

Good afternoon,

I am writing to support the petition by the students to rename the Berkeley Library. Having been established in 1978, the people who decided on the library's name can be forgiven for not understanding the history behind it. Today, knowing what we know, it cannot be allowed to stand. We have a collective responsibility to take action and improve our institutions for those we train, for those coming after us. Evidence, provided by historians, tells us that the library's namesake was an enslaver. This should be the only red flag required to rename the building. As a historian who researches the long-term effects of colonialism, enslavement and settler colonialism, I believe that it falls to the research community and to the institutions who employ and support us to move towards reconciliation. We cannot do this if we do not challenge the wrongs of the past in meaningful and determined ways. We need to lead by example so that our students, all of them, can feel welcome within the learning environments we create. It sends a dangerous message to them if a respected institution like Trinity College Dublin does not acknowledge the mistakes of the past and move to rectify them by renaming one of its libraries. After all, a library is meant to be a space where all students should feel welcome, included and safe – it is meant to encourage learning. It is not meant to stand as a reminder that one of Ireland's most respected universities is celebrating a person who enslaved other people.

Best wishes,  
Karly Kehoe