

# UNC-Chapel Hill building to drop name of prominent KKK leader

BY EMERY P. DALESIO  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHAPEL HILL — Trustees at the country's oldest public university decided Thursday, May 28, to rename a University of North Carolina classroom building so that it no longer carries the name of a 19th century Ku Klux Klan leader. The decision reverses one made in 1920 to honor William Saunders, a Confederate officer and politician credited with helping to preserve colonial records. But university trustees 95 years ago also praised Saunders for his post-Civil War leadership of the Klan, a violent white supremacist group that aimed to overthrow elected state governments and reverse rights granted to newly emancipated slaves.

"This was the institution honoring someone for being the leader of a terrorist organization. That's just not going to fly," said Alston Gardner, one of the

trustees who crafted the school's response to demands by student activists.

Phillip Clay, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor and former chancellor who is the trustee board's only black member, said he would have favored leaving the name and explaining Saunders' pros and cons.

But he agreed a name change was needed after learning earlier campus trustees honored Saunders specifically for his leadership of the Klan, which was even then illegal.

Haywood Cochrane, one of three trustees to vote against renaming, said it's unwise to evaluate people of other times and places with strictly contemporary eyes.

"The university's history should be used to let it show us how far we've come, but also how far we need to go," Cochrane said.

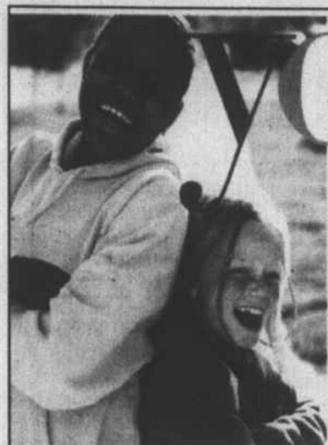
The building now housing the geography depart-

ment will be renamed Carolina Hall. Trustees also adopted a 16-year moratorium against renaming other places on the campus that was chartered in 1789, making it the country's oldest public university.

Though it could be reversed by future trustees, the moratorium would seem to freeze in place the name of a dormitory named for former Gov. Charles Aycock, a white supremacist who led the state from 1901-05.

Duke University and East Carolina University have dropped Aycock's name from campus buildings in the past year and UNC Greensboro is considering renaming a 1,600-seat auditorium named for him.

"There are a number of troublesome people in our history. But that's reality," Gardner said. "In the Saunders case, we felt it was very different than someone having objectionable racist views."



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