He will no doubt wait until he finishes at Oxford and exhausts his Rhodes funding before embarking on a spree against Cecil Rhodes. That's what opportunists do. W&L has bought and brought far too many of them in your quest to change the place. So instead, you might consider hiring and admitting people who want to be there.

The middle ground which you seek to plow will never mollify the faculty Jacobins and their fellow travelers, nor sate the mob. And it won't save you or the storied

institution you lead. History repeats, and revolutions always devour those perceived as weak. You won't avoid the confrontation in any case, so why not stand your ground and declare that there will be no further concessions, no navel gazing about portraits on diplomas, and no name change. Stand for diversity of thought, not just race or gender. Reassert the Chicago principles which you profess to support. Embrace the Western canon, not only revisionist history and victimology. There will be hell to pay, but prevail you will, if you resist confusing pandering with leadership. And you will have the robust support of an alumni cohort which is not ashamed of W&L and which does not buy the narrative about systemic racism nor embraces the corruption of conformity of thought and expression.

So, you and the Board have a binary choice; you can preside over the "systemic" and systematic destruction of an institution which has served the country with distinction for 270 years, or you can preserve it, while wholeheartedly disavowing the excrescences which have infested our academic institutions. Diversity and inclusion by all means, but real diversity of thought and expression rather than the warped Orwellian perversion of those terms which has been foisted on all of us.

Whatever choice you and the Board make, opprobrium will be heaped upon you. But there's a difference in the nature of that opprobrium. Opprobrium for the steadfast and the brave, or opprobrium for the craven and cowardly? I wish you luck, but it's backbone you need.

Non Incautus Futuri,

Kazimierz J. Herchold, '68

c. Class of 1968 50th Reunion Committee