

June 19, 2020

Fairfax County School Board
c/o Karl Frisch, School Board Member
for Mosby Woods Elementary School
9819 Five Oaks Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22031

Re: Request to Change Name of Mosby Woods Elementary School

Dear Mr. Frisch and members of the Fairfax County School Board:

We the great-great-grandchildren of Colonel John Singleton Mosby, in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and the peaceful demonstrations against the continued oppression of people of color going on across the U.S. and Europe, respectfully request that you change the name of Mosby Woods Elementary School.

We acknowledge that Colonel Mosby is an important figure in U.S. history, and that of Virginia in particular. He is noted, and duly so, for his brilliance as a tactician, his inspiring leadership, and his courage in battle. History, however, should not dismiss that his military achievements were on behalf of a Confederacy that sought to maintain the reprehensible institution of enslaving other human beings.

Mosby Woods was founded in 1963, at a time when only 1.6 percent of African American Students in Virginia attended schools with white students. This was in the wake of a concerted policy of massive resistance to integration in Virginia, at a time when the John S. Mosby Academy was still open in Front Royal, having been founded four years earlier as a “segregation academy”: a private all-white high school supported by state funds. The choice of name clearly designated what is now your school as an institution where black students were not welcome. This is clearly not the case now in 2020: you have a school that rightfully prides itself on the cultural diversity of its student body, and a change of name would reflect the commitment to diversity the school embodies today.

We grew up in Fairfax County and are keenly aware of the affection that many Virginians feel towards our great-great-grandfather, a unique and colorful figure in the history of the war between the states. As parents and educators, however, we must consider what message we send when we choose which aspects of our history to celebrate and which to condemn. In addition to being places of learning, schools are environments that nurture developing ideals and identities. When we memorialize a Confederate officer, who, whatever his merits, military and otherwise, fought in the service of a government whose aim was to preserve the institution of slavery, what ideals are we fostering? When we celebrate the accomplishments of the “Grey Ghost of the Confederacy”, what sense of identity and community are we encouraging for young people of color whose ancestors were enslaved? We must also consider the message this sends to white students who may through their home environment or social media may be susceptible to the propaganda of neo Nazis and white supremacists, who have actively opposed the removal of confederate memorials.

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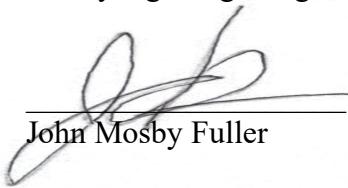
In the interest of furthering the mission you are already engaged in of maintaining an inclusive environment for all students, we hope that your institution will follow the precedent set by Justice High (formerly J.E.B Stuart High School) and change the name of your school to something that does not include the name of our ancestor or any other military figure.

We the undersigned do not claim to represent the views of all of Mosby's descendants, and as individuals we have different opinions regarding our ancestor. We are, however, in complete agreement that the symbols and history of the Confederacy have been so effectively misrepresented and co-opted by proponents of white supremacy that there can be no justification for "honoring" Confederate military figures by displaying monuments of them or having roads or schools named after them.

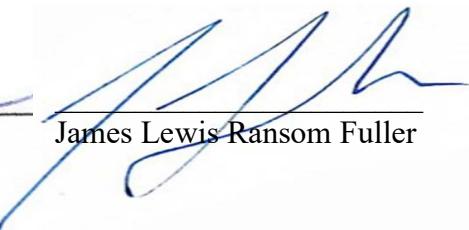
Bearing all of this in mind, we ask that you change the name of Mosby Woods Elementary School.

Sincerely,

Mosby's great-great-grandchildren:


John Mosby Fuller


M. Dare Fuller DeLano


James Lewis Ransom Fuller

And Mosby's great-great-great-grandchildren:


Kai Fuller


Isabel DeLano


Oliver DeLano


Emily DeLano