

Report of the Committee on the Carr Building

Duke University

November 20, 2018

On August 21, 2018, the Duke University Department of History submitted a [proposal](#) to President Vincent E. Price to remove the name of Julian S. Carr from the building on Duke's East Campus where the department is housed. In addition, the proposal suggested renaming the building in honor of Professor Raymond Gavins, who was a member of the Duke history faculty from 1970 until his death in 2016. In keeping with the [procedures](#) for reconsidering names on buildings that were developed by the Commission on Memory and History and adopted in 2017, the history department's proposal was reviewed by the president and the senior leadership of the university.

In September, President Price [appointed](#) an ad hoc committee to review the proposal and make recommendations to the president and the Board of Trustees. The committee included Duke trustees, faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, and members of the administration. In addition to representing various constituencies, the committee members included historians and scholars with relevant expertise, as well the current university archivist and the university archivist emeritus, both with deep knowledge of Julian Carr's connection to Duke.

In his charge to the committee, President Price asked the committee to separate the issue of removing the name from the proposal to rename the building.

This report describes the work done by this committee and its recommendations.

Outreach by the Committee

The committee reached out to Duke students, faculty, staff, and alumni to hear from a wide range of voices on the question of whether the name should be removed from the Carr Building. An online survey was set up to receive feedback, and the opportunity to contribute perspectives was extended to the Duke community via the Duke Alumni Association, Duke Today, and at the meeting of the faculty's Academic Council. Paper versions of the survey were also shared with staff in Facilities, Housekeeping, Dining, and other departments at Duke who may not have easy access to a computer while at work. Emails were also sent to parties who might wish to contribute an opinion but who would not be reached by the above methods, including descendants of Julian Carr.

The committee received several emailed letters from individuals and [groups](#), including a [letter](#) signed by 140 alumni of the Duke History Department. Dozens of responses were received via paper survey, and more than 900 responses were submitted to the online survey. The committee also heard from multiple members of the Carr family. In total, the responses presented a wide-ranging set of perspectives from students, student groups, faculty, staff, and alumni. The committee is extremely grateful to all who took the time to consider this issue and share their views with us.

The Committee's Process

In three in-person meetings, the committee had vigorous and thoughtful discussions about the legacy of Julian Carr and how Duke should respond to the proposal by the history department. The committee heard from experts who presented the historical record regarding Julian Carr and his relationship to Trinity College, Duke University, the city of Durham, and the state of North Carolina. The committee discussed how to apply the four principles provided by the Commission on Memory and History to this case, carefully reviewed community feedback, and researched the work of other universities who have weighed similar decisions.

Julian S. Carr: The historical record

The committee consulted historians, university archivists, and numerous primary sources and published works to try to understand the historical record on Julian Carr. We did not attempt to write a full or authoritative biography in the time available but present the following relevant distillation.¹

The historical record provides information about Julian S. Carr's association with Trinity College, which began when the college was still located in Randolph County. An ardent Methodist and trustee, Carr stepped up his commitment to the college in the uncertain times following the death in 1882 of longtime President Braxton Craven. Along with two other trustees, Carr served on a Committee of Management that administered the college for three years. This administrative arrangement kept the title to the land, which maintained the continued independence of the college. His donation of \$10,000 in stock in 1887 was the largest gift received by the college at that time. He also served as chair of the search committee that selected John F. Crowell as president, a decision that dramatically changed the direction of the institution. Carr's donation of 62 acres of land in 1890, along with Washington Duke's gift of \$85,000, ensured that Trinity College would relocate to Durham. That land is part of present-day East Campus.

Carr was known for his philanthropy in support of higher education and gave to the University of North Carolina, Davidson, Wake Forest, and many other colleges. He also supported the education of Charlie Soong, the first international student to attend Trinity College. In addition, he donated the site for the Durham Public Library, the first public library in North Carolina.

The historical record also indicates that Carr was an active proponent of white supremacy throughout his adult life. He boasted about being a member of the initial Ku Klux Klan. After holding office for one term in the North Carolina legislature, Carr unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. Senate in 1900 on an avowedly white supremacist platform. In a 1913 dedicatory speech for the "Silent Sam" Confederate memorial statue at UNC, Carr proudly recalled having violently attacked an African American woman who had allegedly insulted a white woman.²

¹ For more information, see the Duke University Archives page, "Julian S. Carr and the Carr Building," at <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/uarchives/history/fags/carr>

² "Unveiling of Confederate Monument at University," 2 June 1913. Folder 26, Julian Shakespeare Carr Papers 1892-1923, Southern Historical Collection, University Libraries, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Reference URL: <https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/00141/>

Julian Carr died in April 1924 and thus did not live to see Trinity College become Duke University later that year. The Classroom Building on what is now East Campus was named for Carr in 1930.

Duke's Principles in the Context of the Carr Building

To approach its task and guide its discussions, the committee turned to the [principles](#) that were developed by the Commission on Memory and History in 2017. The committee considered how best to understand and apply each of the following four principles to the question of the Carr Building name.

1. The educational mission is central. Therefore, the goal should be to engage with history and never to erase it.

This principle led us to the firm conviction that any action taken should ensure that Carr's role in our university's history is visible to the Duke community. Carr's role warrants recognition in our university's history and should not be erased. To engage with history, the Duke community must grapple both with the positive information about Carr and with information that is less flattering to the man and the university that chose to honor him. Although such virulent racist attitudes were not universal among white Americans at the time, they were common. Still, Carr's active dedication to and propagation of white supremacy, as well as his position of influence with regard to these views, are noteworthy and should be recorded in Duke's history as well.

The committee concludes that Principle 1 requires us to do more as a university to offer students the opportunity to learn about all sides of Carr's complex legacy. Standing alone, the building name does not accomplish the university's educational mission; it suggests Carr was worthy of recognition but provides no information about who he was or what he did to merit recognition, thus providing no opportunity for learning. We also acknowledge that Carr is not extraordinary in this regard; most of Duke's named buildings offer little opportunity to learn about and understand their namesakes. Thus, regardless of whether the Carr name is changed or retained, the committee concludes that Duke should offer consistently formatted, easily accessible information about the namesake of each building. At the same time, Duke should undertake an effort to offer more knowledge about the many people who played an important role at Duke, both those recognized with building names and those as yet unrecognized.

2. Both past intent and present effect of the representation matter and should be given weight.

This principle requires that the committee consider both why the university originally sought to honor Carr with the building name and how the Carr name affects the community.

University records suggest two reasons why Carr was recognized by Duke University. In 1930 when the Classroom Building was named for Carr, buildings were also named for the two other members of the Committee on Management at Trinity College, suggesting the university was offering these namings in recognition of the role of these trustees. Handwritten notes also mention the gift of land in Carr's case. Little other information is available. The committee noted that no agreement was made with Carr regarding the gift of land; the building was named several years after Carr's death; and it does not appear there was any legal or moral obligation to name the building after Carr. Instead, the university made a decision to recognize Carr for his role in managing Trinity College and for his gift of the land in Durham.

Present effect is complicated to assess. In the history department's town hall meeting in September 2018, staff and students spoke of the distress they experience working in a building named after a man who actively worked to oppress the rights of African Americans. In feedback to the committee, many Duke community members reported that this building name reflects poorly on Duke's oft-stated commitment to equality and community wellbeing. Many also expressed that the building name does not reflect who we hope to be at Duke. A minority of respondents, however, expressed a different view of the name's present effect. They noted that Carr's legacy includes extensive philanthropy and expressed that retaining the name would convey that Duke respects those who have contributed to the university, understands the difficulty of judging individuals from another time, and cares about protecting history, so that we may learn from the past.

After carefully reading all the community feedback, and after conducting our own research and engaging in an open and thoughtful debate within the committee itself, the committee offers its observation that the Carr building name means different things to different people. Evaluating the past intent of the university is relatively straightforward, but evaluating the present effect is less so. The committee's own opinions were mixed on the application of this principle.

3. The meaning of campus symbols should align in totality with Duke's highest aspirations.

For guidance about Duke's highest aspirations, the committee turned to Duke's mission statement. According to the statement, Duke aims to foster students' intellectual growth as well as their development as ethical individuals and leaders in their communities. Duke aspires to advance knowledge, foster free and open inquiry, help those who suffer, "promote a deep appreciation for the range of human difference and potential, a sense of the obligations and rewards of citizenship, and a commitment to learning, freedom and truth," contribute to Durham, North Carolina, the nation, and the world, and to "attain and maintain a place of real leadership in all that we do."

We thus evaluated whether Carr, as a campus symbol, aligns with Duke's highest aspirations. We see Carr's philanthropy and work with Trinity College as aligned with Duke's aspirations to contribute to Durham and to North Carolina, and to help Duke attain a leadership role in the nation. Carr's support for the Soong family aligns with aspirations to promote appreciation for human difference and potential. Carr's active promotion of white supremacy, however, is in clear opposition to the goals outlined in Duke's mission statement. In particular, committee members noted Carr's extensive and lifelong work to undermine the rights of African-Americans. We note that historical understanding must allow for the complexity of human nature: Carr both supported a Chinese student and generously donated nearly all of his family's wealth to others—and also engaged in violent and racist oppression. Acknowledging this complexity, the committee felt that if campus symbols should "align in totality with Duke's highest aspirations," we must conclude that Carr does not meet this criterion.

4. The process of changing an historic structure must be thoughtful and deliberate.

Guided by the procedures and principles developed by the Commission on Memory and History, the committee has attempted to conduct this work in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. Committee members held different views but shared a commitment to open and candid discussion. The committee worked to engage as many stakeholders as possible to ensure that a diversity of opinions was included in the committee's deliberations. The committee also aims for transparency in its work, both with this report and with our request to place committee notes and community feedback in the university archives.

According to Principle 4, “History and tradition are important to Duke, and removing or renaming historic structures should be an uncommon event, undertaken only in extraordinary circumstances that clearly warrant a change.” With this in mind, the committee took seriously the importance of the decision, and it applied a presumption against changing the name. The committee was mindful that the question is not whether Carr’s name should be added to the building today, but rather is the very different question of whether the extraordinary step should be taken of removing his name. We weighed whether we could meet all four principles without removing the name and eventually concluded that keeping the name was inconsistent with the principles as articulated.

Recommendations

The committee recommends that the university remove the name of Carr from the building. We note that no individual is perfect, and we do not pretend to sit in judgment on any individual as a human or citizen. But the white supremacist actions that Carr pursued throughout his life, even when considered in light of the time in which they were held, are inconsistent with the fundamental aspirations of this university, and removing the name will be a powerful statement that lifts up our values as a diverse and inclusive institution.

At the same time, Duke has a special responsibility as an educational institution never to erase or ignore history. The committee felt we must protect and promote history while also ensuring that the campus reflects our aspirations as a community. Therefore, the unanimity of the committee’s support for the recommendation to remove the name is contingent on the creation of means to present educational and historical information on Julian Carr in order to preserve the record on Carr’s contributions to Trinity College and help the community understand his complex legacy.

The committee thus recommends that the university display information inside the Carr building that outlines Carr’s connection to Duke and his legacy in the wider world; the marker should state why the university chose to name the building in his honor in 1930, and why it chose to remove his name nearly ninety years later. This information should be visible and accessible to all. The committee also recommends that the university support a more extensive exhibit about Julian Carr, Trinity College, and Duke University, perhaps hosted by the library, as part of Duke’s larger effort to present its history to educate the Duke community and the public. We recommend that university librarians, archivists, and historians work together on the creation of the exhibit and the informational panel, and that funding be allocated to support these projects. There is great interest in university history from students and faculty, and supporting a thoughtful and nuanced presentation of Duke’s history is a worthwhile institutional investment.

In making this recommendation, the committee articulated a distinction between history and veneration. Naming a building after an individual is an act of veneration and does not alone accomplish historical education or understanding. By recommending the removal of the Carr name from the building, while also recommending the installation of a summary of Carr’s contributions in the building, we are reflecting the voices who told the committee that we should never erase history or ignore past contributions as well as those who told the committee that we should expect our symbols to reflect our highest aspirations as a university.

The proposal from the Department of History also suggested renaming the building in honor of the late Professor Raymond Gavins, who was the first African American member of the Duke history faculty. In

his charge to the committee, President Price asked the committee to separate this suggestion from the primary request to remove the Carr name. The committee wishes to highlight the warm and enthusiastic support received from many alumni and former colleagues of Professor Gavins. These individuals remember Professor Gavins' scholarship, teaching, and especially his devoted encouragement and mentoring of generations of students, many of whom were inspired by his example to become academic historians themselves. In addition to Gavins, a number of other worthy individuals were suggested by the community in the survey responses. While commending the suggestion of Professor Gavins, the committee recognizes that the naming of buildings is within the purview of the Board of Trustees and that the Board may choose to consider other possibilities for candidates worthy of this honor.

Future Direction

We also offer the following suggestion: The university should apply these principles proactively rather than reacting to requests or public pressure. Doing so would allow the university to apply one set of criteria across the board with all of its monuments and named buildings. The committee suggests that this process begin with a scholarly and educational effort in which the university provides historical information about individuals for whom campus buildings are named.

Appendix

Committee Roster

Committee on the Carr Building

Committee Roster

Gráinne M. Fitzsimons, *Chair*, Professor of Management and Organizations in the Fuqua School of Business, and Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience

Curtis Bradley, William Van Alstyne Professor of Law and Professor of Public Policy Studies, co-director for the Center for International and Comparative Law

William A. Darity, Samuel DuBois Cook Professor of Public Policy, Professor of African and African American Studies, and Professor of Economics

Valerie Gillispie, University Archivist

Thavolia Glymph, Professor of History, Faculty Affiliate of the Duke University Population Research Institute (DuPri) and the Program in Women's Studies

Jessica Hauger, Ph.D. candidate in History

William E. King '61, A.M. '63, Ph.D. '70, University Archivist Emeritus

Robin Kirk, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Faculty Co-Chair of the Duke Human Rights Center at the Franklin Humanities Institute

Sally D. Robinson '55, Trustee Emerita

Kennedy Ware, undergraduate student

Annabel J. Wharton, William B. Hamilton Professor of Art and Art History

Ex officio:

Michael Marsicano '77, G'78, G'82, Trustee, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation For The Carolinas

Michael J. Schoenfeld '84, Vice President for Public Affairs and Government Relations

Tallman Trask III, Executive Vice President

Staff:

Carolyn Gerber '90, Special Assistant to the Vice President for Public Affairs and Government Relations