

GW is saying goodbye to the colonials moniker after years of student complaints.

The George Washington University has been using this moniker since 1926, a little over one hundred years since its founding.

[The Special Committee on the Colonials Moniker](#) was put together in 2019 by former GW president LeBlanc to decide on the effectiveness and harm of the moniker. This committee consisted of professors, trustees, alumni, and students. In 2021, the committee decided that the moniker should be changed.

During the process of making this decision, they met with different student organizations, student-athletes, alumni, and indigenous students.

One argument made in the report is that George Washington didn't identify as a colonial and even said that he rejected the word.

The report and decision made by the committee were sent to LeBlanc and he then decided to agree with their conclusions about removing the moniker. The decision was made before his resignation.

"Ultimately, it was the president and his inner circle that made the decision whether to accept or reject the report. I don't know what that process was." Said Robert Silverman, GW History Professor and special committee member.

[Their report](#) summarized and said, "The committee recommends that, for compelling reasons of university unity and the promotion of university values, the moniker 'Colonials' should be retired."

Similarly, last year the decision was made to change the Cloyd Heck Marvin Center to the University Student Center, originally named after a past GW president that supported segregation. The pattern of removing controversial figures and messages is not secluded to the university.

"Society is re-evaluating colonial and white supremacist influences in our institutions and there's been a series of building name changes and replacing old monuments or replacing of plaques on monuments, to if not necessarily purge them of white supremacist and colonial influences at least to acknowledge those influences are there." Said Silverman.

[A survey](#) sent out to students, faculty, staff, and alumni in 2020 found that 44% of respondents wanted the moniker to be changed whereas 43% thought it should stay the same. Also, 25% felt 'included by the use of the colonial moniker.' This survey's main portion (55%) of its participants were alumni.

Backlash to the moniker has been prevalent at the university. In 2019, the Anything But Colonials Coalition was formed and in 2020 students created a petition "Change The Name."

For some students, the colonial moniker wasn't something they were aware of until they moved in.

"My parents were even like 'are you sure you want us to leave you here?' They were very thrown off by it." Said Allee Haring, an indigenous student and member of the Student for Indigenous and Native American Rights Organization.

The colonial moniker impacted more than just GW's indigenous community.

"I think that kind of speaks to the environment the colonial moniker fostered not only for Native Americans but any person who comes from a lineage where their ancestors were colonized." Said Haring.

The change in moniker will affect other things on campus as well. The Special Committee on the Colonials Moniker discussed the legal and financial implications that will come with this.

"We certainly kicked that ball around but not in an informed way because we didn't have any actual statistics." Said Silverman.

"I think that a challenge they can face is having to change all of the different things on campus relating to the colonials like the colonial health center and stuff but I think it's important they remove all of it." Said Ben Robinson, a freshmen indigenous student.

Students have differing opinions on what the new moniker should be, however, the main contenders are the hippo and water horse. They are anxiously awaiting the decision of the new committee that will decide on the new moniker.

"Next week, the search committee, which consists of 10 members including myself, will be starting the meeting process. The moniker name has yet to be changed or decided, therefore we will be in the discussion as a committee." Said Christian Zidouemba, president of the Student Association.

SINAR hopes to work with the university in the future to create an online reference about indigenous culture and history.

"I think one of the reasons the colonial moniker persisted for as long as it did is because of that lack of awareness so we want to help to be able to prevent that lack of awareness from continuing into the future." Said Haring.

As the GW community awaits a new moniker, they are hopeful for a future where all students feel pride in their school and moniker.