



## *Council of Student Leaders*

Thursday, June 18th, 2020

To the Winthrop University Board of Trustees:

Founded in 1886, Winthrop Training School has been known for providing each of its students with a quality education to be met with a promising future. As we now know it to be Winthrop University, our institution has consistently seen change. We began as a school that prepared [white women](#) to become educators, and have since grown into a university that offers a variety of majors and embodies the principles of diversity, service, excellence, community, and leadership. Though our institution has come a long way since our initial establishment, we must acknowledge our history in all aspects - which includes the cognizance of our university's memorials, dedications, respects, and homages to individuals who do not represent the university's core values.

As we continue to move forward and advance our university, we must reflect on our history and acknowledge that what was once viewed as "honorable" did not stand the test of time. It is honorable to understand the role and impact Benjamin Tillman played in the founding of our beloved Winthrop University. However, it is not honorable to disregard the significant likelihood that students who walk our campus daily are the descendants of the men and women Benjamin Tillman enslaved. He, among others, have a name engraved on our campus:

Byrnes Hall, named for former judge and South Carolina governor, [James F. Byrnes](#). During his time as governor of South Carolina, he was known for supporting segregation in education as stated in his inaugural speech. "Whatever is necessary to continue the separation of the races in the schools of South Carolina is going to be done by the white people of the state. That is my ticket as a private citizen. It will be my ticket as governor."

Joynes Hall, named for [Dr. Edward S. Joynes](#), who worked for the Confederate Army during the Civil War. While working for the Confederate Army, he reported to Robert E. Lee.

Richardson Hall, named for former South Carolina Governor John Peter Richardson Jr., who signed the Ordinance of Secession in 1860 signaling South Carolina's secession from the United States. [The Ordinance of Secession](#) was a declaration of southern states who left the Union because they felt their right to own slaves was threatened.

Thurmond Hall, named for [James Strom Thurmond](#) who holds the United States Senate's record for the longest filibuster - his speech against the 1957 Civil Rights Act.

Thomson Hall, named for [Dr. James William Thomson](#), who was in attendance at the Ordinance of Secession and served as a colonel in the Confederate service.

As we reflect on our history, the disapproval of building names is all too familiar to our student body. Efforts to change the name of a given location or entire building have been in circulation since 2013. Between [sit-ins on the first floor of Tillman Hall](#), [resolutions](#) and emails to the Board of Trustees, and [petitions](#) that engage our campus community and beyond, changing the names of these buildings and further creating an inclusive environment is a need that many have been requesting throughout the years.

And now, more than ever, change is needed. We cannot truly open our arms to students from all walks of life if parts of our campus are dedicated to individuals who did not believe in what we stand for today. We believe that Winthrop University has every intention to be an institution where each student, faculty, staff, community member, and overall guest feels welcomed. Therefore, to uphold this belief it is time to change aspects of our campus that do not align with our beliefs and core values. Now, it is time to do what is honorable to the coming generations of Winthrop students and alumni.

Whereas the [South Carolina Heritage Act of 2000](#) prohibits the "...the renaming of any local or state monument, marker, memorial, school, or street erected or named in honor of the confederacy or the Civil Rights Movement without the enactment of a joint resolution of the general assembly approving same adopted by a two-thirds vote of the membership of each house," we, the 2019-2020 Chair and Vice Chair [Imani Belton and Brandon Jackson] of the Council of Student Leaders in addition to the 2020-2021 Chair and Vice Chair [Brandon Jackson and Ravyn Cunningham] of the Council of Student Leaders, strongly encourage the Winthrop University Board of Trustees to change the names of Richardson and Thomson residence halls and further request authority from the South Carolina General Assembly to restore Tillman Hall to its original name of the Main Building and to rename the J. Strom Thurmond School of Business Administration and Byrnes Hall.

Our work in this area is far from finished; however, with the consistent actions from all who embody, stand for, and represent Winthrop University, we will capitalize on the progress we have made and continue to uplift our core values that we stand upon today.

Yours in service,

*Brandon Jackson*

*Ravyn Cunningham*

*Imani Belton*

[https://www.senate.gov/senators/FeaturedBios/Featured\\_Bio\\_Thurmond.htm](https://www.senate.gov/senators/FeaturedBios/Featured_Bio_Thurmond.htm)

[https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess113\\_1999-2000/bills/4895.htm](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess113_1999-2000/bills/4895.htm)

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/lprbscsm.sesm0680/>

Bruce Bartlett (January 8, 2008). *Wrong on Race: The Democratic Party's Buried Past*. St. Martin's Press. pp. 58. ISBN 978-0-230-61138-2.

<http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/winthrop-university/>

Resolutions

<https://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/csl/BessieMoodyLawrenceResolution.pdf>

Events surrounding Tillman Hall

<https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/special-reports/charlotte-shooting-protests/article104801971.html>