

Departments of History, Political Science, and Sociology
Curriculum in Peace, War, and Defense
UNC-Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Chancellor Kevin M. Guskiewicz
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Dear Chancellor Guskiewicz:

As Chairs of the Departments of History, Political Science, and Sociology, and the Peace, War, and Defense Curriculum, we are writing to request your forceful and expeditious intervention to change the name of the building in which we work from Hamilton Hall to Pauli Murray Hall. We have previously contacted the Commission on History, Race, and a Way Forward with this request for the name change, which we have also forwarded to the chairman of the Board of Trustees.

We do not make this request lightly or without input from a wide range of participants. For years, members of our community have raised questions and concerns about the appropriateness of the current building name. In just one example, a recent [petition from History Department graduate students](#) to the department's leadership included this demand: "Call for and take action to rename buildings on campus that are named after racists, Confederates, and/or White supremacists." Even before that petition was issued, a committee composed of faculty members and graduate students from the departments of History, Political Science, and Sociology, along with the chair of the Curriculum in Peace, War, and Defense, considered the name of the building and produced a short report and recommendation. They did so with input from faculty members, students, and staff, and also influenced by the [Black Faculty, Faculty of Color, and Indigenous Faculty Roadmap for Racial Equity](#). Members of the Hamilton and Pauli Murray families were also contacted, to ensure that they support the change. On July 9, faculty members in each of those departments met by Zoom to discuss the recommendation; it was approved overwhelmingly by all of the departments involved. Indeed, in our decades of experience here at UNC, we have never before seen such consensus—both within and between departments--on any issue. This is truly multi-disciplinary and multi-generational.

There is no doubt that the name of Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac Hamilton should be removed from our building. Between 1906 and 1930, Hamilton was a professor in the Department of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. From 1931 to his retirement in 1951,

Hamilton served as the director of the UNC Library's Southern Historical Collection, which he founded. He passed away in 1961.¹

Throughout his career as an academic and archivist, Hamilton promoted white supremacy in ways that were intellectually dishonest and damaging, even considering the context of his times. In his academic work on the US Reconstruction period, he openly defended the racial violence of the Ku Klux Klan and the "Black Codes," the series of laws commonly seen as the precursor to Southern Jim Crow. As an archivist, Hamilton collected materials that glorified human enslavement and served to exclude African Americans from the historical profession and historical literature.² As the Alabama Department of Archives and History recently argued, this tradition of racist records management in the American South has created a dangerous legacy of "the preservation of Confederate history and the promotion of Lost Cause ideals."³

The naming of Hamilton Hall in 1972 was a mistake that should now be remedied. At the time, Hamilton's "anti-Negro view of Reconstruction," as one journalist wrote then, was already widely known and was forcefully disputed within the historical profession.⁴ Moreover, Hamilton's living relatives were never consulted in this decision, and they insist that Hamilton would never have accepted the recognition. Hamilton, his grandson has recently argued, "would likely not have accepted the honor had he been alive at the time. He had no interest in that sort of thing."⁵

Though the building arguably should never have been named after Hamilton, it certainly should not carry that name now, as the university engages in serious reckoning with its racist past. **To continue to glorify Hamilton's name is to acquiesce in the use of the social sciences—the very disciplines housed in the building—for discrimination and oppression, by one of UNC's own faculty members.** UNC must not stand for this blatant disregard for the truth, principles of academic integrity, and social justice.

In place of Hamilton, those who use our building unanimously propose that it be named after Pauli Murray. Born in 1910 and raised in Durham, NC, Murray was a black descendent of one of the university's original trustees, James Strudwick Smith, as well as two other early UNC students and another generous benefactor. In 1938, Murray applied to the Ph.D. program in sociology but was denied admission because, as university officials wrote at the time, "members of your race are not admitted to the university."⁶ If not for segregation, then, Murray would be a

¹ Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac Hamilton Papers, 1895-1961, Finding Aid, University of North Carolina Libraries: <https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/01743/>

² Bradley D. Proctor, "White Supremacy in the Academy: The 1913 Meeting of the American Historical Association," *The Activist History Review*, December 6, 2019: <https://activisthistory.com/2019/12/06/white-supremacy-in-the-academy-the-1913-meeting-of-the-american-historical-association/>; and Rebecca Hoffman, "Ransack Roulhac" Hamilton Hall: J.G. de Roulhac Hamilton and His Impact on the University of North Carolina," *Names in Brick and Stone: Histories from UNC's Built Landscape*: http://unchistory.web.unc.edu/building-narratives/hamilton-hall/#_ftn17.

³ Alabama Department of Archives and History, "Statement of Recommitment," June 23, 2020: https://archives.alabama.gov/docs/ADAH_Statement_Recommitment_200623.pdf. See Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1914).

⁴ Jim Becker, "Politics of Imposing Edifices," *Daily Tar Heel*, August 31, 1972, 12.

⁵ Alfred Hamilton to William Sturkey, "Return to You," email, February 11, 2020.

⁶ Pauli Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat: An American Pilgrimage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 115.

distinguished alumna of UNC and of one of the departments housed in the building we would like to name after her.

Undeterred by her rejection from UNC, Murray achieved prominence as an outspoken scholar and activist whose work continues to make major contributions to numerous disciplines. Murray was a gifted poet, writer, labor organizer, legal theorist, and, later in life, Episcopal priest, who advocated for the rights of all members of society. As a law student, she formulated the argument used by Thurgood Marshall in the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case; later, she co-wrote an article used by Ruth Bader Ginsburg to convince the Supreme Court that the Equal Protection Clause applies to women. Thus, Murray articulated the intellectual foundations of two of the most important social justice movements of the twentieth century—the direct opposite of Hamilton’s use of academic research in the service of segregation and oppression.⁷

Pauli Murray represents the immutable spirit of scholarship and public service, as she made major contributions to our society in the face of nearly insurmountable resistance. She also represents the forgone knowledge that UNC could have been a part of, could have supported and nurtured, and could have learned from. Naming our building after her will serve as a reminder of what is lost, what could have been, and what can be as we move forward. It will signal inclusiveness and intellectual breadth and serve as a welcome for all scholars.

We send this request to you, Chancellor Guskiewicz, at a moment of crisis for our university and the wider public. The coronavirus pandemic strains all of our capacities as it highlights our public mission and reminds us of the precarity of human life. Across the country, protestors, counter-protesters, and public authorities confront starkly different visions of the common good. Here at UNC, these widespread challenges intersect with our own ongoing reckoning with the legacies of racism and inequality that we inherited from our predecessors.

Such circumstances make bold, visionary leadership imperative. Not only is renaming Hamilton Hall as Pauli Murray Hall the right thing to do; it is the right thing to do *now*. Moreover, this is the moment to remove offensive names from dozens of campus buildings and to begin the process of widespread renaming. To do so is to proclaim to the campus community, our state, and the wider world that UNC no longer acquiesces to bigotry and white supremacy, or to the perversion of academic research in the service of discrimination. It is to affirm our collective commitment to justice and knowledge in support of it. It is to affirm what we are *for*, in a way that can offer inspiration and uplift to all in this trying time.

We can assure you that replacing the name Hamilton with Pauli Murray on our social science building, and indeed renaming all campus buildings currently named after white supremacists,

⁷ Of particular importance are Pauli Murray and Mary O. Eastwood, “Jane Crow and the Law: Sex Discrimination and Title VII,” *George Washington Law Review*, vol. 34 (Dec. 1965), 232-256; and Pauli Murray, ed., *States’ Laws on Race and Color* (Cincinnati, OH: Women’s Division of Christian Service, Board of Missions and Church Extension, Methodist Church, 1950). For more, see Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, “Admitting Pauli Murray,” *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 14, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 62-67; Pauli Murray, interview by Genna Rae McNeil, February 13, 1976, transcript, Southern Oral History Program: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/G-0044/G-0044.html>; and Pauli Murray, *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1956). Other material related to Murray’s attempts to enroll at UNC are available through the UNC Libraries blog: <https://blogs.lib.unc.edu/uarms/2016/02/19/the-1939-correspondence-between-pauli-murray-and-frank-porter-graham/>.

would be met with widespread support and acclaim among faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students, alumni, and observers. (Indeed, please see the accompanying letter in support of our proposal from the bishop and bishop suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina.) It would move UNC again to the vanguard of forward-thinking state universities—a place certainly befitting our scholarship but not always, thus far, our public symbols. And it would put you at the forefront of this historic change for the good. Thank you in advance for your serious and timely consideration of our request.

Cc: Provost Robert Blouin, Dean Terry Rhodes, Senior Associate Dean Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld, Prof. James Leloudis, Prof. Patricia Parker
enclosure