

To whom it may concern,

George Berkeley (1685-1753) is Ireland's most celebrated philosopher and one of Trinity College Dublin's most lauded alumni. Berkeley is a symbol for the prestige and reputation Trinity has garnered over the centuries. Berkeley's work, which primarily focused on developing a theory called "subjective idealism" in the topic of empiricism, won him great acclaim and power. Myriad schools in America, a university, a residential college at Yale, and a city all bear his name, as well as an International Essay Prize. Within Trinity, he is remembered with a library and the prestigious Gold Medal awards named after him, as well as a memorial window in Trinity Chapel, in recognition of his academic credentials.

However, a thorough examination of both the man and some of his morally corrupt beliefs were exposed by a 2001 Yale research project. The charges brought against Berkeley by the research team were that:

1. Between 1728 and 1731, he purchased 3-5 enslaved people to work at his personal residence, Whitehall, a plantation in Rhode Island.
2. He drew up plans for what he called the "Bermuda Scheme", a school for Native Americans, which he proposed to fill with kidnapped Native Americans that would have seen further enslavement on his part.
3. He was a vocal proponent of the Yorke-Talbot opinion. He argued that enslavement was justified as it enabled the conversion of enslaved Africans to Christianity, but denied the possibility of a route to freedom through religious conversion. This opinion was heavily applied in supplying a legal basis for the continued enslavement of men, women and children in the US.
4. Berkeley's opinions on the benefits of enslavement applied to the enslaved African, Native Americans, and to the native Irish Catholic population as well.

Not only do Berkeley's opinions not represent current day values but neither should we pretend that he was merely a man of his times. In his own time, we have a multitude of voices propounding the injustice of the slave trade, from the Quakers to the Irish philosopher and Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University, Francis Hutcheson. This anti-slavery opinion was widespread and familiar to intellectual circles and gives to lie to any historical justification of Berkeley's problematic endorsement of the enslavement of human beings.

An appropriate decolonisation of college would recognise that the Berkeley Library, the eponymous Gold Medals, and memorial window are no longer appropriate to the 21st century university that Trinity projects to the world. Their continued existence reflects poorly on Trinity College Dublin's ability to meet its goals of inclusivity and the fostering of a positive environment in which students can learn.

Berkeley's continued lionisation is a failure on the part of Trinity College Dublin to engage with this problematic legacy.

Trinity's attempt at a solution is the Colonial Legacies Project. However, this is limited by being merely a research project and the Provost must be involved for action to occur in relation to those symbols of College which continue to reflect the barbaric views of a man, who indulged in the intellectual sleight-of-hand that allowed him to attempt to justify enslavement.

**We call on Provost, Linda Doyle, and on Trinity College Dublin to rename the Library and Gold medals, and to rededicate the memorial window to a more appropriate candidate.**

Precedence for this is abundant.

2017 - Georgetown University renames Mulheddy and McSherry Halls as their namesakes oversaw the sale of enslaved people.

2017 – Yale renames Calhoun College as John Calhoun championed enslavement.

2020 - UCL removes the names of Francis Galton and Karl Pearson for their support of eugenics.

2020 – Columbia University renames Bard Hall due to Samuel Bard’s owning of 3 enslaved people.

2020 – Townson University renames two dormitories due to their namesakes’ relation to enslavement.

2020 - Stanford renames Jordan Hall due to David Starr Jordan's support for eugenics.

2020 - USC removes the name of Rufus von Kleinsmid for his support of eugenics .

2021 – Rider University removes Benjamin Van Cleve’s name as Van Cleve was an enslaver.

2022 – Trinity College Dublin renames Schrödinger Lecture Theatre due to his grooming and abuse of women and children.

In the case that the Berkeley Library and Gold Medals are renamed, and the memorial window is rededicated, it falls then on us to provide the university with a list of possible candidates. Trinity alumni have reached exalted positions and thankfully we have many who impacted the world in a positive and significant manner.

Ideally the staff and students of Trinity College Dublin could be involved and included in the selection process for the replacement of Berkeley in the three instances.

Potential replacement candidates include (but are not limited to):

1. Mary Robinson – first female president of Ireland, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO Peace Prize winner, Sydney Peace Prize winner, American Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, seven term Irish senator, member of the group "The Elders", and former chancellor of Trinity College Dublin.
2. Mary McAleese – former Reed Professor at Trinity College Dublin, former President of Ireland, co-founder of the Campaign of the Homosexual Law Reform, Alfons Auer Ethics Award winner, and current chancellor of Trinity College Dublin.
3. Priscilla Elworthy – founder of the Oxford Research Group, three time Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Niwano Peace Prize winner, member of the World Future Council, founder of Peace District charity, co-founder of Rising Women Rising World, adviser on the founding of “The Elders”, and author.

4. Kader Asmal - founder of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Ireland, former lecturer of human rights, labour, and international law at Trinity.

5. Mairead Maguire – co-founder of the Community for Peace People and Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Trinity's reputation and influence as an institution behoves them to set an example of how an inclusive and respectful learning environment can be established. This includes ensuring that the campus does not openly promote relics of oppression and institutional racism.

Now that we know better let us do better. Help us to remove the stain on the university's legacy that is the ill-suited glorification of an enslaver through the naming of a library, an award, and a memorial window.

Kind Regards

Louie (luther) Lyons

To whom it may concern,

I recently read both Nigel Biggar's piece in the Irish Times and Trinity News' coverage of David McConnell's submission regarding the renaming of the library. Frankly, I was incredibly insulted by the almost glib manner in which both claimed firstly that changing the library does not in itself solve the entirety of racism across the globe and thus is not worth doing, and secondly that since "everyone was doing it" at the time we cannot judge Berkeley by today's standards.

I simply wish to voice my firm opposition to both of these points and highlight that renaming the library will have a profoundly positive effect.

As a Trinity student of African descent, I am negatively impacted by having to study under the roof of a library named after an enslaver and a pro-slavery writer. The library, as it is currently named, is a clear reward to Berkeley and espouses the message that his enslavement of people is bad but only bad enough to be a mere footnote. Enslavement is more than a footnote in the story of Berkeley. It is more than just an extra detail for tour guides to tell. It is more than an additional plaque on the library. It is a continuous assault on me and people like me that promulgates the idea of Trinity preferring its colonial past to its more diverse present. This is all to say that of course the renaming of the library does not "solve" racism on a global level. But on a local and personal level, it is a necessary move towards decolonization and an inclusive campus as it is difficult for me to be a Trinity student when Trinity are actively rewarding those who espouse sentiments that are against me.

I would like to highlight this letter in the Irish Times in response to Mr Biggar's piece.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/letters/2023/01/24/erasing-berkeleys-name-from-trinity/>

Regarding the point that slavery was common and we cannot judge Berkeley because he didn't know it was wrong. That's a common misconception. Of course some of his contemporaries knew slavery was wrong but furthermore his enslaved people knew it was wrong and the assertion that NO ONE knew it was wrong implies that the opinions of enslaved people does not matter. It is an inherently colonial belief. For a better explanation of this point, i would point you in the direction of Philomena Mullen's article on the 'man of his times' argument in the Irish Times.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/2023/01/26/philomena-mullen-man-of-his-times-argument-does-not-get-berkeley-off-hook/>

Kind regards

Luther