



19 June 2020

SMAD Calls for Removing Confederate Names on JMU Buildings

We, as members of the School of Media Arts and Design (SMAD), call upon JMU to **immediately remove the names of Confederate leaders from prominent buildings on JMU's campus**, including Ashby, Harrison, Jackson, and Maury Halls, to denounce the honoring of oppression of Black people.

The time for task forces, surveys, and studies has passed; the time to act is now. As our colleagues in the Department of Political Science explained in their letter to President Alger, "The buildings [including Ashby, Jackson, and Maury Halls] were named during the so-called 'Lost Cause' movement, contrived by benighted Confederate sympathizers and apologists during the Jim Crow era. Thus, they represent a de facto commitment by James Madison University to celebrate symbols of violent, pervasive, and enduring oppression of Black Americans." ("Faculty Call for Removing Names of Confederates on JMU Buildings Immediately" submitted June 6, 2020) SMAD echoes the statements by our colleagues from the Political Science, Justice Studies, English, and Sociology and Anthropology departments, the School of Communication Studies and the JMU Libraries to remove these Confederate names from buildings, and we encourage students and alumni to use their voice in support of JMU [Student Government Association Bill of Opinion](#) and the [Pledge of Self-Examination and Concrete Action in the JMU Libraries](#).

We include Harrison Hall in our renaming request, where the School of Media Arts & Design resides. According to the JMU libraries [History and Context website](#), our building was named in 1917 for Gessner Harrison, "a professor of ancient languages at the University of Virginia from 1828 to 1859... who was deeply loyal to slavery and the South." Harrison Hall was named around the same time as Jackson and Maury Halls, for the same reasons.

JMU should eliminate all "Lost Cause" namesakes to model "being the change," to denounce honoring symbols of the oppression of Black people, and to take steps toward implementing the University's own Strategic Plan Priority of "Embracing Access, Inclusivity and Diversity." **We, in SMAD, pledge to foster a welcoming and inclusive community by:**

- Listening to and amplifying the voices of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) on campus and in the larger community,
- Educating ourselves and our students on race matters which includes providing a diverse and inclusive curriculum, and by



- Communicating transparent and attainable goals furthering diversity in pedagogy and personal practice.

“Empathy is not simply a matter of trying to imagine what others are going through, but having the will to muster enough courage to do something about it.” –Cornel West

SIGNATORIES

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NOTE: This statement is endorsed by the individuals who sign it, not by any academic unit, office, center, or other entity affiliated with James Madison University. We are confident that other members of our community support this



statement, but they may not have been able to indicate their support on short notice or because of a conflict of interest. We reserve the right to add additional cosignatories in the coming days. Signatures updated on 20-06-2020.