

August 31, 2021

Friends,

We were ready to go to press on another topic when we received the recent letter from Mike McAlevey, the Rector of Washington and Lee's Board of Trustees (see [Letters](#)). The letter begins innocuously enough announcing additions to the Board and other organizational matters.

However, it then turns to a politically correct agenda when Rector McAlevey announces that the Board is "considering options for the new design of the university diploma, which we expect to finalize in October." When this policy decision was announced in June, The Generals Redoubt pointed out the unfathomable and, frankly, hypocritical nature of this decision. When, in the 2019-20 school year, some law school students asked the Board not for the removal of portraits of George Washington and Robert E. Lee from diplomas but for the "option" of having portraits removed from individual diplomas, the Board flatly turned them down in the spring of 2020. Now, a little over a year later, the Board has made a complete reversal and decided that no portraits shall appear on any diplomas. What has changed in the last year or so to cause this reversal? We and others have asked, but the Board has provided no explanation. Why cannot students who wish to have portraits of Washington and Lee on their diplomas be given that option? Again, several individuals, including parents and students, have asked, but there has been no response from the Rector or Board. While we cannot speak for parents and students, we suspect that a number of them will be directly challenging a decision which seems arbitrary and capricious and in direct contradiction to the recent Board decision on the issue of diplomas.

The main subject of Rector McAlevey's letter is the Lee Chapel. We had been warned about some of this in the Board's June announcement. But we were frankly unprepared for the degree of destruction which is planned for the interior of the chapel and the desecration of so much of the history and memories associated with the Chapel by generations of alums. It would appear that in addition to the permanent walling off of the recumbent stature, a totally unnecessary action given the previous Board decision to close the doors to the statue during university events, there are

several other steps to be taken which smack of the radical Puritan iconoclasts of the English Reformation or the marauding tribes of barbarians such as the Huns and the Vandals, who attempted to destroy Roman civilization and culture. One of these is the removal from the chapel of the portraits of George Washington and Robert E. Lee which, by Board decision, were only placed there a couple of years ago to replace the "martial" portraits of Washington and Lee! Once again, what has changed in the last two years to cause the Board to completely reverse itself on this matter.? Again, no answer. It would appear that in this period of "cancel culture," there must be no reminders of our namesakes in the chapel, not just Lee but Washington as well.

Rector McAlevey then states that, in addition to the removal of portraits, there will be the removal of "some" plaques. We do not know which ones, but all of these plaques honor individuals who distinguished themselves as citizens and soldiers. Why should some be removed but not others? Is this cancel culture at work once more? Again, no explanation.

Kamron Spivey, a rising sophomore at W&L, has provided his own response to the Rector's letter (see [Letters](#)). It will be recalled that last spring Kamron pointed out the dishonorable and destructive behavior of some faculty and students. For this, he received some opprobrium from "woke" elements at the university. When Kamron recommended to President Dudley that he (Dudley) should publicly condemn this behavior, he was basically ignored and told that he (Kamron) could organize some form of protest if he liked. This lack of leadership by President Dudley is just one of several examples and is one of the reasons that TGR passed a vote of "No Confidence" in him this summer. Kamron, in contrast, has demonstrated remarkable leadership and courage on a number of occasions in the face of a frequently hostile on campus environment. One of his latest actions has been to purchase, along with his father, a significant number of books and other items from the Lee Chapel which the university is trying to get rid of- apparently another effort to purge the past and abandon our history. We salute Kamron for his efforts and are certain that The Generals Redoubt will find a way to preserve and display some of these items.

Perhaps the most disturbing and disconcerting aspect of Rector McAlevey's letter is his final statement that "the Board will continue to update you as we implement the commitments which we announced in June." In light of previous actions and his recent letter, we have no idea what this means. But we are not comforted or convinced that such "updates" will do anything to preserve the history, values, and traditions of the university. Indeed, if the past is prologue to the future, we are deeply concerned that future actions will only further undermine our university and its history.

Neely Young  
Editor, The Generals Redoubt