

Moe Brown Statement:

Forever to thee. Three powerful words that unite Gamecock Nation win, lose or draw; triumph or failure; nationality or race. Forever to thee. As I address you all as a former student-athlete, the same words again offer the opportunity to unite our great institution. Our goal is simple - correcting the ill effects of Systemic Inequality experienced by minorities.

One thing that most SAs understands as essential to get better daily – is to be consistently self-aware and correcting. And as it relates to renaming of facilities due to the representation of such being offensive, I insist that our University proceed with the same approach.

Sen. Thurmond beliefs were consistent of the bigot, racist and segregationist mindset that was deeply rooted in the south. So much so, that he was the presidential candidate of the segregationist States' Rights Democrats in 1948. Beyond this mindset, there is also the issue consistent accusations of misogyny and other inappropriate behavior towards women. As a collective, these characteristics are not consistent with the virtues we claim of this institution.

Personally, I am a South Carolina country boy through and through. I love my state and country. That said, I have experienced racism directed to me throughout my entire life. And, what's consistent throughout our history, is that black folk progression moves at the speed of white folk inconvenience. Now, I am sure that statement may rub some people the wrong way. That's good – inconvenience. Think about walking into a facility bearing a man's name who never wanted you to be there, then being questioned to as of why do you want to it removed? Think about walking into a store, movie, hotel, office and consistently have to predict how you should conduct yourself to disarm others due simply to the color of my skin. Think about asking for a flag whose fundamental genesis represent the enslavement of folk that look like me to get removed. And must say, I am proud that our university for leading the way in this effort to successfully do so. Finally, I ask, do you not see these truths to be inconvenient for folks who look like me?

This Commission's work is honorable. I challenge everyone of to be thorough and display empathy to do what's right. To do so will prevent the necessity of such commissions moving forward. Not only in the matter of Sen. Thurmond but all other names creating division among Gamecock Nation. I close by evoking the Great Martin Luther King Jr., "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." We have the power shorten that process in this moment. Thank you for your time. Forever to thee.

Cheslie Kryst:

The battle we are having about removing Strom Thurmond's name from the Wellness and Fitness Center isn't just about Thurmond; we've had this same argument time and time again. For years, we watched some South Carolinians wave the Confederate flag, host weddings at plantations, and honor countless individuals like Strom Thurmond who have a history of advocating for segregation and opposing civil rights legislation. These and other symbols and places and people hold special meaning for some in this state; however, it is undeniable that these same items and people have racist histories that we cannot erase or forget. I celebrated the moment when the Confederate flag was removed from the South Carolina State House because it symbolized an acceptance of the horrific history the flag holds for black people and a refusal to honor the hatred and division it represents. I will also celebrate Thurmond's name being removed from the Wellness and Fitness Center at my beloved University of South

Carolina. I am confident that university leadership and the South Carolina legislature will come to the same realization about what Thurmond represents as they did with the Confederate flag. It's just a matter of when. I hope that "when" is sooner, rather than later.

Natasha Hastings:

I come from a family of immigrants from Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago. While athletics was always a staple in our home, academics always came first. My parents always emphasized the importance of getting an education no matter my athletic abilities. At the age of 18, I left NYC to attend the University of South Carolina on a track and field scholarship. I was unaware that the things that I had read and studied about in history books wasn't so much history. I was shocked to find that not only was the confederate flag still flying atop the building on the state capitol, but it was also clear that we as black people weren't even welcome in certain places of business. It was even more disheartening to know that there were buildings on campus memorializing people that I knew once owned slaves or would have lobbied against me even attending the university. I remember walking into Strom Thurmond a few times and having an uneasy feeling. Where possible I would avoid going into the building, knowing the history behind Strom Thurmond the man. While Carolina was a place that I called home for three and a half years, it never FELT like home knowing racists and bigots were memorialized and celebrated on campus. I know that my fellow black students also felt this way, and I hope that we can change this for the current and future students of all backgrounds, as every student has a right to feel celebrated and welcome on a campus they call home.

Chris Campbell:

*"Ever since I began working in the international business space--whether its at corporate retreats, professional networking events or even black-tie galas--I have been asked by senior leaders at Fortune 100 companies, foreign government officials, lawyers and regular folks in Asia, Europe, Africa and even the United States about South Carolina's history with the confederacy as well as the dynamics of people like Mr. Thurmond with the African-American community.*

*They are always shocked to find that people that fought for segregation and white supremacy are honored and revered with buildings and other honorifics. My hope is that we can do what South Carolinians do best...lead our country by changing the narrative from what has divided us, to what can unite us--and that starts with respecting the voices from throughout our community. UofSC is among the best Universities in the world, if we want to wear a mantle that the rest of the world will follow, it starts with acknowledging with what is holding us back.*

*Let us re-name the facility with a name that represents and celebrates ALL Gamecocks across our proud history."*

Marcus Lattimore:

Good afternoon,

I pray that you and your families are well and safe as we navigate through this pandemic. We have the power to beat this if we continue to work together by making selfless decisions every day for the greater good. Wear your mask, save a life.

I love the University of South Carolina with all my heart. This great institution provided me with an opportunity to play the sport I love, receive a great education, and impact thousands upon thousands of young lives across America. In my darkest days, the collective spirit of South Carolinians lifted me up. And for that, I am forever grateful.

My goal today is not to bash or tarnish the legacy of a human. I understand better than most that nobody is perfect. Strom Thurmond's legacy and ideals have been well documented. What happened in the past is in the past. But I am here to shed light on why having his name on a particularly important building is a problem for me, and thousands of others who look like me.

During the summer months when my teammates and I had time on the weekends we would frequent "The Strom" to go play basketball or swim. Most of them were black and I found it odd that nobody seemed to care that we were walking in a place that he would have never wanted us to enter. So, I did not care.

Fast forward almost ten years later. No longer immature and naive I am serving as the director of player development for the football team. Part of my job was recruiting so when prospective student-athletes came on campus I would show them around. As I chauffeured a family through the wellness center someone recognized the name and in a voice of disbelief uttered "This is ok for y'all?" My response was what came naturally, "That's just how it is". After that interaction, I learned for the first time that Mr. Thurmond was succeeded as governor by James F. Byrnes who famously said, "niggers will never walk the halls of this school" What school? My high school. In Duncan, South Carolina. "That's just how it is". It is just ok to celebrate the legacy of someone who would have never allowed my grandad or dad to step foot in that building. It's just normal.

Well, I am here to say that it is not ok. It is unacceptable. And to anyone who thinks otherwise is a part of the problem. This is not about me or Mr. Thurmond. It's about the fourteen million tourists that come to our capital every year. It is about prospective students in the future who visit USC that might feel as if they do not belong because of that constant reminder they walk by every day. It is about our staffers who work tirelessly to recruit student athletes but must find creative ways to explain why it is ok for their black son to enter that building. There have been times I just skipped that stop altogether to avoid the questions. It's an obstacle that impedes our advancement as a society. It is about the message we are sending to the world. We cannot run from the fact that Mr. Thurmond's ideals were divisive. That is not equality. That is not inclusion. That is not empathetic. And most importantly, that is not what we represent as a University.

I hope this heightens your awareness and illuminates some of the challenges this building has brought mentally, emotionally, and psychologically. "That's just how it is", is now unacceptable. It is time to move forward.

Thank you