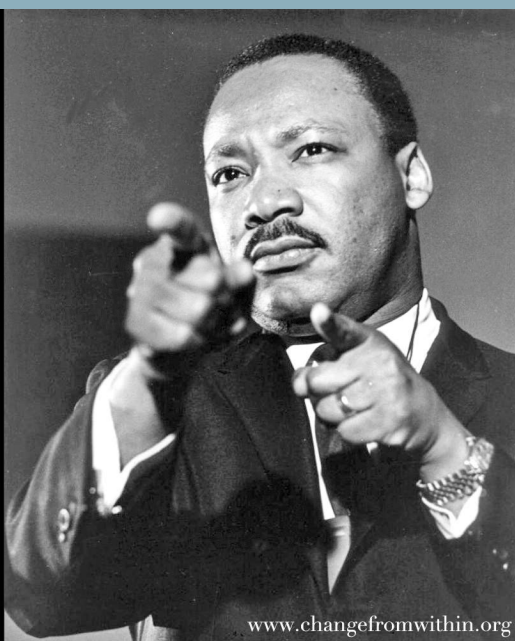


"I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action'; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a 'more convenient season.' Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection."



[www.changefromwithin.org](http://www.changefromwithin.org)

# An Open Letter

## Written in response to the Board of Directors of the Stapleton United Neighbors

Friends, Family and Colleagues

Across the nation, a broad array of community activists and allies have been working to dismantle monuments to racism, privilege and white supremacy. After the recent events in Charlottesville, where White Nationalist and White Supremacy groups marched with shields, weapons and racist slogans, a young woman who was present to resist such displays, lost her life while standing for social and racial justice.

Here in Colorado and Denver we have our own history of white supremacy. One of the lasting symbols of hate and supremacy is the honoring of former Mayor, Ben Stapleton who was a long-time member and supporter of the Ku Klux Klan. Denver named the Stapleton Airport after him, in honor of his many contributions to this area.

Today, Forest City continues to promote real estate development and gentrification in his name. We are asking that neighbors, friends and allies join with us to demand that the City of Denver, Forest City Developers and the Neighborhood Association "Stapleton United Neighbors" discontinue the use of the name of the white supremacist, Benjamin F. Stapleton. **As the nation works to dismantle their monuments to white supremacy, it is time for residents of Denver to dismantle ours.**

The concerns about our community ties to white supremacy are not new. Mr. Stapleton was not only a "member" of the Ku Klux Klan, but he served as a major supporter. One of his close friends served as the Grand Dragon of the KKK. Once Upon a Time, between the 1920s and 1950s, the Klan boasted of many members that controlled both houses of the Colorado State Legislator. Governor Clarence Morley was also a member. Indeed, we understand that the Klan enjoyed control of the Office of State, the Supreme Court of Colorado and seven judicial seats on the District Court of Denver. Mayor Ben Stapleton was a central figure in this domination of our Colorado institutions. He appointed many Klan members to prominent positions in our local government, including the Chief of Police.

It would serve us well to remember that the Stapleton Airport was not "just a name of an Airport" and that is not "just the name of a Community. No. The name serves as testament and monument to a long, storied history of racism, bigotry, discrimination and terror. Our current struggles with the same issues in our Colorado institutions, including extra-legal, brutal law enforcement, a school to prison pipeline, and gentrification in the areas of Swansea, Five Points and now, Aurora...are part of this horrific legacy.

**We hope good people will agree that now is a good time to move forward and away from these traditions. The continued Symbolic Violence that this celebrated association represents is an affront to social and racial justice.**

In an open letter to the community crafted by SUN in response to the tragedy in Charlottesville, the Board of Directors and the signatories said this, in part:

**"...we say clearly, that there is no place for these displays of hatred in our neighborhood, nor anywhere."**

Yet we know this statement from SUN to exist in variance with the plain and simple truth. The very use of the name Stapleton is a display of hatred. It is time for us to move forward.

**As one, first step, we call upon the Board of Directors of the Stapleton United Neighbors to immediately discontinue the use of the name of this white supremacist. We argue that the time is now and that the wait for “consensus” for a change of the name is not desired, nor sufficient as a response to white privilege and white supremacy.**

We have waited for a change since the promise of Forest City to phase out the use of the name Stapleton early in 2002 as the airport was being transformed into a community. We have waited since 2015, when there was a community call to “Change the Name” and the SUN promised to conduct a valid survey of community perspectives on making a change. We have waited as children of color and difference continue to be raised in the white, privileged “Pleasantville” of “Stapleton” under the burden of the continued, Symbolic and other violence of our “nice” and “friendly” neighbors.

How much longer should we wait? How much more “conversation” and “consensus” should we seek? If we waited only for the good will of nice people of comfort and privilege, many of us would still not have the rights of equal educational opportunities, the right to vote or human rights of liberty. We cannot afford for Forest City and the Stapleton United Neighbors to continue to set the timetable for social and racial justice.

**Let us not wait any longer. Today is a Good Day to make a change.**

**We, the undersigned ask for the following supports:**

1. Please begin to contact the members of the SUN Board and urge them to move immediately to remove their formal association with the Stapleton name. [stapletonunitedneighbors@gmail.com](mailto:stapletonunitedneighbors@gmail.com)
2. Please plan to attend the SUN Neighborhood Fair on September 16<sup>th</sup> from 8:30-10:30 AM at The Cube: 8371 Northfield Blvd, Denver, CO 80238. Express your concerns and demand an immediate change. Instruct them to place the topic of changing the name on the Agenda for the next Board Meeting and call for a “consensus” vote.
3. Please plan to attend the next meeting of the Board of Directors of SUN on September 19<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-8:45, Central Park Recreation Center Multipurpose Room. We would like for residents of Stapleton and Northfield to be present and have their voices heard. We would like for other citizens and organizations who are advocates for social and racial justice to add their voices to those of our residents.
4. Please begin to contact your state and local elected officials to make public declarations in support of discontinuing our formal association with this hateful history and legacy.

Changing the Name is one, small step, one symbolic step towards moving forward from our historic and present associations with racism, bigotry, hate and terror. We look forward to working with you.

Follow the #ChangeTheNameStapleton movement and join us at: <https://www.facebook.com/changethenamestapleton/>