

Public Comments for Virtual School Board Meetings #25

My public comments are related to: * General Public Comments

Topic * Rename T.C. Williams

Name * Paul Glist

What is your relationship to ACPS? * Community Member

To include your comments as part of the Public Comments agenda item at weekly Special Called School Board Meetings, enter your comments here:

I have been an Alexandria resident for well over 30 years. The namesake of our one high school – T.C.Williams – openly advocated for racial segregation within Alexandria schools and resisted desegregation for five years. Thomas Chambliss Williams was opposed to the very inclusion, equity, and racial justice our community strives for. We can no longer celebrate his name or force students, parents, and the community to identify with him. Princeton is removing President Wilson’s name from its public policy school because his “racist thinking and policies make him an inappropriate namesake for a school or college.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/27/nyregion/princeton-university-woodrow-wilson.html> You can too.

Please do everything in your power to rename our high school. We must engage the full community in the renaming process and change the name by 2021.

The New York Times

Princeton Will Remove Woodrow Wilson's Name From School

University trustees concluded that Wilson's "racist thinking and policies make him an inappropriate namesake for a school or college," Princeton's president said on Saturday.



The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. "Wilson's racism was significant and consequential even by the standards of his own time," Princeton's president said.

Credit: Mark Makela for The New York Times

By Bryan Pietsch

June 27, 2020

Princeton University will remove Woodrow Wilson's name from its public policy school and one of its residential colleges, the university's president said on Saturday — a move that comes four years after it decided to keep the name over the objections of student protests.

The university's board of trustees found that Wilson's "racist thinking and policies make him an inappropriate namesake for a school or college whose scholars, students and alumni must stand firmly against racism in all its forms," Princeton's president, Christopher L. Eisgruber, said in a [statement](#).

"Wilson's racism was significant and consequential even by the standards of his own time," Mr. Eisgruber said. Wilson was the university's president from 1902 to 1910 before becoming the U.S. president in 1913.

Wilson had overseen the resegregation of federal government offices, including the Treasury Department. In a meeting in the Oval Office with the civil rights leader Monroe Trotter, Wilson said, "Segregation is not humiliating, but a benefit, and ought to be so regarded by you gentlemen," [according to a transcript](#) of the meeting.

Monmouth University in New Jersey said last week that [it would remove](#) Wilson's name from its marquee building after administrators, professors and students said that the former president held abhorrent views on race and reinstated segregation in the federal work force.

The decision contrasted with a vote by Princeton trustees in 2016 to [keep Wilson's name](#) on campus buildings and programs, despite student protests that led to a review of his legacy there.

The university's trustees said in a [statement](#) that it had questioned whether it was appropriate to name a school for "a racist who segregated the nation's Civil Service after it had been integrated for decades."

"The question has been made more urgent by the recent killings of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Rayshard Brooks, which have served as tragic reminders of the ongoing need for all of us to stand against racism and for equality and justice," the statement continued.



A mural of Woodrow Wilson adorned the dining hall of Wilson College at Princeton in 2015.

Credit: Mark Makela for The New York Times

Students in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs sent [a letter](#) dated June 22 to the university's administration asking for the school's name to be changed, among a list of other demands.

Renaming the school is "the most basic step the university could have taken," said Ally McGowen, a rising senior at the public policy school, who is black. The students behind the letter said the university had not consulted with them before its announcement on Saturday.

"This is more than a name," Ms. McGowen said. The students had asked that the university underwrite research into reparations and that the public policy school's faculty and curriculum be diversified. The students noted their demands are "nothing new," having been raised in 2015 by students in the Black Justice League at the university.

The discomfort over the school's name was widespread, said Ananya Agustin Malhotra, a 2020 graduate of the policy school.

Princeton had already planned to retire the former president's name from Wilson College, a residential community of about 1,000 students that includes dormitories, dining facilities and

extracurricular programming. But rather than asking students “to identify with the name of a racist president for the next two years,” Princeton will “accelerate” the retiring of the name, Mr. Eisgruber said.

The community will be renamed First College, acknowledging its history as one of the first residential colleges at Princeton, AnneMarie Luijendijk, head of the college and a professor of religion, said in [a note](#) to students.

Professor Luijendijk said she “always found it hard” to ask students to “cheer for Wilson” during intramural sporting events. The renaming is an important step, she said, adding that students often struggled with the “constant reminder” of Wilson’s actions.

Julia Chaffers, a black Princeton student who resided in the college, which is not affiliated with the Pennsylvania liberal arts college of the same name, wrote in a 2018 [opinion piece](#) for the university’s newspaper that upon entering Princeton, she “felt a mix of excitement for the coming adventures but also a discomfort with the name I would now be adopting as my home.”

“To name a residential college after Wilson, while ignoring the fact that he did not believe white and black people belonged on equal terms in the same spaces, is ridiculous,” Ms. Chaffers wrote.

Residential colleges at Princeton are “really central to your identity on campus,” especially as a freshman, Ms. Chaffers, who is a rising junior, said in an interview on Saturday.

Introductions at the university would often begin by asking about the college someone was in, and identifying Wilson College could be “really challenging for black students,” she said.

Ms. Chaffers said the renaming is a “really important turning point” in recognizing other changes that need to be addressed at Princeton. “But it’s not the end of the road,” she added.