

February 4, 2019

Dear SUNY New Paltz College Council,

The faculty and staff of the Sojourner Truth Library respectfully write to share our thoughts and concerns regarding building renaming on campus. We believe that this decision will have a lasting impact on the future of the College. We strongly urge the College Council to vote in favor of the renaming, and bring this debate to a successful, healing close.

Following the extensive investigation and debate regarding the buildings that were named for slaveholders, we believe and affirm that:

1. Having buildings named for slaveholders is fundamentally at odds with the mission of the College, and moral and ethical standards in our community.
2. Living and working in buildings named for slaveholders takes a toll on students, staff, and faculty, as these names continue to honor people who succeeded in this world by forcing others to work and live in captivity.
3. A vote to rename the buildings would identify SUNY New Paltz as a moral, cultural, and educational leader on a national level. Any vote by the College Council against renaming would be a public embarrassment to our campus--historically, morally, culturally and pedagogically.
4. Any vote by the College Council against renaming would contribute to an unsafe environment on campus for people of color.
5. A vote by the College Council in favor of renaming would generate significant positive media attention and aid in our mission of building a campus that truly welcomes diversity. Conversely, retaining the names of slaveholders on buildings, and the adverse publicity that would certainly result, would--without doubt--damage student, faculty and staff recruitment and retention. Our reputation as a welcoming and safe campus for a racially diverse population would be tarnished; and rightly so.
6. We must commit--as a Library and as a campus--to making more visible and accessible the complex history of this region. Including both the harsh reality of slave-holding in the Hudson Valley *and* the contributions by descendents of the Huguenot founders.

As educators we recognize that the racial diversity that we see on campus every day makes this college a stronger, better place. Any actions taken to undermine this would seriously harm the students, staff, teaching and learning that happen here every day.

We stand with students and faculty who have already testified to the importance and value of renaming. We stand with everyone on campus who wants to feel safe from institutionalized racism at SUNY New Paltz. We believe that these buildings should be renamed. And, we look to the College Council to support this stance and this community with an affirmative vote in February.

Signed,

Kim Allesi, Library Clerk II

Kate Bellody, Research & Education Librarian

W. Mark Colvson, Dean

Matthew Cummings, Cataloging Clerk

Anne Deutsch, Instruction Program Coordinator

Morgan Gwenwald, Special Collections Librarian

William Hennessy, Library Clerk II

Elijah Jonas, Visiting Assistant Librarian

Yvonne Kester, Visiting Librarian – Systems and Tech Support

Joan Laudicina, Library Clerk II

Colleen Lougen, Electronic Resources Librarian

Charlene Martoni-McElrath, Evening and Weekend Supervisor

Valerie Mittenberg, Collection Development Librarian

Gary Oliver, Tech Team Staff

Jennifer Rutner, Visiting Assistant Librarian

Diane Sharp, Secretary

Madeline Veitch, Research, Metadata & Zine Librarian

Carol Ward, Assistant to the Dean

Cc: Eli Basch, Chairperson, SUNY New Paltz College Council

Donald P. Christian, President, SUNY New Paltz

Lorin Basden Arnold, Provost, SUNY New Paltz

Rebecca Grigas, Vice President of Academic Affairs & Governance Student Association