

Dear Trinity College Dublin,

My name is Regan Roseveare; I am a current undergraduate at Trinity College Dublin pursuing a degree in history. Currently, in my final year, I have spent a considerable portion of my studies hidden amongst the shelves of the Berkeley Library. Home to the History Department within Trinity's libraries, the Berkeley is where many History students find themselves *lost* in their studies - uncovering stories of the past and unearthing some of the histories we often overlook. Much like many other history students, my relationship with the Berkeley, and its dimly-lit second floor, is complex - it is a place I both love and loathe. It is pertinent that scholars have a say in the name of the building in which they so often find themselves sheltered. I firmly believe that the Berkeley name should be removed from the library's walls and that a more welcoming name should replace it.

I suppose that those in favour of retaining the name might structure their opinion within three columns; Firstly, that Berkeley was an esteemed Trinity graduate who should be honoured on our campus. Secondly, removing the name would erase history. Finally, we should 'retain and explain.' It should be noted that this library was originally named the New Library and only received its current name in 1978. This library's name has changed before, and it should change again. I am also sure most Berkeley defenders will list a detailed record of his academic contributions to support their claims. However, it should be noted that his academic contributions are not the point of contention in this instance. The issue is whether or not, in 2023, Trinity should continue to lionise a man who used his wealth to perpetuate the enslavement of human beings.

Moreover, the issue is whether or not the values Berkeley espoused during his lifetime, specifically regarding enslavement and race, align with the values of Trinity College in 2023. I should hope that everyone can on that issue agree. I am currently enrolled in the Senior Sophister history module, *Ireland's Colonial Legacies*, under Dr Ciaran O'Neill and Dr Patrick Walsh. We have often deliberated these same themes in that space, and I would like to share some of those outcomes here. With this submission, I intend to discuss the arguments of those who oppose renaming while simultaneously evidencing a name that I believe is more appropriate for this building that we history students love to hate.

It is worth noting that Berkeley's philosophical contributions, academic esteem, and his time as a former Trinity student might have been a reason for a building with his name in the past. However, that time has long since elapsed, and his legacy as an enslaver and his outwardly racist writings can no longer be glossed over. Simple facts relating to his legacy as an enslaver reveal his ownership of at least four enslaved people on his Whitehall plantation in Rhode Island between 1728 -1731. Those enslaved people are thought to have been named "Philip, Agnes, Edward and Anthony Berkeley ", as reflected in archives such as baptism records. These names were likely assigned at their baptism, by Berkeley, or by the person who sold them to Berkeley. However, the names given to them by their families, or the ones they might have taken had they been born outside of enslavement, are entirely *lost* to history. We do not know much about these people Berkeley enslaved beyond these names. I honestly wish we had first-hand narratives of their lives under Berkeley's enslavement which could be presented in support of renaming this building. However, the reason we do not know these people, why we do not know these stories, is because of Berkeley and people like him who engaged in, profited, supported, and benefitted from the enslavement of millions of human beings.

What we know about these people is that Berkeley brought them as property items. We do know that they were either born into or forced into enslavement. We know their history was *lost*, and their voices do not exist in the historical record as individuals because of Berkeley and his peers. We know that Berkeley envisioned constructing a utopian university on the island of Bermuda. We know he intended to name this institution St Paul's and to abduct Indigenous children and hold them captive to "Christianise" them. We know that he modelled these plans for St Paul's after Trinity and hoped it would operate as an agent of empire much as Trinity did. We know that four of the proposed founding fellows were employed by Trinity. We know that Berkeley's behaviours were not simply a product "of his era," after all, he was supposed to be a person of such academic and philosophic enlightenment that he somehow deserved a building in his name. Why is it acceptable to excuse his obvious and egregious moral failings when other less esteemed, more typical "men of

his age" staunchly opposed the slave trade and did not enslave people? This library was named in honour of Berkeley, but an honest assessment of his life and writings reveals a conspicuous mountain of dishonour.

Berkeley's name might, in the past, have been reflective of the many of the people who graduated from Trinity, but that is not a fact worth celebrating. Berkeley was by no means the only Trinity alumni who participated in the trans-Atlantic slave trade or as an agent of empire in colonial violence against innocent indigenous communities, domestic and abroad. It is nearly impossible to account for every alum or department with skeletons in their closet, both figurative and literal. However, Berkeley is also unlike other alums because his name is the one branded in a physical display of his legacy on campus. In 2023, and as the 12th most international University in the world, this institution seems proud of the diversity of its more recent alums who represent varying socio-economic backgrounds, genders, religions, ethnicities, and sexualities – a fact not at all reflected by its campus. Most statues or buildings on campus dedicated to alums are overwhelmingly dedicated to white Christian men, with few dedications to women or people of colour.

For an institution so proud of the diversity of its student body, allowing places on campus that honour the history of their exclusion from these classrooms and spaces is not only outdated but also hurtful and intrusive. This University systematically excluded groups of people from academic entry for the bulk of its history and, by doing so, also denied those people a chance to be a visible part of Trinity's history. If victors indeed write history, then the history at Trinity has been written by its alums. This fact is one of the reasons I am opposed to allowing this name to stay, and it is also why I believe the building should not be named after any long-dead and gone alums. Naming this library after a different antiquated alum with a cleaner past might address international colonial legacies, but it would replicate and reinforce this institution's more intimate exclusionary history. This is because, until relatively recently, those alumni were afforded admission to this University partly because they did not belong to the masses who were denied a chance to be alums based on their gender, ethnicity, or religion. Going forward, this library should be a testament to the diverse students, perspectives, voices and once-lost stories it now so proudly embraces.

I understand that there is a prominent voice of people who believe that removing Berkeley's name from the side of the library would "erase" history and that we should retain the name and explain its controversy. However, history is not a monolithic account of the past; it is subject to interpretation and is constantly being written and rewritten. It must also be urged that Berkeley's history is neither being told by his name on a wall nor would it be by a plaque underneath it. Instead, it is told by the books housed inside the library, which can assess the past with the nuance it desperately requires. By its very nature, the subject of history is writing about the past with the hindsight and clarity of the present. Thus, history has always been subject to "today's lens".

I further evidence the removal of the Cecil Rhodes statue at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2015 as a counter-argument for this claim. #RhodesMustFall began at UCT in 2015 as a movement to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes from its prominent placement on the campus, this campaign was successful. In the eight years which have elapsed since that statue was taken down, the erasure people so similarly feared never occurred, and Cecil Rhodes' history endures. Further, South Africa has frequently partaken in renaming places, buildings, and even entire cities since it gained democratic independence in 1994. These efforts have been part of a countrywide commitment to removing celebratory relics of Apartheid, and yet Apartheid still exists in history and the South African classroom. Another African nation that corroborates the fact that renaming does not erase painful histories is eSwatini, which selected its nation's pre-colonial name, yet still has and teaches the history of its colonisation. These histories persist because history is not taught through names of places or even through statues; it is taught in museums, classrooms, and books. Removal from the public domain does not constitute an erasure of painful history – it prevents its valorisation. Berkeley's contributions to academia would not be erased should the library's name change because his accomplishment as a philosopher is not dependent on the name of a library erected 200 years after he lived, and to claim it that to would be so, is simply preposterous.

Moreover, history is complex and uncomfortable. A topic as serious as slavery should not be reduced or cast off to facilitate palatable and comfortable stories which uphold those who have always been upheld. As far as I can see, any calls to retain the name place his academic legacy in higher prestige than the lives of his innocent victims of enslavement which is fundamentally elitist and racially aggravative. One lesson I have

learned while studying History at Trinity is that we have *lost* more stories than we could ever account for because of the actions of people like Berkeley. An honest historian has to restore as much justice as possible to people mistreated in the past by giving them their deserved place in the present. Re-centring historical discourse around its victims and not its preparators does not erase history; it repairs it. History has the potential to be an incredibly inspiring and powerful tool when it restores the narrative to those whose voices have been so often *lost*. Berkeley erased the narratives of the people he enslaved - their stories are *lost*, and theirs is the history being erased.

I believe that the Trinity Colonial Legacies project has the chance to be ground-breaking, and it has the opportunity to lead the way for other institutions to assess their past with adjusted lenses. This project allows Trinity to spearhead this new age only if they take on the challenge to do so with honesty and candidness. I feel that renaming the library after yet another white Christian man who was afforded admission to an exclusionary institution would impede this exercise's innovative potential and diminish the project's restorative nature. Humans are not infallible; they never will be, and naming buildings after people, in essence, requires that they be so. When George Berkeley's name comes down, what should rise in its place is all names of the people whom we do not know, those whose lives were taken, those who were enslaved, those who suffered at the hands of Trinity alumni, and also those who were never afforded the chance to be Trinity alums.

This is why I propose that the library be renamed *The Lost Library*. Aside from having a nice ring, this name would be in honour of all the names, histories, and lives *lost*. It would memorialise the books never written and the stories never shared. It would symbolise all we do not know and all we do—honouring those whose names which have not been suggested because people like George Berkeley erased them. This name would be in honour of the complicated pasts, mistakes, and failures which stole those histories from our library. Perhaps it would also honour all the hours spent inside the library *lost* in its worlds. It would be a name that always drives conversation and causes students, staff, and tourists to think about those people when they see it. It would be easy to slap another surname on the wall and call it a day, but it would be empowered to give the library a name which inspires change. I believe that Trinity has a chance to set a powerful precedent and should indeed do so. If I am right that the essence of this exercise is about reflection, then a name reflecting Trinity's commitment to accountability and progress is needed.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission.

Regards,
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