

Dear Trinity Legacies

I would like to propose that the former Berkeley Library be named “The Anarcha, Betsy, Lucy Library”.

Anarcha, Betsy, and Lucy were three young women who lived and worked as slaves on different plantations in Alabama in the 1840s. After childbirth, each suffered from the development of a vesico-vaginal fistula (VVF): a highly complex, highly distressing, and highly debilitating obstetrical complication. There was no known cure at the time.

Over a period of five years, Anarcha, Betsy, and Lucy (and nine other unnamed slave women) were subjected to multiple experimental operations (without anaesthesia) by Dr Marion J Sims (“the father of modern gynaecology”). Eventually after her 30th procedure, Sims cured Anarcha and published his techniques to great acclaim. The three women were returned to their slave owners and disappeared from history for over 150 years.

After publication of his seminal paper on the management of VVF, the name of Dr Marion J Sims became internationally synonymous with surgical excellence in the practice of gynaecology. It is only recently, that the stories of Anarcha, Betsy, and Lucy have been told. However, the vast majority of doctors and medical students are unaware of their existence.

In order to do justice to a proposal to name the former Berkeley Library “The Anarcha, Betsy, Lucy Library” (I can think of no better name change) it would be inestimably preferable to make an in-person formal presentation - and I would be honoured to do so if this was at all possible.

It is of note that VVF remains a significant problem for women in the developing world.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Chris Fitzpatrick  
(attending short courses in history in TCD)

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(& former Master/CEO)  
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PS If further documentary evidence is required, please let me know. Thank you.

Dear Trinity Legacies

For a recent peer-review paper in the medical scientific literature to support my proposal for a new name for the Berkeley Library - please see 'Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy and the women whose names were not recorded: the legacy of Marion J Sims' by Monica Cronin in Anaesthetic Intensive Care in Nov 2020 (PubMed link below).

Thank you for your consideration.

Chris Fitzpatrick  
Student attending short courses in history in TCD  
Clinical Professor (obstetrics & gynaecology) UCD

Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy, and the women whose names were not recorded: The legacy of J Marion Sims - PubMed  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33249851/>