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## Stapleton: Residents Begin the Name Change Discussion



*Dr. Diggs explains to community members at the Central Park Recreation Center, the problem with branding their neighborhood with the name of Benjamin Stapleton*

Photo: Allan Tellis

By Allan Tellis

**T**he Stapleton neighborhood located on the east side of the Denver has recently been forced to deal with the city's controversial name and the possible re-branding caused by honoring former Denver Mayor, Benjamin Franklin Stapleton. Many newer residents may be unaware of Denver's disconcerting past, but for those who are aware and for those who lived during and through the Stapleton era, the neighborhood's name is not only controversial but demeaning and inflammatory.

Benjamin Franklin Stapleton was a white supremacist, a Ku Klux Klan leader, and both the 33rd and 35th mayor of the Mile High City. Due to his high-ranking position in the city and his apparent affinity for the Klan, Stapleton was able to place

various other white supremacist leaders into positions of power and unfortunately, enacted policies and ingrained attitudes into public institutions that we still feel the effect of almost 70 years later. As an audience member and long-time Stapleton resident, Dr. Gregory Diggs put it, "It wasn't just that he's a member of the Ku Klux Klan, he appointed a lot of different [but like-minded] people to key positions such as the chief of police and that kind of thing."

Dr. Diggs is a fervent advocate in the campaign to have Stapleton's name changed or at the very least branded differently so enormous billboards littered throughout the city will not pay homage to the Benjamin Franklin Stapleton, who many see as a villainous figure in Denver's history. American history is not always pretty, and this push for the

city's name change comes at a time where nationally the American people have to come to terms our country's choice to immortalize and celebrate white supremacists in our history, whether that means erecting statues in their honor or naming an entire city after them. Dr. Diggs says, "The legacy of white supremacy is still here today. It shows up in our policing; it shows up in our schooling; it shows up in gentrification, where all of these lands are being developed for affluent white people at the expense of people of color". It is a real concern for both minority and white residents alike. Furthermore, many residents are simultaneously concerned about the image the name Stapleton conveys and connection to potential residents.

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## Teen Pregnancy Prevention Organization To Close

**A** Denver-based nonprofit accused on teen pregnancy prevention, and youth health will close its doors at the end of 2017 after losing two grants.

Andrea Miller, executive director of Colorado Youth Matter, announced the news in an email to supporters Monday afternoon.

The organization, begun in the 1980s as a volunteer-run group, provides teacher training and assistance in picking sex education curricula for 10 to 25 Colorado school districts a year.

Miller said she's hopeful other organizations will pick up the Colorado Youth Matter legacy — possibly RMC Health's responsible Sex Education of Planned Parenthood of Rocky Mountains or the Colorado Sexual Health Institute.

Colorado Youth Matter's financial hit came in July when federal officials announced the end of a major teen pregnancy prevention grant mid-way through the five-year grant cycle. The funding made up three-quarters of Colorado Youth Matter's \$1.5 million annual budget.

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# Continuations

## Sun

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At the most recent SUN (Stapleton United Neighbors) meeting, advocates for the name change filled the small room completely and eloquently stated their reasoning for needing the municipality to change its name. The committee responded skeptically reminding the audience of the complicated nature of changing the name as the process is rife with expensive and convoluted paperwork. Not only would the city need 67% of Stapleton residents to support the name change, but the City and County of Denver would also have to be heavily involved to make the process legally viable. To this idea, the crowd responded quite simply that they were not concerned about the paperwork process, but were more so worried about the name and historic connection being broadcasted and being promoted to potential residents. As one audience member suggested, "The point is, the name is making my neighbors feel uncomfortable for just living here, and that is unacceptable!" The SUN committee has decided to investigate the matter further. This will obviously be an ongoing discussion for residents of Denver, Aurora, and most importantly Stapleton area residents. Dr. Diggs speaks for many concerned residents, "Changing the names doesn't change all of the problems, but as a symbol, it's one of the easiest first things to do as a commitment to doing better for our diverse communities in the future."

## Teens

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"It feels like we're getting cut off at the knees," Miller said.

About the same time, the organization lost a family foundation grant that made up another 10 percent of its budget.

Miller, who took the helm of the organization just ten months ago, said one of her primary goals was to diversify funding, but there wasn't enough time.

Miller said with a variety of factors playing into the state's teen pregnancy rates, which have been at record lows in recent years, it's hard to say what the impact of the organization's dissolution will be.

She said Colorado Youth Matter had worked successfully with school districts with different political leanings to find the right policies and resources to address the sexual health of their students.

"We have been masters at meeting the school districts

where they are," she said.

*Originally posted on Chalkbeat by Ann Schimke on September 18, 2017*

## Jenkins

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-acy theories that have been offered and countless people who are attempting to play detective and solve the case as to what happened over there," said Gary Mack, a spokesman for the Village of Rosemont. "Our police officers are leaving no stone unturned as far as trying to put all the pieces together."

Recently, surveillance videos were released showing Jenkins staggering alone through the hotel kitchen at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. However, the videos do not show Jenkins walking inside the walk-in freezer.

At a news conference a few weeks ago, the Jenkins family attorneys Larry Rogers Jr. and Sam Adam Jr., announced that they will conduct their own investigation and possibly a second autopsy.

"[The hotel] never checked. They never searched, they never did anything while a young, 19-year-old disoriented girl was sitting in their freezer," Adam said. "Now there has to be an answer to how that happened. Better yet, there has to be an answer to why that happened."

During the news conference, Attorney Rogers insinuated Jenkins' life could have been saved or found quickly if the hotel staff listened to Jenkins' friends and mother when they came seeking help.

Jenkins' mother, Teresa Martin believes foul play was involved in her daughter's death.

"They think that she walked into a cooler, intoxicated, barely able to hold herself up," she said of the investigators, adding that walk-in freezer doors are heavy and difficult to open. "Please, please, please, I beg you, let me know something. Help me."

This past weekend, a memorial was held for the teen at Douglas Park in Chicago. The memorial was later turned into a protest march led by Martin and 100 community members who were dissatisfied with the hotel videos released.

Activists believe the video clips may have been doctored and threatened to protest 30 days outside the Crowne Plaza hotel, if they weren't given the full version of the tape.

"I'm not a professional, but the FBI, from what I heard, they are professionals," she said. "I'm just looking for help — that's all I've been asking for since day one."

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