



Sarah Sam <ssam1994@vt.edu>

Fwd: The community supports Caltech, and renaming

Cybele Garcia Kohel <cybelegarcia@me.com>

Fri, Oct 30, 2020 at 5:22 PM

To: ssam@caltech.edu

Ms. Sam,

Michael Chwe shared your email address. We wanted you to see this letter we just sent to President Rosenbaum.

Sincerely,
CybeleCybele Garcia Kohel, MSC
Poet, Writer, Cultural Worker
cybelegarcia@me.com
(626) 319-8836
Twitter: @Capacity4ArtPlease read my latest: <https://www.culturalweekly.com/acknowledgement-on-race-and-land/>

Begin forwarded message:

From: Cybele Garcia Kohel <cybelegarcia@me.com>**Subject:** The community supports Caltech, and renaming**Date:** October 30, 2020 at 2:46:38 PM PDT**To:** president@caltech.edu**Cc:** tfr@caltech.edu, michael@chwe.net, Donna Perkins <nuucdonna@gmail.com>, Elizabeth Sadlon <elizabethsadlon@gmail.com>, Luis Sierra Campos <Lcampos@neighborhooduu.org>, Irene Woodsburkner <iwoodsburkner@att.net>, Clyde Derrick <cderrick3@aim.com>, Terasa Cooley <tcooley@neighborhooduu.org>, pcolopy@caltech.edu, MIMI HENNESSY <mimi510@me.com>

President Rosenbaum,

We are a group of congregants who attend Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church in Pasadena. Although we do not speak for the Church as an entity, this letter has had the support of the Neighborhood board, staff and congregation. The members of our Truth and Reconciliation Committee watched the Caltech event Histories of Eugenics and it had a deep impact on us. We wanted to reach out to you because we are also presently in the process of renaming church spaces that were named for Dr. Robert A. Millikan. While our organizations are different, the circumstances around the renaming of space we are not. Each of our institutions' establishment and history have many parallels, and our organizations even now, share constituents.

Many institutions are currently facing what we call "difficult pasts". Our institutions, culturally, are extensions of our country and our country is presently reckoning with its colonial past. Not a bit of this is easy, and yet history will judge us in how we rise to this moment. At Neighborhood we spent the better part of this past church year (2019-2020) in a series of church education meetings and dialogues. We spent a lengthy amount of time discussing how to acknowledge our history with Dr. Millikan, and how we will make reparations, because he was part of our congregation. Some may say, that since we weren't involved directly with eugenics, nor did we financially benefit from it, that Dr. Millikan's involvement with eugenics should mean nothing to us. However, Dr. Millikan's notoriety gave us a higher community standing at the time he was a member. We as a church benefited from his membership.

When we came to understand his writings and associations showed him to be racist and misogynist, we knew we had to address it because racism and misogyny is against our Unitarian Universalist Principles*. We have thus accepted accountability for Dr. Millikan's actions. If we wish to take a stand against racism and misogyny, we have to acknowledge what Dr. Millikan did and who he was. And we have to put in place

clear standards and statements that strive to educate, acknowledge and ensure that we won't stand by and watch while any racism, misogyny, eugenics, or abuse happens in our community or any other. We have also engaged in community relationship repair and reparations by volunteering with, donating to and joining relevant community coalitions. We have had other positive developments on our campus as well, such as the forming of a White Allies group, and are embarking on anti-racism and conflict transformation training. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed us down, but not stopped us. We will have a renaming ceremony once the country reopens. Our Interim Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley, who joined our congregation in July, has been exceedingly impressed with our deliberate and inclusive process and is promoting it as a model for other congregations in similar circumstances.

These renaming circumstances are really opportunities, because these situations are not really just about renaming. They are really opportunities to look deep into our institutions and ask, "Are we living up to the ideals of equality and access?" Equality and access are the best political and cultural ideals that our country's founders have given us. In our case we offer access to our faith and community; in your case you offer access to employment, education, and space for scientific rigor and discovery. If we see that we are not living up to these ideals, do we continue as we are? As Albert Einstein said, *"The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking."*

Indeed, it is time for new thinking. Especially in the case of Caltech, since scientific spaces should reflect the makeup of its citizenry—else more and more of its citizenry shall reject science. Science is everything in our world, and the more it is understood, experienced and engaged with, the more it will be embraced by everyone. We know you would agree that if more people reject science, we do so at our planet's peril. In reality, by having diverse spaces, we also guarantee diverse ideas and greater scientific progress.

Before closing this letter, one more thought. How do our institutions make progress in dealing with difficult histories? Every institution will find different ways to deal with the issues of equality and access. However, we'd like to give one bit of advice—hire professionals to help you deal with these issues—people who have degrees and experience in anti-racism work. These kinds of cultural moments are beyond what a human resource department can deal with, and certainly not something solved by putting a couple of Black, Indigenous, People of Color faculty or students on a renaming committee. When doing this, you are asking the individuals who are the most marginalized to essentially solve the problems of institutional racism, which is unfair because that is not what they are at Caltech to do.

We hope you will take this letter as it is meant: with a great respect for Caltech, and an understanding for your situation. You are part of our community and we want you to thrive. If you would like to speak to a member of our Truth and Reconciliation Committee, who lead the discussions and actions for our church, don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Members of the Dr. Robert A. Millikan Truth and Reconciliation Committee

of Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church in Pasadena (NUUC):

Donna Perkins, Chair

Irene Woods-Burkner

Cybele Garcia Kohel

Clyde Derrick

Eugene Hutchins

Elizabeth Sadlon

Luis Sierra Campos, Social Justice and Inclusion Coordinator of NUUC - Staff Support to the Committee

Cc: Michael Chwe, Sarah Sam

12/20/2020

Virginia Tech Mail - Fwd: The community supports Caltech, and renaming

* <https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/principles>

Cybele Garcia Kohel, MSC
Poet, Writer, Cultural Worker
cybelegarcia@me.com
(626) 319-8836
Twitter: @Capacity4Art

Please read my latest: <https://www.culturalweekly.com/acknowledgement-on-race-and-land/>