

To the Board of Trustees of Washington and Lee University:

We entrust the following message and letter to you in strict confidence.

On February 2, 2021, we submitted a letter entreating you to retain the name of Washington and Lee University. Appended to that letter was a list of endorsements of over 200 parents of current and former students. After we sent our letter, many additional parents expressed interest in adding their names in support of our effort. As a result, we are now submitting an additional list of new endorsements as well as a copy of the February 2 letter (along with the initial list of parent endorsements).

The parent names included on this list and the original list represent people who have invested in the university with their children, time, and treasure. Some of the parents have multiple students currently enrolled (or to be enrolled in the class of 2025). These parents are enthusiastic about their sons and daughters being afforded an education at one of the oldest and most respected universities in the country. Here also are the endorsements of the parents of Washington and Lee alumni who say with pride that their children and even grandchildren are graduates of this great institution. They value the experiences that their children receive here and are genuinely grateful for the generous financial aid packages that students from all backgrounds receive.

It is understood that the advocates of a name change will not be satisfied regardless of the Board's actions on the name change. In fact, the recent "Manifesto" that they released, as well as statements from their faculty "enablers", detail a wide ranging and radical agenda. These name-change advocates represent a very small but overly vocal percentage of current students, alums and parents. Their tactics include distortion of the University's history, disdain for its culture and traditions, and silencing of all opposition to their demands. Their hope is to try to guilt or bully the University into acquiescing to these demands and to remaking the University into something unrecognizable.

Changing the name of a university is a momentous and irreversible decision for any school. For Washington and Lee University, the decision is even more

profound. The name “Washington and Lee University” is internationally recognized for producing graduates of elite caliber. It boasts one of the most cohesive alumni support networks in the world. It is changing with the times, and becoming more inclusive and diverse, largely because of generous alumni who are passionate about the school, and are often the target of broad woke labeling and disrespect. Yet, Washington and Lee University still thrives as a place like no other because the passion of the students, parents and alumni make it so.

The attached letter contains the list of approximately _____ parents of current and former students (many of whom are themselves alumni) who share our passion to keep the name. Please take to heart the words of this letter and study the breakdown of who is endorsing it and which classes are represented. Because of the prevailing climate, we entrust the following letter and signatures to you in the strictest confidence.

Respectfully,

Concerned Parents of Washington and Lee University

2 February 2021

To the Board of Trustees of Washington and Lee University:

We are a group of current and past Washington and Lee parents who wish to retain the University’s name. We appreciate the Washington and Lee experience, and would like to preserve its unique character and history for future generations of students and families. There are ways for the school to evolve without destroying all that has come before.

We feel that the Board of Trustees should neither sanitize the multi-faceted truths of the school; nor erase the incredible contributions of its founders. The current

effort to remove Lee's name is based on the false notion somehow connecting the school to the Confederacy and the "Lost Cause" myth. We see this as a dangerous position because, not only is it historically incorrect, but it means that an individual's flaws of judgement preempt all other attributes of one's life.

In the case of the board's current decision, removing Lee's name is to deny the uniquely American value of redemption. It is well known that Lee was instrumental in reviving the school after the Civil War. Many of the most honored traditions of the school were initiated by President Lee. His prior actions, though historically relevant, are not why the school was renamed in his honor. The school became Washington and Lee University to recognize Lee's contributions to the school while he was President of Washington College. There is so much history on the campus, and while we don't have to agree with it all, we should appreciate our past, protect it and seek to learn from it.

We realize that many institutions are feeling enormous pressure to sanitize their histories, but they do so at the peril of erasing what makes their character unique. Don't let this happen to Washington and Lee. Stop the deleterious name change movement now, and don't allow it to gain further traction as other universities and institutions might look to your decision as a model. It is notable that other prestigious schools like Yale and Brown are not seeking a name change because they realize that the consequences of a name change would be severe and injurious to their schools.

Please consider the impact on future recruitment. There are so many colleges that students and their parents can select when the time comes. Many of these colleges have adopted a philosophy that discourages open dialogue and shuts down opposing points of view. Consequently, there is often nothing that makes one college especially distinctive. What makes Washington and Lee special and different is its combination of traditions, values, and history. It truly is "a place like no other." We would like to see it remain that way. Let us continue to make that true by rejecting the prevailing trend of the last few years to erase history.

Enormous numbers of alumni are proud to say they graduated from Washington and Lee, and they know it as a name that will be met with recognition and great

respect. Changing the name threatens to undermine the reputation and identity or brand of the University.

Changing the name is a threat to current financial support and to untold future contributions. Show the world that alumni contributions, if accepted by the university, will always be honored. Alumni should never fear that some future aspect of their lives then deemed inappropriate would cancel out the good they do for the school.

As parents, we are well aware that there are many current students who do not wish the school to change its name. Many students are forced into silence and afraid to share their opinions. Other students have been coerced into expressing their support for the name change to avoid being ostracized. Make no mistake about it; they are there. Such is the prevailing culture. Colleges are supposed to be places for the free and open exchange of ideas and not places where selected viewpoints can be dismissed through shaming tactics.

Many parents of Washington and Lee students are also alumni of the school. Continue to seek and honor these alumni, whose contributions have made Washington and Lee a more inclusive place. Without them, the school would have fewer resources to admit students with financial need and thus be able to offer merit and need based scholarships. Another way of saying this is that alumni are helping make the school more diverse, always with merit as the core value for admission. Changing the name risks alienating many parents and alumni from making further contributions, resulting in a student population less reflective of the fabric of our world.

At a time when the school is dealing with controversy surrounding the COVID pandemic as well as issues involving Rush Week, spring break scheduling, and student and parent dissatisfaction, perhaps a decision this momentous should not be added to the mix. Students and others who are in favor of the name change are planning to protest whatever the Board of Trustees decides. They will not stop until they have taken away everything that makes Washington and Lee unique.

We believe the Board of Trustees needs to make a bold and courageous stand to retain the name and reputation of our beloved Washington and Lee University.

We ask that the Board keep the identities of those who have endorsed this letter confidential.

Sincerely,

Concerned Parents of Washington and Lee University