

Please take time to watch this clip from Last Week Tonight with John Oliver. His points are directly relevant to removing the name of a Klansman.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5b\\_-TZwQ0I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5b_-TZwQ0I)

At the St\*pleton United Neighbors (SUN) meeting this week I heard Councilman Herndon speak for people who don't want to come to meetings for fear of being called a racist. Well, I am a racist, because I am human. I admit to my humanity and my flaws. I have spent 18 years learning about my culture, my white privilege. Let's face it, I am as white as they come. I spend every day questioning the social structure we live in, wanting better. If people are afraid to come to meetings because they might be called a racist, then I will stand beside them and say I am a racist too. How can we fix this? How can we flip our perspective? How can we open our minds to become more accepting and welcoming of others?

The SUN board continues to want to hear from “the people”.

Who are we wanting to hear from? These are comments copied from the Change the Name Stapleton online petition in 2015.

- 1) “Ha. Never will happen.”
- 2) “Unable to make it to the meeting. Stapleton was a reluctant kkk member. After he was elected mayor he was removed from office because he wouldn't bend to the will of the kkk. At a later date he was voted back in. The kkk was focused on the removal of Jews, Catholics, Latino's and blacks from influence in Colorado. Of these, the blacks were the smallest population. So far I haven't seen the other three groups raising a stink about the Stapleton name.”
- 3) “Don't people work anymore. How do they have so much time to spend on a ridiculous issue. Grow a spine. People are way too easily "offended." This is a real eye roller. Nice post \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you. In my opinion, ignorance is far more offensive than a name.”
- 4) “What is "moral authority?" Not to start a fight or anything, but no one has moral authority over anyone else. That sounds like a made up politically correct phrase if I ever heard one. Terms like moral authority is just the sort of thing that causes divisions among Americans. \_\_\_\_\_ made an educationally informative post. Personally, I had no idea who Benjamin Stapleton was until today. Stapleton is just a name. It was an airport. If we want to subject naming to moral relativism for everything we name under the purview of political correctness than we are going to have pretty droll names for everything. Again, when did we become a nation that can't be offended by anything. Its just creepy.”
- 5) “Cry baby whiners!”
- 6) “I just read what Wikipedia says about the group "Black Lives Matter ". It talks about burning police, an "aversion to church involvement ", and are "skeptical of nonviolence ". I haven't read the full details yet, but do we want a group like this pushing for a change of something that has nothing to do with them?”

These continue.....

Are these the voices we are waiting to hear from?

Are these the voices that overpower Brooke Owyang Lee's story of a neighbor recently blocked from his own house in our neighborhood and being told by a white neighbor, "You don't live here?" Or overpower the Lakota woman who drove across town to attend a SUN meeting to ask for inclusion? Or overpower the elderly Jewish man who remembers the KKK marching down his street during the Sabbath when he was a child? Or overpower Liz Hogan Stalnaker's childhood memory of hate symbols painted in her community against her family and nobody doing anything about it because she is a minority? Or overpower one of the original residents, Justin Ross's, own daughter's words after traveling to Chicago and saying, "This is not what my neighborhood looks like." Or overpower my own grandmother's fear at seeing a lit-up cross, because in the 1950's lit-up cross=KKK=Terror?

In 2015 there were over 100 voices raised to change the name, not 30! (<https://frontporchne.com/article/stapletons-name-changed/>). Every voice had a powerful memory behind it. Please, count those 100 voices as calls to your office to change the name.

Consistently, the SUN board has asked, "Where does it end? Do we change all the names of people associated with a dark history?" John Oliver's answer is, "Somewhere."

Can you imagine a doctor saying, "Well we can't cure cancer because...tuberculosis. WHERE WOULD IT END? If we cure one disease we have to cure them all!" Of course not, that's ludicrous. "Where does it end" is the wrong question.

The right question is "where do we begin?" If civilizations have taught us anything it is that multitudes working together can move mountains, send people to the moon, cure diseases.

So, where do we begin? Right here at home. The name is a blockade. It is not welcoming. It limits the ability of the community to highlight the wonderful things about the neighborhood, and to write meaningful statements about inclusion and diversity. The name is a dark shadow in stark contrast to the goals of the Green book, and the new SUN "community pledge." SUN cannot release well-intentioned statements disavowing hate symbols on letterhead with the name of a Klansman. At best it's hypocritical, at worst it's culturally naïve and offensive.

Monuments and neighborhood names glorify people. So far, I have heard arguments that changing the name is a waste of time and a PC move, and I have heard impassioned voices desperate to remove a symbol of hate. I have not heard anyone say that Ben Stapleton is a person who deserves glorification.

It is also important to point out that while voting is an important part of a democratic system there is a time a place for everything. Civil rights issues are never popular and will always fall behind in polls. Across culturally for thousands of years polls regarding equality, justice, and civil rights have been used to uphold the majority and suppress the minority, always accompanied by the phrase, "We were listening to the people." Again, I ask, "who are we waiting to hear from?" Is the desire of our community to uphold the white privileged status quo: we aren't offended so it doesn't matter?

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10105556626632583&set=gm.2173629659530647&type=3&theater&ifg=1>

I hope you will take time to read this letter and think about it with an open mind. An issue that draws the attention and time of a 16-year-old high school student and emboldens her to speak to a group of adults with a councilman present, is not an insignificant issue. Certainly, not an issue that deserves to be disregarded and waived off by the question “Where will it end?”

We begin here! In our community, one step at a time, one day at a time.

Please consider this a call to your office and a voice clearly stating “Change the name.”

Thank you

Jamie Hodgkins

