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Almost 60 years ago when I was considering my college options, I was singularly drawn to Washington & Lee University. As a lifelong Virginian at the time, I was attracted to the traditions, history, and values embraced by a university with such a rich legacy. The Honor system, the speaking tradition, and commitment to academic excellence were all specific factors that encouraged me to apply to this well-recognized university. I was so passionately committed to W&L that I applied--and was accepted--for early admission. The pride that I experienced then, throughout my four years as a student, and for the next five decades was palpable. Accordingly, at our 50th Reunion, having participated with the class agent for years in the Annual Giving program and sitting on the Reunion Committee, my wife and I committed significantly to the University in our estate plan.

In the several years since the 50th Reunion and certainly more visibly in the past few months, I, as well as many of my classmates, have witnessed the relentless undermining of the University's "history, values, and traditions", those characteristics that formulate the culture, the very essence of Washington & Lee. This movement manifests itself in "woke" theology that now permeates the university, CRT, and DEI, at the expense of those cultural elements that made the university a special place over the centuries. All associated with the university support greater inclusiveness and diversity in students, staff, faculty, and the board, however, that diversity must include, just as importantly, diversity of thought. As to the "Equity" component, I am not aware that anyone at W&L has explained what is meant by that initiative--but to the extent that it is used in a neo-Marxist sense, it has no place on the W&L campus. CRT undermines all that has been accomplished in race relations over the past 50 years, and "woke" theology attacks the concept of free speech in violation of the US Constitution and the university's commitment to the Chicago Principle.

It is the Board's responsibility to ensure that the administration/staff, faculty, and students that participate in the W&L community are committed to protecting, enhancing, and nurturing the W&L traditions, values and culture--recognizing the contributions in leadership and example of its two benefactors. To the extent that this is a failure point, W&L is just another liberal arts school that attempts to be everything to all. It is here that the administration and board are, in fact, failing.

The Board of Trustees has agreed that a name change is not necessary--a decision most support. However, that was the easy decision--some might describe it as the convenient decision as any other decision would have devastating financial impact. The remaining Board decisions are mostly in support of "woke" dogma with one exception perhaps- the commitment to student internships. Even the plan for "need-blind" admissions tends to draw those totally disinterested in or indifferent to the university's culture. The Board threw the traditionalist a bone by retaining the name, but that was the extent of it.

The decision to change the name of Lee Chapel--a National Historic Landmark--is an abomination. Lee, the one gentleman who perhaps contributed the most to the existence and success of the university, is being relegated to a 2nd class citizen on campus. Lee Chapel which has borne its name for over a century and a half, is the edifice that houses the remains of the entire Lee family and is situated precisely opposite Washington Hall as a focal point of the famous W&L Colonnade. Washington Hall and Lee Chapel at center campus--a divine symmetry of campus design that will be lost forever with the Board's recent decision.

Accordingly, I regret to inform you that I am suspending the final payment to the university arising from my 50th reunion pledge and put the university on notice that our estate plan pledge is in jeopardy of withdrawal. I remain committed to what I recognize as the "essence" of W&L. To the extent that the administration and Board continue failing to protect and nurture this essence, I will be refocusing my energy and resources elsewhere.

With deep respect for the W&L traditions-

W A Roper Vaughan Class of 1967