

Florida State Students Want Law School Building Renamed and Statue Moved



Summary: A group of Florida State University students are pushing to have any connections to racism removed, including renaming the law school building.

With the urging of students at Florida State University, a panel of 15 faculty, staff, students and alumni have agreed to remove a statue of Francis Eppes, the grandson of Thomas Jefferson. The panel is also recommending that two school buildings be renamed, according to News 4 Jax.

The statue of Eppes, a former slave owner, sits right to the right of FSU's main administration building, Wescott Hall. Eppes played a major role in securing the land for the school to be built on. The plaque on his statue refers to Eppes as the university's founder. Maddie Hendrick, a representative for Students for a Democratic Society, said, "There is no founder for Florida State University. He was on a couple of committees."

With a push from Students for a Democratic Society, the panel announced their recommendation for the statue to be moved. They also agreed that the building behind the statue should be renamed.

In October 2016, the school put the statue's removal to a vote with the student body voting 70-30 to keep the statue. However, when more details about the history of the school and the role Eppes had in finding land for the school but not actually founding the university were made clear, the student body has since changed their mind.

The group also urged for the renaming of the [FSU law school](#) building, which was named after Florida Chief Justice B.K. Roberts. The group points to Roberts' role in stopping a black man, Virgil Hawkins, from attending law school at the University of Florida in 1949. By 1954, the state ordered all public schools to be desegregated but the University of Florida continued to deny his admittance. In 1958, he withdrew his application to the law school in exchange for a court order desegregating their graduate and professional programs. Hawkins ended up attending a law school in Massachusetts that was not accredited by the American Bar Association.

Some are divided over the attempt to remove any connection to slavery or questionable persons of history in general. FSU alum Andrew Gordon said, "A lot of the land here was probably – probably had slaves on it, so I don't know. Are we going to remove everything?"

Moving the statue is a simple step for the school but renaming the law school building will require a vote of the legislature. FSU President John Thrasher will make the ultimate decision sometime this summer, or so he promises.

Do you think it is fair to discredit those that were doing what was acceptable at the time and do not have the opportunity now to defend themselves? Share your thoughts with us in the comments below.

To learn more about other schools trying to remove any slavery connections, read these articles:

- [Harvard Law Places Plaque Honoring Those Once Enslaved by Royall Family](#)
- [Confederate Statues Removed from Texas University](#)
- [Georgetown University to Give Priority to Slave Descendants](#)

Photo: legacywalk.fsu.edu