

**Report of the George Washington University
Special Committee on the Colonials Moniker**

Submitted to President Thomas LeBlanc

March 31, 2021

Introduction and Formation of the Special Committee on the Colonials Moniker

In recent years, institutions across the nation have grappled with how to acknowledge and confront difficult aspects of their history, especially legacies of racial injustice and discrimination. In particular, colleges and universities have increasingly convened committees tasked with developing paradigms to guide examinations of renaming buildings, monuments, and other entities.

Acknowledging that GW has its own history to examine, the university's Board of Trustees created the Task Force on Naming in November 2019 to develop a framework to advance discussions that examine GW's history and requests for renaming.

The Task Force comprised a diverse group of 17 GW community members, including trustees, students, faculty, staff, and alumni, and was led by trustee and alumnus Mark Chichester. The Task Force engaged in extensive research and community outreach.

In June 2020, the Board of Trustees approved the framework recommended by the Naming Task Force which was accompanied by detailed guidance. (See Appendix A for the framework and guidance from the Naming Task Force.) The framework enabled the university to move forward to address the proposed renaming of on-campus buildings and memorials, and the "Colonials" moniker. The Naming Task Force noted that the moniker "stood apart as an issue of great concern" and recommended that the process for addressing it begin immediately.

The Office of the President received a petition, titled "Reconsider the Names" in July 2020, presented by the Black Student Union, Black Defiance, Students for Indigenous and Native Rights, Persist GW, and Students Against Imperialism. The petition stated that the "Colonial Moniker inappropriately and inaccurately represents the student body" and that the moniker "severely impacts school spirit and the experience of the student body." The petition had more than 2,800 signatories, including students, faculty, staff, and alumni. (See Appendix B for the petition text.)

The issue of the moniker had been a matter of concern prior to the petition. Indeed, the petition was preceded by a vote of the student body in spring 2019 in favor of removing "Colonials" as the university's moniker, while the Anything But Colonials Coalition, comprising GW community members, was formed to advocate for changing the moniker, asserting that the Colonials moniker does not reflect the university's institutional values.

In August 2020, President Thomas LeBlanc convened the Special Committee on the Colonials Moniker, chaired by Mary Cheh, the Elyce Zenoff Research Professor of Law. The committee comprises a broadly representative group of university community members and includes faculty, students, staff, and alumni, as well as three advisers. Committee members were selected with the recommendations of the Faculty Senate, GW Student Association, GW Alumni Association, and academic leadership of the university.

The committee members are:

- Mary Cheh, Elyce Zenoff Research Professor of Law, GW Law (Chair)
- Jamison Battle, GWSB '23, Men's Basketball
- Nemata Blyden, Professor of History, CCAS

- Georgie Britcher, ESIA '22
- Annemargaret Connolly, GW Law '88
- Curtis Davis-Olegario ESIA '13, GWSB '19 Associate Director, Direct Response Annual Giving, Development and Alumni Relations
- Brandon Hill, CCAS '22, Student Association President
- Sarah-Jo Lawrence, CCAS '08
- Darren Menaker, ESIA '00
- Lara Negron, ESIA '21, Women's Rowing
- Eugene Pair, CCAS '92
- Gregg Ritchie, GWSB '87, Head Coach, Baseball
- Elizabeth Rule, Assistant Professor of Professional Studies, CPS; Director, AT&T Center for Indigenous Politics and Policy
- David Silverman, Professor of History, CCAS

Advisers

- Denver Brunsman, Associate Professor of History, CCAS
- Patricia Carocci, Associate Vice President of Development, Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, Development and Alumni Relations
- Brigitte Kamsler, University Archivist, Libraries and Academic Innovation

Charge to the Special Committee on the Colonials Moniker

President LeBlanc charged the Special Committee on the Colonials Moniker with researching and evaluating whether there is a compelling case to rename the “Colonials” moniker. As part of its work, the committee was assigned, in particular, to discuss six considerations:

1. The use of the term “Colonials” in historical context.
2. The history and process behind the initial selection of the moniker.
3. The connection of the moniker to the university and/or its namesake.
4. The depth and breadth of offense or harm caused by use of the moniker.
5. The affinity for and prominence of the moniker as found on or associated with structures, events, athletic uniforms, traditions, and the like.
6. The legal and financial implications of changing the moniker.

President LeBlanc also specified that during the committee’s review process, it should provide opportunities for members of the GW community to share feedback, and it should adhere to the protocols set forth in the Naming Task Force framework. The special committee was specifically not charged with exploring or determining alternative names should a name change be recommended.

The Work of the Special Committee

The special committee held regular meetings from August 2020 to March 2021, conducted research on the meaning of the term “Colonial” both in its historical and current context, and invited experts and guests in order to gather views and information from key stakeholders on the moniker and the potential impact of a change. Specifically, the committee wanted to ensure it heard directly from university leaders who represented admissions, athletics, alumni, student

affairs, diversity and inclusion, and international programs, as well as senior staff who could speak to the financial and legal implications of a change. (For a full list of guests who shared information with the special committee, see Appendix C.)

The special committee also held a series of virtual town halls and conducted an online survey to gather views from the greater GW community. About 200 community members registered for the three town halls, including alumni, faculty, staff, students, parents, and others. (See Appendix D for summaries of the town halls.) More than 7,300 alumni, students, faculty, and staff responded to the survey. (See Appendix E for the GW community survey results.) In addition, committee member and alumnus Eugene L. Pair conducted a survey of Black family and friends who had a connection to GW. (See Appendix F for those survey results.) Committee members Professor Elizabeth Rule and Georgie Britcher spoke to the committee about indigenous experience with the term “colonial”. Professors Silverman and Brunsmann wrote a report on the term ‘Colonial’ in its historical context, and Professor Blyden wrote a report on the term in its global context. The special committee also reviewed and shared historical information and solicited comments through a dedicated website, which has received more than 2,100 visits and more than 400 comments. (See Appendix G for comments submitted via the website.)

Committee Analysis of Framework Topics

Some Context: The Purpose of a Moniker and Monikers Come and Go

Monikers are most closely associated with school sports teams. Indeed, they came into use beginning in the 19th century sometime after the first college football game between Princeton and Rutgers in 1869. Today, most colleges and universities have a moniker both for their athletic teams and to serve as a brand or trademark for the school more generally. Monikers are meant to unite a school community, and to foster pride and enthusiasm in a school’s accomplishments, particularly in its athletic successes. Monikers give students, alumni, and staff a nickname to rally around, to boost school spirit and connection, and to provide a shared identity and shared values.

Monikers arise in different ways. Some arise from a thoughtful process or university-wide voting. Others come into being casually and almost haphazardly. Some official monikers exist alongside unofficial nicknames. The most common monikers are animals (Eagles, Tigers, Panthers, Bulldogs, etc.) usually to celebrate grit, courage, competitiveness, and steadfastness. Common too were/are nicknames associated with indigenous peoples or tribes. Monikers may also be linked with a school’s location, its founder, or a particular war, whether the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, or the Civil War. Monikers may even be whimsical or silly (Fighting Artichokes, Banana Slugs).

Over time many schools have changed their monikers, some multiple times. For example, the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets were once known as Yellowjackets, Techs, Engineers, Blacksmiths, and Golden Tornado. A brief internet search reveals a very long list of schools that have changed their nicknames. Some names were offensive to racial groups or indigenous peoples or tribes, other names changed when the school’s name changed or there was a merger, some names were deemed dated or out of fashion, and so on. Apparently, nicknames may come and go over time.

Use of the Term Colonial in Historical Context

According to the “Report on the History of Colonialism in the United States” written by Professors of History Denver Brunsman and David Silverman at the request of the special committee, “colonials” was not a term used during the Colonial Era, traditionally defined as 1607 to 1776. Instead, the term “colonial” became popular during the Colonial Revival period of the late 19th and early 20th century. In fact, they write, no one in the Colonial Era called colonists “colonials”; they were instead known as “colonists” or “provincials.” (See Appendix H for the full report.)

History and Process Behind the Initial Selection of the Moniker

“Colonials” became GW’s moniker in 1926. In the early 20th century, the football team went variously by the “Hatchetites,” “Hatchetmen,” “Axemen” or, after the 1924 arrival of Coach Henry Crum, the “Crummen.”

According to Elmer Kayer’s history of the university, “Bricks Without Straw,” in 1926 then-President William Lewis wanted a new name. The other nicknames were “particularly obnoxious to President Lewis because of their lack of any euphony,” and Lewis asked Kayser, who was then the university secretary (one of many roles he held at the university during his 71-year tenure), to “find a better name and try to get it accepted.” Kayser wrote that he came up with “the Colonials” and suggested it to students. In her research of university archives, Archivist Brigette Kamsler found no documentary evidence for this history.

A Hatchet editorial from 1926 advocated the adoption of the “Colonials” moniker. It mentions “dissatisfaction” with the nicknames then associated with GW’s athletic teams, writing they “hardly carried the dignity” of a school named after George Washington. According to Archivist Kamsler, the editorial is most likely what led to the adoption of the moniker. (For more information about historical materials, see Appendix I.)

Connection of the Moniker to the University’s Namesake

According to the research by Professors Brunsman and Silverman, although George Washington was certainly a colonist, this was the last thing for which he wanted to be remembered. Washington firmly rejected the term “colonial” in the few times he used it. For him, “colonial” marked a provincial state of mind that he sought to discard in favor of a broader, more enlightened national and American perspective. While recent generations of GW students might have used “colonial” interchangeably with “revolutionary,” the terms did not have the same meaning for Washington.

The committee also learned that many school monikers have little or no connection to the school at which they are used.

Depth and Breadth of Harm Caused by the Moniker

Forty-four percent of the 2020 survey respondents said they were in favor of removing the “Colonials” moniker, while 43 percent were in favor of keeping it. And just 25 percent of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, “I feel included by the use of the Colonials moniker.”

As previously stated, more than 2,800 students, faculty, staff, and alumni signed a petition advocating for changing the Colonials moniker. In addition, in 2019, about 54 percent of the

student body voted in favor of a Student Association referendum to change the university's moniker to something "less offensive."

Many community members in favor of changing the moniker said they viewed the name "Colonials" as a symbol of imperialism and an unwelcome association with the people who oppressed Native Americans and owned slaves.

"Colonial means the person who does colonizing. In the context of the Americas, it means white Europeans who pillaged, raped, and stole the land of indigenous peoples, then started importing African people to enslave them in inhumane conditions," wrote one survey respondent.

At one of the town halls, a student who spoke on behalf of the Black Student Union said students of Color do not want to wear anything with the moniker on it. At least one athletics team, women's volleyball, has declined to wear uniforms with the moniker "Colonials".

Special committee guests representing student affairs and diversity and inclusion told committee members that students have repeatedly expressed discomfort with the "Colonials" moniker. The special committee also heard in a report by Professor Nemata Blyden that internationally the term "colonials" is often perceived differently—and more negatively—than it is in the United States. (For Professor Blyden's report, see Appendix J.)

"As an international student from a country that was colonized and is still facing challenges created by colonialization, it is utterly unsettling to be associated with this term, whatever its original intended purpose may be," a survey respondent wrote. Students who have studied abroad have also reported they received negative reactions to wearing clothing with the moniker on it.

Others in support of changing the moniker pointed out that it was adopted at a time when GW was all white and said it does not reflect the current diversity on campus. In the words of one survey respondent, "I don't think the moniker "Colonials" represents the truly inclusive environment GW strives to deliver."

Professor Rule and Georgie Britcher also spoke to the committee about indigenous perspectives of the term "colonial" and colonialism's lasting harm for Native American communities as evidenced in high rates of domestic violence, suicide, and incarceration. (See Appendix K for a summary of these comments.)

Affinity for and Prominence of the Moniker

Forty-three percent of survey respondents said they were in favor of keeping the "Colonials" moniker. In the town halls, on the survey, and in other comments, community members, especially alumni, said they associated the moniker with revolutionary spirit and fighting tyranny. They also expressed concern that if the university changed the moniker, it would be doing so to be politically correct and erasing history.

"There is nothing 'insensitive' about the "Colonials" moniker. On the contrary, it is something to be proud of since the colonists fought oppression to set us on the path to becoming the great

nation we are today,” wrote one survey respondent. Another wrote, “Please don’t revise history to appease anyone.”

Nevertheless, a far smaller percent of survey respondents—12 percent—said the moniker is or was essential to their GW experience. Four percent of survey respondents said the moniker affected their decision to attend GW.

In terms of prominence of the moniker, some physical spaces on campus currently have the name Colonial, including the Colonial Health Center, and Colonial Crossroads. Other physical spaces, such as the Colonials Club, and events, such as Colonials Weekend, Colonials Inauguration, and Conversation with a Colonial, have already been renamed.

Legal and Financial Implications

The special committee heard from Jared Abramson, vice president for financial planning and operations, who speculated on the cost to change the moniker. The committee was not charged to evaluate this figure.

The major cost would involve the physical implementation of the new moniker. This includes changing inventory, as well as removal and replacement of the former moniker. An inventory of where “Colonials” turns up would have to be done and would encompass everything from signage, print materials, flooring, athletics fields, scoreboards, uniforms, athletic apparel, merchandise, digital assets, and more.

Legal changes would consist primarily of assessment and trademark protection. The legal assessment could be done partially by the Office of General Counsel and partially by outside counsel. The costs for trademark research would be relatively de minimus.

A future cost, not technically before the committee, would be the engagement of consultants, particularly around creative development and execution of a new brand, as well as an awareness campaign.

Vice President Abramson did acknowledge that at least some of the estimated cost might be offset by sales of new merchandise and perhaps other benefits. In town halls, some alumni, including those who are substantial donors to the university, said they would no longer donate to the university if the moniker changed. It might also be that donations would suffer if the moniker stayed the same. The committee discussed the potential implications for giving but concluded it is in no position to assess these indirect financial effects and leaves the deliberations matter to the president and the Board of Trustees.

Findings and Conclusions of the Committee

The committee made the following findings and reached the following conclusions:

- The moniker “Colonials” arose, not as an official endorsement or after thoughtful university-wide consideration but casually and haphazardly.
- The moniker exists alongside other nicknames like “GDub.”
- The popularity of the moniker has varied over time. Perhaps, the height of its popularity was the early 20th century and then again in the decades of the '80s and '90s. More

recently, its use and popularity have declined and even been specifically avoided (e.g., the women's volleyball team).

- The university community is sharply divided over whether to continue using the moniker or whether to retire it, with an almost 50/50 overall split among all constituencies, with alumni somewhat more in favor of retention, and students somewhat more against retention.
- The essential divide relates primarily to different meanings being ascribed to the term "Colonials." For supporters, the term refers to those who lived in the colonies, especially those who fought for independence against England and, with bravery, courage, and against all odds, secured democracy for the United States. It embodies the spirit of George Washington. For opponents, "Colonials" means colonizers (both here and abroad) and refers to those who stole land from indigenous groups, plundered their resources, murdered and exiled Native peoples, and introduced slavery into the colonies. These are perspectives that cannot be easily harmonized. And it is the broader, historically based understanding of the opponents and the meaning they attach to the term "Colonials" that causes significant offense and harm if its use continues.
- Given this offense and harm and given that those who would retire the moniker comprise a little over half of the university community, the moniker can no longer serve its purpose as a name that unifies.

Therefore

The committee recommends that the moniker "Colonials" be retired. Specifically, a motion was made and properly seconded that, "The committee recommends that, for compelling reasons of university unity and the promotion of university values, the moniker 'Colonials' should be retired." The motion passed on a vote of 13-1.

Respectfully submitted, the Special Committee on the "Colonials Moniker"
Professor Mary Cheh, Chair

Appendices

Appendix A: Naming Task Force Renaming Framework

Guiding Principles

These Guiding Principles will inform the university's philosophical approach and the application of the considerations prescribed by the Board of Trustees when considering the renaming of buildings, memorials, and the like.

- In applying the Renaming Framework, those charged with the responsibility for overseeing/executing the process *shall*:
 - 1) Embrace the role of the university as a training ground for citizens and future leaders and be true to the university mission: In summary, to educate, conduct scholarly research, and publish.
 - 2) Approach each petition for renaming with the understanding that the interested constituency is the entire GW community, inclusive of those with whom many, or some, may sharply disagree.
 - 3) Establish credibility through meaningful outreach to, and engagement with, the GW community.
 - 4) Model the behaviors of listening and compromise, which are essential to a vibrant campus community and healthy democracy.
 - 5) Handle each individual petition with intellectual rigor and compassion for the individuals who will be impacted – on either side of the matter – by the university's decisions on renaming requests.
 - 6) View history in context and with a longitudinal, future-oriented perspective that will serve the community beyond the particular moment.

Procedures

The Board of Trustees, based on the work of the university's [Task Force on Naming](#), adopted the procedures below as part of the Renaming Framework to guide the prospective renaming of buildings, memorials, and the like at GW. Should any member of the GW community have questions regarding these procedures, or wish to submit a request for a naming reconsideration, please contact the Office of the President via email at president@gwu.edu.

Review of Name Change Requests

It is the sense of the Board of Trustees that reconsideration of the name of a building or memorial of any sort should be a rare undertaking, pursued only in extraordinary circumstances. When such circumstances do arise, requests for reconsideration should be directed to the Office of the President. Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis. However, duplicative requests may be joined and reviewed together. While the Guiding Principles will apply to all requests for reconsideration, the unique circumstances of each case will inform the timing and, ultimately, the decision that is rendered. The Board of Trustees retains the final authority over all matters related to naming, whether arising under the Renaming Framework or the Gift Naming Policy.

Required Steps

1. GW students, faculty, staff, and alumni may submit a request for reconsideration of the naming of any campus building or memorial.
2. Such requests are to be submitted to the Office of the President (president@gwu.edu), and include:
 - a. the specific building or memorial in question;
 - b. the general basis for the request for reconsideration;
 - c. a statement, including relevant background information and application of the guiding principles to the specific details of the case for the requested change; and
 - d. a supporting petition duly signed by no fewer than 500 students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni, which may be waived at the President's discretion.
3. Upon receipt of a complete request, the President will:
 - a. formally acknowledge the request;
 - b. add the request to a registry that is available online to GW students, faculty, staff, and alumni;
 - c. review the request for factual sufficiency and application of the guiding principles; and
 - d. request additional information, where necessary.
4. If the request is found to be reasonably compelling when the guiding principles are applied to the particular facts, the President will:
 - a. consult with the appropriate constituencies, such as the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, leadership of the Student Association, and the Executive Committee of the GW Alumni Association, on the merits of the request for reconsideration;
 - b. appoint a special committee to research and evaluate the merits of the request for reconsideration; and

- c. where such special committee finds that there is a compelling case for renaming, consult with the Chair of the Board of Trustees, in whose discretion it shall be whether and when to submit the request for decision by the Board of Trustees.
5. If the case for renaming is brought forward by the President, the process of consultation, research, and evaluation remains the same.
6. The Board of Trustees may then accept, deny, or modify the recommendation as part of the final action of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees retains the discretion to decide what level of consideration is required prior to a renaming decision.

Renaming Considerations

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of each case based on the following considerations.

Consideration #1: The prevalence and persistence of the namesake's repugnant behavior.

Guidance: The case for renaming is most compelling when the behaviors in question were exhibited on a sustained basis as part of the namesake's public life. The case for renaming is less compelling where the behavior in question is known but amounts to an isolated incident, or does not represent a core element of the individual's public profile. The case is likewise weaker if deep and consistent contrition was expressed by the namesake and accepted by the affected parties, there were sincere attempts to rectify the prior behavior, or if the historical record establishes that the behavior was considered consistent with the conventions of the time. The case for renaming may also be weakened where, despite the behavior in question, other aspects of the namesake's life and work are especially laudable.

Consideration #2: The harm caused by the namesake's behavior.

Guidance: The case for renaming is most compelling when the behavior in question is directly contrary to the mission and values of the university and the overarching role of higher education institutions to promote knowledge and education among the citizenry. As such, the case for renaming is further strengthened where a name undermines the ability of a significant number of students, faculty, or staff of a particular gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin or other characteristic protected by federal law or university policy, to engage in, or feel a sense of belonging to, the university community.

Consideration #3: Strength and clarity of the historical evidence.

Guidance: The case for renaming is most compelling where the historical record of the subject's questioned behavior is substantial and unambiguous; and is least compelling where the record is limited or debatable. Any decision should be based on research that uses all publicly-available sources to ascertain the historical context and naming decision holistically.

Consideration #4: The namesake's relationship to the university.*

Guidance: The case for renaming is subject to greater scrutiny when the namesake has had an objectively significant and noteworthy role in the history of the university. It follows, then, that the argument for a name change becomes especially compelling when the namesake does not have a significant connection to the university. In addition, consideration should be given to legal or other commitments the university has made to any donors (and their heirs) in connection with the name in question and the legal and financial implications thereof.

* When considering the namesake's relationship to the university, any members of the special committee or Board of Trustees with a conflict of interest must recuse themselves from deliberations.

Consideration #5: The university's earlier consideration of the appropriateness of the name.

Guidance: The case for renaming is considerably more compelling where the conduct in question became widely known after the initial naming decision, or where the university has not previously examined the issue with reasonable rigor, as determined by members of the special committee. The case for renaming is less compelling, and names more appropriately left to stand, where the university was aware of the namesake's behavior and, based on reasonable diligence and research, nonetheless decided to confer the honor; or where the university has previously examined and rejected another request to change the name. While decisions following previous reconsideration of a name should be shown some deference, such decisions should receive less deferential treatment where decision-makers ignored, or were not aware of, history of the behavior in question.

Consideration #6: Opportunity for education.

Guidance: In considering a name change, appropriate weight should be given to the potential educational value to the GW community of contextualizing and confronting the namesake's legacy. Where there are strong arguments for and against a name change, the university will be best served by exploring appropriate opportunities to address the history in a deliberate and visible manner, it being all the more important to do so where a name change is made.

Naming Task Force Appendix

Throughout the Naming Task Force’s research, community engagement, and deliberations, the GW “Colonials” moniker stood apart as an issue of great concern. However, it became apparent that a framework intended to address namesakes for buildings, memorials, and such is not appropriately applied to an examination of the moniker. It is the task force’s sense that renaming should be rare, and, while in no way sacrosanct, moniker reconsideration, given that there is only one moniker at any given time, should arguably be even rarer – potentially a matter of one-time concern. Accordingly, the Naming Task Force includes as an appendix the procedures and considerations below, to guide the university in taking up the matter, posthaste.

Procedure

In response to the Student Association resolution (Resolution) and views expressed by other members of the GW community, the President will:

- formally acknowledge the 2018 GW Voice Petition, 2019 Student Referendum, Student Association Resolution SR-19-11 “The Colonials Referendum Act” and Student Association Bill SB-F19-08 “Colonial Moniker Task Force Executive Order Codification Act”;
- request additional information, as appropriate;
- take immediate steps to appoint a special committee, made up of a *diverse* and *representative* cross-section of the GW community (i.e., students, faculty, alumni, and staff) to research and evaluate the merits of the request based on the considerations adopted by the Board of Trustees for this specific purpose; and
- where such special committee establishes that there is a compelling case for changing the moniker and recommends such action, notify and consult with the Board of Trustees, which will accept, deny, or modify the recommendation as part of the final action of the Board of Trustees

Considerations

Assess the strengths and weaknesses based on the following considerations.

Consideration #1: The use of the term “Colonials” in historical context.

Consideration #2: The history and process behind the initial selection of the moniker.

Consideration #3: The connection of the moniker to the university and/or its namesake.

Consideration #4: The depth and breadth of offense or harm caused by use of the moniker.

Consideration #5: The affinity for and prominence of the moniker as found on or associated with structures, events, athletic uniforms, traditions and the like.

Consideration #6: The legal and financial implications of changing the moniker.

Appendix B: Reconsider the Names – Petition

Presented to the Office of the President by the Black Student Union, Black Defiance, Students for Indigenous and Native Rights (SINAR), Persist GW and Students Against Imperialism

We, the students of the George Washington University, demand the renaming of our moniker, the Colonials. There are a multitude of reasonings for why the Colonial Moniker inappropriately and inaccurately represents the student's body. The school moniker severely impacts school spirit, and the experience of the student body at GW for the following reasons.

Firstly, George Washington was not a Colonial. The term colonial was an insult utilized by mainland residents to belittle remote colony residents as a demoted social class. As commander of the Continental Army and a leader of the revolution to literally no longer be a colony, George Washington was if anything an anti-colonial. These facts have been verified by a leading scholar on campus of George Washington's life and legacy, Professor Denver Brunsmann.

Colonials were active purveyors of colonialism and were complicit in militarized and racialized violence, oppression, and hierarchy. Colonialism has been historically and contemporaneously built upon usurping land, labor, and autonomy from racialized communities through dehumanizing violence and suppression. The only occupants of a colony or colonized territory that were identified as Colonials were those with autonomy and power. This excludes enslaved and indigenous communities. The glorified and romanticized image of a white male Colonial normalizes white supremacist patriarchy.

School spirit should foster inclusive community identity, not divisive hierarchy. The purpose of a university's moniker and team name is to unite all campus community members under one identity that symbolizes a collective celebration of school pride. Having a moniker that is both historically inaccurate to associate with the first President of the United States' legacy and exclusive to many diverse groups on campus is counterproductive and continues to prevent BIPOC from feeling comfortable calling GW home.

Appendix C: Special Committee on Colonials Moniker Guests

The following spoke with the special committee about the impact of the moniker on their area of expertise:

Jared Abramson, Vice President for Financial Planning and Operations

Nemata Blyden, Professor of History

Georgie Britcher, ESIA '22

Denver Brunsman, Associate Professor of History

Jennifer Donaghue, Director, Office of Study Abroad

Jay Goff, Vice Provost for Enrollment and Student Success

Caroline Laguerre-Brown, Vice Provost for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement

Brigette Kamsler, University Archivist, Libraries and Academic Innovation

Cissy Petty, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

Eugene Pair, CCAS '92

Charles Pollak, Associate General Counsel

Elizabeth Rule, Assistant Professor of Professional Studies, College of Professional Studies, Director, AT&T Center for Indigenous Politics and Policy

Donna Scarboro, Associate Provost for International Programs

David Silverman, Professor of History

Ben Toll, Director of Admissions

Tanya Vogel, Athletics Director

Appendix D: Summary of the Colonials Moniker Town Halls

For a summary of the Oct. 29, town hall, click [here](#).

For a summary of the Nov. 2 town hall, click [here](#).

For a summary of the Nov. 11 town hall, click [here](#).

Appendix E: Results of 2020 GW Community Survey on the Colonials Moniker

To read the full results of the 2020 survey of the GW community on the Colonials moniker, click [here](#). To read an executive summary of the results, click [here](#).

To view the full results by affiliation, click [here](#), or for an executive summary by affiliation, click [here](#).

Appendix F: Results of Survey Conducted by Alumnus and Special Committee on the Colonials Moniker Eugene Pair

To read the results of the 2020 survey conducted by Eugene Pair, click [here](#).

Appendix G: Comments Received through Website of Special Committee on the Colonials Moniker

To read the website comments received by the special committee, click [here](#).

Appendix H: Report on the History of Colonialism in the United States

By Professors David Silverman and Denver Brunzman

September 2020

Throughout most of the existence of the United States, white Americans have considered the purpose of a history education to make people proud of the country, rather than to provide a critical understanding of the past. The colonial era as it is traditionally defined (1607-1776) has long played a central role in this patriotic agenda and never more so than during the so-called Colonial Revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Colonial Revival involved white Americans looking to the colonial past for enlightenment and inspiration during a time when many Americans feared that the country was becoming decadent and immoral under the combined weight of industrialization, immigration, urbanization, political corruption, and racial strife. The colonial themes favored by white Americans included religious liberty, representative government, public and higher education, economic opportunity, and the transformative effect of “the frontier,” in which Europeans absorbed the forest skills of indigenous people to transform themselves into Americans. Indeed, if there was an interpretive thrust to the Colonial Revival, it was that the colonial process created a distinct American character of individual liberty, endless striving, and enlightenment.

It was during the Colonial Revival that George Washington University adopted the “Colonials” moniker. It was a curious choice of name. No one in the colonial era called colonists “colonials,” but instead “colonists” or “provincials.” Furthermore, GW’s namesake is best known to history for leading a rebellion to end the mainland North American provinces’ colonial relationship to Great Britain. Although George Washington was certainly a colonist, this was the last thing for which he wanted to be remembered. As Professor Brunzman has explained in his editorial for the Hatchet, Washington firmly rejected the term “colonial” in the few times he used it. For him, “colonial” marked a provincial state of mind that he sought to discard in favor of a broader, more enlightened national and American perspective. While recent generations of GW students might have used “Colonial” interchangeably with “revolutionary,” the terms did not have the same meaning for Washington and they carry very different meaning today.

There were always critics of the celebratory emphasis of the Colonial Revival, even among the white population, but in academia the edifice truly came crashing down beginning in the 1960s. The combined effect of the Civil Rights movement, Red Power Movement, Women’s Liberation, peace protests in response to the Vietnam War, and a host of other calls for social justice led historians to pose new questions to the past. So too did the slow but certain opening of academia to white women and scholars of color. Attention shifted from white colonial elites to include everyone else. At first, it seemed radical to expand the historical vantage to include middling and lower-class whites, including indentured servants, peasants, artisans, sailors, soldiers, farm wives, and mothers. Yet the real paradigm shift occurred as historians began to bring people of color into the picture.

Examining the role of slavery in colonial and early United States society, and the social and cultural lives of the enslaved, posed fundamental challenges to the uplifting themes of the

Colonial Revival. It forced acknowledgment that slave owners constituted some of the most prominent leaders of the Revolution and authors of the egalitarian principles enshrined in the country's founding documents. How, then, to understand this seeming oxymoron? That very question now rests at the center of American historical study. As historians have tallied the number of west Africans captured and sold into slavery across the Atlantic, they have come to realize that Africans in chains—12.5 million in all—constituted most of the people who crossed the Atlantic to the Americas as a whole before the year 1800 and 80 percent of all females. Even in just the thirteen colonies that became the United States, where enslaved Africans made up a quarter of the population in 1776, they were a majority of new arrivals between 1700 and 1750. The utter brutality of slavery, which previous generations of white historians studiously avoided, burst to the fore alongside these discoveries, as did the heroic efforts of the enslaved to constitute family, community, culture, and even some semblance of individual dignity amid systematic debasement. Slave resistance, which earlier white historians utterly refused to acknowledge, suddenly appeared everywhere in colonial America.

The North/South divide, which colonial historians had read backward in time from the Civil War, began to blur as historians grappled with two basic facts: first, that slavery existed and was upheld by law in every single colony (albeit with varying levels of importance); and, second, that even northern colonies with relatively low levels of slavery had economies that were utterly dependent on the traffic of slaves and the sale agricultural and wood products to plantation colonies. In turn, historians began to explore race not as a self-evident, natural truth but a human creation, a thinking decision. It involved white people using the law, violence, religion, science, cultural symbols, and custom to degrade Africans and their descendants in order to exploit them, and Africans and their descendants fighting back on multiple fronts. Such findings and more turned white colonists' enslavement of Africans, and the experiences of enslaved peoples, from an eccentric and barely acknowledged exception to the story of American liberty, into a foundational aspect of American society.

Coming to terms with the Native American role in the colonial past has been every bit as transformative. Take a look at the index of any set of official colony records and you'll find that no entry is longer than that for "Indians." No wonder. Indigenous people were most of the people in North America until at least the late eighteenth century and they controlled most of the continent until the mid-nineteenth century. They were of the utmost importance to the colonies economically, politically, and militarily. Warring with indigenous people and trying to convert them to Christianity and other European ways of living was nearly as central to American race making, including the formation of white identity among colonists, as African slavery was, never mind indigenous people adopting the identity of Indian in response to the shared colonial threat.

Confronting these fundamentals, like the centrality of African slavery in the colonies, makes it difficult to sustain an inspirational colonial past. First, there is the matter of sheer destruction of Native American life. Decades of research have shown authoritatively that the most significant feature of the colonial era was the introduction of European, African, and Asian epidemic diseases like smallpox, yellow fever, and the plague to the Native

American population. The loss of life from these diseases numbered in tens of millions and, in some cases, wiped out entire tribal nations. We are also beginning to realize that the toll from these diseases was directly related to other destructive colonial forces. Total war between indigenous people and colonists (and later the United States) was chronic as the colonies encroached on tribal lands and jurisdictions. So too were intertribal wars that were increasingly fought with colonial weaponry (including firearms, steel hatchets, and metal-tipped arrows) for reasons directly related to colonial expansion. Those reasons included control of hunting territory for fur-bearing animals, control of access to colonial markets, serving as proxies in colonial-Indian wars, and, not least of all, obtaining captives for sale into colonial slavery. In fact, the last thirty years has taught critical lessons about the ubiquity of indigenous slavery in the colonies and in Indian country.

Throughout the seventeenth century, one was as likely to encounter Native American slaves as African ones in the mainland colonies. In South Carolina, colonial-sponsored intertribal raiding for these slaves contributed to the near depopulation of the entire Florida peninsula and spread havoc west of Mississippi River. By one historian's estimate, the number of indigenous people enslaved by colonists in the western hemisphere numbered five million, or about forty percent the volume of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. By comparison, the total population of the United States on eve of independence was about two million. Taking Native American history seriously fundamentally redefines the terms we use to understand what is colonial in America. The destruction and degradation of indigenous life involved more than losses of life to disease and war. It included processes that continued and quickened after the United States gained its independence from Great Britain. Those colonial processes included white people forcing Native Americans from lands that sustained them economically and culturally. It involved white polities subjugating tribal nations so that they could not provide for and protect their peoples, including massacring them whenever they resisted. It involved taking children from Native families and forcibly re-aculturating them in abusive boarding schools, including trying to make them ashamed of who they were. It involved forcing Native people onto reservations where resources were scarce and even then poisoning those lands through mineral extraction and waste dumping overseen by federal agents. And it involved a national agenda of public history education that utterly ignored these chapters in favor of the notion of Manifest Destiny, that God wanted the United States to become a beacon to the world and that any losses along the way were a necessary sacrifice. These processes were so destructive, persistent, and purposeful, that a growing number of scholars have begun to characterize them as genocide. If we start, as we should, with the premises that Native American life has value, that indigenous people have an inherent right to sovereignty in all its forms, that Native Americans have a full and distinct place within the United States, and that their history is important on its own terms and critical to an understanding of this country, then we cannot treat 1776 as the end of the colonial era. It persists, to this day.

Colonial history is at the heart of ongoing argument about what this country is and where it is going, and the Colonials moniker should be too. To anyone aware of the aforementioned history, including those who have lived it, the colonial era is not something to celebrate. Its very real positive accomplishments cannot and should not be separated from what we now see as its staggering human rights disasters and dark legacies that continue to the present.

For all these reasons, we feel strongly that the Colonials moniker is damaging to GW as an institution. In the past several years, student leaders have followed a clear rationale in their movement against the moniker. Their work has come from the same impulse that has motivated resistance against colonialism and its legacies in the U.S. and across the world. The term highlights a dark and tragic chapter from the country's (and world's) past, which continues to inflict pain into the present, without even properly honoring the university's namesake. We can do better.

Appendix I: Historical Materials

A selection of materials the committee reviewed can be found [here](#).

Appendix J: Report from Professor Nemata Blyden on “Colonial” and the Larger World

Within a generation 10% of the world’s population and 20% of its land was added to Europe’s overseas empires. Almost all of Africa and South East Asia found themselves under colonial rule. Britain, with the lion’s share, annexed over 1/4 of the world’s land space and 1/3 of its population. The British empire on the Indian subcontinent lasted for almost two hundred years. Beginning in the mid eighteenth-century regions in present-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar (Burma) were brought under British imperial control. Between 1870 and 1914 the entire continent of Africa was annexed by seven European powers (France, England, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Portugal). In the 1880s European powers divided Africa up without the consent of people living on the continent, and with a limited knowledge of the territory they claimed. This expansion occurred at the same time a globalizing economy with financial and industrial centers located in Europe emerged. Capitalist markets spanned both colonial and non-colonial regions.

Today, colonialism is recognized as an agency of domination - an integral part of Europe's cultural, economic and military dominance globally. Conquered people were subordinated, and their resources exploited under the guise of European superiority. Colonial authority was grounded on race. As one scholar has noted race was “a deliberate construct necessitated by sociopolitical change” and colonialism was “rooted in notions of race” (Richard Reid). While we often associate racism and constructs of race with populations in the Americas and have come to understand that at some point in American history African heritage was closely associated with servitude, arguably that heritage is now globally perceived as inferior, largely due to colonial representations of Africa and its people as subordinate. There were strong elements of racism and ethnocentrism connected to the colonial enterprise as Europeans imposed their will, and their ways, on colonized populations, even as they exploited them economically.

Colonialism was a violent enterprise, resulting in the deaths of many. Examples abound of colonized populations being brutalized by European rulers as their land was seized, and resources exploited. Furthermore, conquered people were frequently represented as “other” – different and primitive, influencing how colonized populations would be regarded in European metropolises and how they would be seen historically. That in 1965, after a large number of African nations had gained their independence, Hugh Trevor Roper, a Professor of History at Oxford could declare that “perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness,” is testament to the lingering and damaging legacy of colonialism. More enduring has been the long-term effects of colonialism on populations in Africa and Asia. Scholars have examined how colonialism impacted post-colonial policies as well as the functioning of modern institutions, among many other consequences.

In sum, if we are to speculate on how the term “Colonial” is received by foreign students from formally colonized spaces, or by formally colonized (now independent) nations in

Africa and Asia, we would argue that continued use of the Colonials moniker serves to damage the University's reputation. In an increasingly diverse world, this is NOT how the University wants to be seen.

Appendix K: The Colonial Moniker: An Indigenous Perspective – Professor Elizabeth Rule and student Georgie Britcher (in comments made to the special committee on Nov. 13, 2020)

Professor Rule said that Native people are often times relegated to past history. It is important to understand who Native people are and what they have experienced. She said that Native Americans is an umbrella term for indigenous people in the continental United States, as well as Alaska and Hawaii. Native people are citizens or descendants of tribal peoples. Native people are different from other marginalized communities in that their political status or affiliation sets them apart as unique.

They exist as tribal nations with fully formed governmental systems, and scholars have linked the structure of the United States government to these tribal governmental systems. Tribal governments have their own laws, ID cards, and international relations. It is a myth that Native people exist exclusively in the past. Tribal governments have government-to-government relationships with the United States, and those relationships have powers similar to, or higher than, the powers that individual states have.

There are currently 574 independent Native governments. These governments have hundreds of treaties between the federal and tribal governments. The United States knew that it was dealing with hundreds of indigenous, sovereign nations. These treaties are real and legitimate, and *McGirt v. Oklahoma* is a recent example of how past treaties affect the present day. Professor Rule mentioned that many of the comments in the town halls centered on the British/American Colonial experience, which erases the Native experience.

Professor Rule explained that appropriate terms are: Native, Native American, indigenous, or tribal specific. The terms “American Indian/Indian” are used, primarily in governmental or legal documents. They are out of fashion outside of the legal community.

Professor Rule explained how indigenous people talk about the term “colonial.” The special committee has discussed the term in a historical context, which should not be used as a tool or weapon to erase Native people. She explained that colonialism is a structure, not an event, which means that Native people live within the colonial system day in and day out.

Professor Rule provided a few examples of how colonialism affects Native peoples today:

- 1) Major violence towards missing and murdered indigenous women. Thousands of Native women have gone missing in both the United States and Canada. Homicide is the third leading cause of death for Native women, and 85/90% of sexual violence is committed by non-Native perpetrators. There are gender and racial reasons for this. Today, 1-in-3 Native women will be raped in her lifetime, and Native women are 10 times more likely to be murdered.
- 2) The relationship between Native peoples and law enforcement is fraught, as it is between other communities of color and law enforcement. Native people are more likely to be killed than any other racial or ethnic group in the United States. Native

people have the highest incarceration rate, and higher youth suicide rate than any other group.

Professor Rule commented that she sees parallels between the moniker issue and the national issue of Columbus/Indigenous People's Day. This work is part of a larger national conversation, and the nation is doing some really important rethinking of history, and how we connect to Native people.

Professor Rule conducted a survey of the alumni of the Native American Political Leadership Program. She is the director of the program, and it has operated at the university for over a decade. It is an opportunity for Native American/Native Alaskan/Native Hawaiian students to study government advocacy, policy, and to help empower them to become ambassadors of the nation-to-nation relationship. The survey received nine responses in a week's time. All of respondents were either full-time GW students or alumni. One is a current staff member at CIPP, one a former staff member. Eight of the nine asked to change the moniker, one said to keep it. There were five additional written responses. (To read the survey results, please click [here](#).)

Georgie Britcher spoke about the Native student experience. She is the president of Students for Indigenous and Native American Rights and one of the leaders of Anything But Colonials. She said that it was hard for Native students to participate in solidarity on campus, as it is was hard to find each other. They feel alone on campus, without people from their communities, and do not have platforms for expression. Of the Native students she spoke with, there is hesitancy around accepting GW's offer due to the moniker. Native students do not feel safe on campus, and ideas of colonialism bring up genocide, and issues of missing and murdered indigenous women. Generational trauma is a major concern for Native students. She said that funding for Native celebrations is still low on campus, and that the Colonial Health Center is not seen as a place of safety for Native students.

Professor Rule elaborated on colonialism and Native people in the present day. Native people are being erased by history, and this played out in the town halls. The conversations were about the relationships between the colonies and the British. The Native nations were delegitimized and erased, and people think that Native peoples are not around anymore. She has encountered people being surprised that Native peoples are still active. The pop culture stereotype is that Natives exist exclusively in past history.

She said that our community has done a good job of illuminating the Native experience. Colonization is a structure, not an event, and that the government came, colonized, and never left. For Native people like herself, colonization is present today. She continued that although some countries have undergone decolonization, the United States is not one of them, and that Native peoples still live under occupation.