

The CASEMENT LIBRARY

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

A case for re-naming the Berkeley Library in honour of Roger David CASEMENT (1864 – 1916), Irish Nationalist, anti-slavery advocate and LGBTQ+ man.

The renaming of the Berkley library has rightfully been a subject of deep debate and thoughtful scholarship on the part of the academic and student bodies in Trinity. Whilst of particular moment to the College community, the changing of the name is also of international significance, both politically and academically given Berkeley's associations with the great centres of Western learning. Trinity once again shows its courage and willingness to question the past, bringing what we learn to our present, whilst looking to the future.

Although no human being is perfect, some deserve memorial for their life lived, their commitment to humanity and their sacrifice. Roger CASEMENT has not had the recognition he deserves for his life and sacrifice in the service of Ireland, Europe and humanity. His story is well known. *"He was a humanitarian who fought with bravery and determination against the enslavement of indigenous peoples in the Congo and Amazonia...Despite his attempts to prevent what would be a doomed insurrection, he was also the last victim of the executions that followed the Easter Rising, and thereby became a nationalist martyr"*.¹ Raised a Protestant, died a Roman Catholic he was also a victim of state and social prejudice at a time when homosexuality was considered abhorrent.

Renaming the Berkely Library in honour of Roger CASEMENT would symbolize Trinity's commitment to the Irish nation, universal Human Rights, the struggle against slavery and championing the rights of LGBTQ+ people. Beyond these grand themes, CASEMENT also embodies our common and personal struggles as flawed human beings, with questions of right and wrong, personal versus public ethic, and as individuals in the face of childhood poverty, mental depression, religious and sexual identity.

"Casement" as a word also has an architectural strength about it that is appealing as a name of a building. The "casement" has metaphorical power in the context of a library designed as a place fundamental to the University's mission to throw open new windows in the minds of its users.

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¹ Michael Laffan, "Casement, Sir Roger David," *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (2010).