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Public schools grappling with Confederate names, images

By Jesse J. Holland

(AP) - With a new school year dawning, education officials are grappling with whether to remove the names, images and statues of Confederate figures from public schools - especially since some are now filled with students of color.

The violence at a white nationalist rally over a Robert E. Lee statue in Charlottesville, Virginia, is giving school officials a new reason to reconsider whether it's appropriate for more than 100 schools to be named after Confederate generals and politicians from the Old South.

"It does not make sense to have schools named after individuals who were directly connected to that dark past, and force kids in Dallas, a majority minority population, to walk into these schools every day and have to face this past every single day," said Miguel Solis, former board president and current board member of the Dallas Independent School District.

Dallas, along with other cities, began moving to change Confederate names and imagery after white nationalist and Confederate enthusiast Dylann Roof murdered nine black churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015.

But the review gained momentum after the Aug. 12 protest by white supremacists in Charlottesville, which left one counter-protester dead.

"We don't tolerate hate or discrimination of any form, and we are committed to providing an educational environment where all students can feel safe and welcomed at school," said Superintendent Aurora Lora in Oklahoma City as she announced plans earlier this month to discuss name changes.

Her city has four schools named after Confederate generals, including an elementary school named after Native American Confederate Gen. Stand Watie, who led the Cherokee Regiment of Mounted Rifles. He was the only Native American to achieve the rank of general in the Civil War and was the last Confederate general to surrender, giving up on June 23, 1865.

"We want to think about the people our buildings are named after and whether they represent the values we as a district have at this time," Lora said.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, there are at least 109 public schools named after Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis or other Confederate icons in the United States. Of those, "27 have student populations that are majority African-American, and 10 have African-American populations of over 90 percent," according to the SPLC's 2016 report.

Several school names were changed, or new schools were built and named after Confederates "during the era of white resistance to equality," the SPLC report said.

Solis said that the Confederate names in Dallas came about because of the local Ku Klux Klan.

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JUSTICE CHERI BEASLEY



JUSTICE HENRY FRYE



JUSTICE MIKE MORGAN



JUSTICE JAMES WYNN

Analysis: Historian outlines fight over 'radical' textbook

By Emily Wagster Pettus

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) - "Civil Rights Culture Wars," a new book by Mississippi historian Charles W. Eagles, tells the compelling backstory of a 1970s textbook that challenged the bland and sanitized way 9th graders had been taught the state's history.

The textbook, "Mississippi: Conflict and Change" had several contributors, with the bulk of the writing and editing by sociologist James Loewen of Tougaloo College and historian Charles Sallis of Millsaps College.

Historically black Tougaloo, a private school in Jackson, was a haven for civil rights activists in the 1950s and '60s, and faculty members there developed ties with colleagues from Millsaps, a predominantly white United Methodist school just a few miles away.

Eagles said "Mississippi: Conflict and Change" was considered "radical" because it included narratives about groups of people who had received little attention in Mississippi textbooks up to that point - African-Americans, Native Americans, women of all races and workers.

The history of a history book is interesting in the context of current debates about how Americans, and particular those in the South, deal with remembrance of the past, including the display of Confederate monuments and the continued use of the Confederate battle emblem on the Mississippi state flag.

"Mississippi: Conflict and Change" sought to present different points of view, and to push students to use their own analytical skills.

In his opening chapter, Eagles writes about previous Mississippi textbooks: "At the behest of the white elite, the history books preserved ignorance of past inspirational heroes and, more generally, of lost possibilities and forgotten historical opportunities. The state-sanctioned amnesia played a vital role in the perpetuation of white supremacy and racial discrimination."

Eagles, now retired as a history professor at the University of Mississippi, spoke about his new book in Jackson last week at an event sponsored by the state Department of Archives and History. He said he had been telling graduate students for years that the story of "Mississippi: Conflict and Change" would be an interesting topic for a master's thesis. No student grabbed the idea, so Eagles wrote the story himself.

Eagles says two quotes he chose for the front of the book show why history is important.

In 1963, segregationist Mississippi Gov. Ross Barnett said: "There is nothing more important than molding the hearts and minds of children in the right direction."

North Carolina's 6 black justices from past, present honored

RALEIGH (AP) - The six living black justices of the North Carolina Supreme Court have been honored with a special ceremony.

The two current and four former justices attended Thursday's (Aug. 31) event inside the Supreme Court's courtroom. Former Govs. Jim Hunt and Beverly Perdue, who appointed some of the justices, spoke at the event, as did current Chief Justice Mark Martin.

Among the six is Henry Frye, who was the first African American associate justice and chief justice, serving for 17 years overall through 2000. There's also Jim Wynn, now serving on the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The two current black associate justices are Cheri Beasley and Michael Morgan. Past associate justices are Patricia Timmons-Goodson, a leader on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, and current U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield.



JUSTICE PATRICIA TIMMONS-GOODSON

The other quote is from a black mother in Clarksdale, Mississippi, in 1964, whose name is not published by Eagles: "I've seen the books they give our children in school... they tell all about the white man, and they tell nothing about us, except that we're here, and we're no longer slaves. Well, isn't that nice! So long as our children don't learn the truth about themselves in school, they might as well be slaves!"

"Mississippi: Conflict and Change" was rejected by a state textbook committee in 1974. In response, the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund represented students and other plaintiffs who sued the

tate for reconsideration.

After years of litigation, U.S. District Judge Orma R. Smith ordered the state to put "Mississippi: Conflict and Change" on an approved list of textbooks for six years. The judge wrote that "controversial treatment of racial issues was not a justifiable reason for rejection" by the textbook committee.

One of the people attending Eagles' presentation last week was Charles A. Weeks, who taught history at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Jackson. He said that in addition to "Mississippi: Conflict and Change" he had his state history students read memoirs, "Coming of Age in Mississippi," by Anne Moody and "Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter's Son," by William Alexander Percy.