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Loudoun County School Board, School Board Public Hearing - Renaming Schools (FHR & MMS), Wednesday, April 9, 2025

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Place	Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
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- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): https://player.vimeo.com/video/1073769826?rel=0 - BoardDocs (School Board): https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public	

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-11. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:47] Good evening. I call to order this April 9th, 2025, Loudoun County School Board public hearing on the proposed renaming of Frances Hazel Reed Elementary School and Mercer Middle School.

[00:01:04] Before we begin tonight's public comments, I'd like to take a moment to address some of the dialogue that was shared from the dais last night's board meeting during the school renaming discussion, specifically concerning the Frances Hazel Reed Elementary School renaming committee's recommended name of Loving Elementary School.

[00:01:24] For the reasons I'm about to share, I'll not be repeating such comments. As board chair, it's my responsibility to maintain order during school board meetings, and I'd like to remind board members that as public officers, we are respected to, and must, endeavor to maintain the utmost level of professionalism, respect, and decorum during our meetings.

[00:01:46] The LCPS community looks to us to lead by example, and therefore, we must not engage in conduct from the dais that would not otherwise be permissible by members of the public attending our meetings. Specifically, those attending public meetings are expected to maintain civility, decorum, and respect during our meetings.

[00:02:07] And those addressing the board during public comment should refrain from vulgarity, obscenities, profanity, or other breaches of civility, decorum, and respect. Comments made on the dais during last night's discussion could not only be said to be vulgar, obscene, or profane.

[00:02:24] I believe they also demonstrated a lack of respect a truly brave American couple who fought to love each other. Without their bravery and contributions to society, people would not be able to legally marry individuals they love who are outside their race. I believe our students are able to understand the historical significance of the loving's contributions, and I would think are mature enough to refrain from exhorting to mocking the honorable names of such American heroes. I was disappointed by the unprofessional comments made last night,

[00:02:59] And I ask that all board members, please be mindful to engage in professional and respectful dialogue during our meetings moving forward. And with that, we will move on to tonight's public hearing on the proposed renaming of Francis Hazel Reed Elementary School and Mercer Middle School.

[00:03:15] Procedures for public comment. Thank you for engaging with the school board through the public comment process. The school board welcomes comments from Loudoun County residents and believes that strong community engagement and outreach are important components of a successful school system.

[00:03:31] Please note that the speakers for this school board public hearing shall limit their comments to the renaming of Francis Hazel Reed Elementary School and Mercer Middle School. Speakers must limit comments to the time allotted, and based on the number of speakers on the agenda this evening, all speakers have been allotted two minutes each for public comment.

[00:03:53] Speakers who missed their time slot will not be called at a later time. All audience members shall maintain civility, decorum, and respect for the functioning and dignity of the school board at all times, and abide by the public comment procedures set forth in School Board Policy 2520, entitled Participation by the Public, and on the LCPS Citizen Participation website. Those resources also provide information on the distribution of materials to school board members, given that under no circumstances may a speaker approach the dais. In accordance with school board policy 2520 speakers should refrain from vulgarity obscenities defamation profanity

[00:04:31] and other like breaches of civility decorum and respect targets also that speakers may also not target criticize or attack individual students and or individual division employees during public comment or engage in conduct that otherwise disrupts or delays the meeting inappropriately loud conversations or outbursts from those in attendance will not be tolerated and security staff will be asked to restore order per school board policy 2520 when reasonable the chair will warn the speaker breaches of decorum or of these rules prior to the chair terminating speaking

[00:05:09] privileges or taking other action to preserve the civility decorum and orderly conduct of the meeting which could include but is not limited to the chair directing staff to remove the attendee from the remainder of the meeting and or the public comment being concluded for the evening.

[00:05:25] The public is reminded that access to school board members is available through LCPS TV on Comcast channel 18 and Verizon Fios channel 43. The live stream of the meeting may be viewed on the website. We look forward to hearing your comments and we do have some virtual public comment today. We have two virtual speakers so we'll start with them and then we will move on to our in-person. The first

[00:05:51] virtual speaker is Rasha S. And the second is Mike DeValle. Hello. Thank you so much for putting this together tonight. I would like to focus my comment on the survey that the communities filled out. Both of these school communities filled out surveys overwhelmingly in favor of renaming their schools, just because we have a few community members who are showing up

[00:06:27] and they are the loud minority does not mean that we should not take the survey into account. We need to make sure that we are renaming schools that do not serve our students in order to make sure that they can come to school and put their full hearts and souls into learning and becoming better people. Thank you. Thank you. Our second person, Mike DeVille. Board, thank you for

[00:07:01] taking time to listen to our comments. Over hundreds of years in this very state, unspeakable horrors were committed against African-American mothers, fathers, and children by the people who enslave them. Enslaved, I think about what that word really means. If our loved ones, if my family, if your family was taken from us tonight, shipped across the ocean and sold like livestock, makes me shudder. The effect of this trauma spans generations and continues to affect families and Children's Day. We can promote healing by renaming these schools and send a message that we care about

[00:07:38] them, that they matter, and that the legacy of hate is not welcome in our community. I recognize that something like this is not free. There will be costs, and those costs will be taken into account, but I submit to you that it's worth it. Thank you. Thank you. And we'll move to our in-person speakers, Santos Munoz, followed by Aaron Kunkel. Good evening. My name is Santos Munoz, and I would

[00:08:15] like to talk about yesterday's renaming discussion. Even though the board tasked and paid fine people to do a good job in research and recommendation, it was clear to me as a taxpayer and a parent two things that are glaring. One, that the idea of renaming schools is not from this current board.

[00:08:40] It was the previous board. And the second thing is that the idea seems to be a solution in a desperate search of a problem. And this is what I mean. I assure you, as an Air Force veteran of 24 years, Hispanic man, and some people may call me a person of color, although I prefer to be called American, my main concern is the unnecessary spending of taxpayers' money. Right now, I remember last night teachers asking, begging this honorable government body to consider the promises made to

[00:09:15] them on their retirement benefits. I beg you, please change your course of action. Focus on more important things. And the good thing about the opportunities that is presented to you is that you can redeem everything that has been done to this moment in time. And what I mean by that is that you can be, you can put your names and your reputation in the right side of history. Because again, there's an overwhelming majority of people that I've talked to, people of color as you call it with common sense that are telling me that this issue is not the main focus.

[00:09:49] The main focus for us parents and taxpayers is very simple. Good quality education, well-being and safety of the students and the faculty, and also to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money. I think that if you reverse course, the public and the taxpayers and the voters will be in full support of you and all your future endeavors.

[00:10:12] With that said, thank you so much and a good night. - Thank you. Erin Kunkel, followed by Tim Rush.

[00:10:30] - Good evening members of the school board. My name is Erin Kunkel and I serve as the current chair of the Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee, MSAC, but tonight I also speak to

you as a black woman, as a mother of black children in Loudoun County Public Schools, and as a descendant of the enslaved who were brought to this land here in Virginia.

[00:10:48] MSAC continues to support the renaming of Frances Hazel Reed Elementary and Mercer Middle School. It's a clear and urgent message this is not erasure this is restoration renaming these schools is about confronting the uncomfortable truths of our past and choosing not to celebrate individuals tied to the confederacy or the systems that upheld slavery it's about ensuring that the names of our schools reflect the values we claim to uphold inclusion equity safety and dignity I cannot send my children into a school building that honors a legacy that would have denied their right to exist, let alone to thrive. I should not have to, and no parent should. Loudoun

[00:11:28] County has a complicated history, and renaming these schools will not erase that, but it will say to our students, our staff, and our families, you belong here, you matter, and your truth is not invisible. These buildings should carry the names that reflect who we are becoming, not who we were. LCPS has made promises, public, strategic, and very heartfelt, about building inclusive environments where every student feels safe, supported, and seen.

[00:11:55] You cannot fulfill that promise while maintaining names rooted in the Confederacy. This is our moment to lead. It's our moment to choose what is right over what is easy. As Congressman John Lewis once said, never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get into good trouble, necessary trouble.

[00:12:13] And this is necessary trouble, and we're here for it. Thank you. Thank you. Tim Rush followed by Michael Rivera. Good evening. If this board strips the name of Charles Fenton Mercer, because that is the person ultimately the school is named for, for Mercer Middle School, it will not be confronting the nation's legacy of slavery, but affirming it. I say that as a proud

[00:12:47] 60-year veteran of the civil rights movement going back to participation as a teen in the 1963 march on Washington. Please look closely at the memo I submitted to you. George Washington was an indispensable leader in founding the republic, he also held slaves. Would we delegitimize all his positive contributions by removing his name from a Loudoun country school, county school? The case of Charles Fenton Mercer is exactly parallel. In his three decades as a Virginia state legislature and U.S. congressman, 1810 to 1839, Mercer battled the slave system, which he called the blackest of all blots, in four crucial areas. Economics, pursuing policies to build up agriculture,

[00:13:27] industry, and infrastructure, including his founding of the C&O Canal, against the tidewater slavocracy, public education far ahead of his time, extending the voting franchise to poor non-slaveholding strata, and shutting down loopholes in laws banning importation of slaves. Did Mercer entirely free himself from slavery and racism? No. Mercer inherited a family of enslaved blacks, which he kept on, and in private letters he denigrated the character of free blacks. Did he contribute to creating the conditions for freeing the country of the scourge of the slave system? Absolutely. The great anti-slavery champion, John Quincy Adams,

[00:14:05] when he heard of Mercer's departure from the U.S. Congress exclaimed, the savage and barbarous genius of slavery has kindled a flame of popular odium against him. The champions of the slave system excoriated him. The criterion for changing school names mandated by the Northam government five years ago was when an individual for whom a school was named, quote, advanced slavery and systemic racism. Mercer in no way meets that criterion. I urge you to keep his name on the

[00:14:32] Mercer School. Thank you. Michael Rivera, followed by Matt O'Donnell. I want to make sure I record my comments in case Mrs. Manfield chooses to call my employer and attempt to get me fired again.

[00:14:52] This entire exercise is a political exercise. Both renaming committees were loaded up with political allies, activists, and the Loudon NAACP. It was like having a McDonald's on a committee to approve a new Burger King in town. However, on the Francis Hazel Reed Committee, the daughters of the Confederacy, who were essentially on trial, were treated with disdain and rudely scoffed. It's worth noting that the renaming committees were obligated to produce alternate names and were not allowed to just vote no to renaming, even if that's what the committee wanted to do. The Francis Hazel Reed

[00:15:29] public survey was an afterthought, and the survey was ignored despite a majority of neighborhood residents around Francis Hazel Reed saying no to renaming. This fake public input session is wholly performative as well. The decision has already been made by Mansfield and her cronies. This is yet another political pet project and a waste of taxpayer dollars, just like the renovation here

[00:15:56] at Education Court that is going to cost taxpayers \$1.7 million. Thank you. Mr. O'Donnell followed by Meredith Ray. Matt O'Donnell, sorry. So I signed up accidentally for both nights, so I figured I'd just come by and wing it for two minutes. You know, obviously this is a dicey issue, right,

[00:16:31] and very contentious. And the disappointing thing for me, I guess perspective is everything. So having grown up in Washington, D.C., right, I come out here, and it's culture shock. And everyone's fighting this fight that I fought 30 years ago, right?

[00:16:53] And that I think the only wisdom I can really give is it's very easy to assassinate someone's character, right? It's significantly more difficult to find out what's going on.

[00:17:10] And I think that's what's required in this situation. and you know last night i thought it was a little inside of decorum and no cameras to have people behind me right waving signs inferring that i was racist when they have no idea who i am no idea and i can tell you i would never do that to another human being ever and i think i mean i don't know anything about mercer i'm not defending him right and i'm not advocating either way but i spent some

[00:17:49] time reading about Francis Hazel Reed and I think this is just something that's gone a little too far there's a false narrative right that everyone's gotten behind you know it's unwise and I think we

[00:18:14] can do better thank you thank you Meredith Ray followed by Erica Ogadebe hi I'm going to try and speak quickly because I have a whole bunch of things that I wanted to address um Charles Mercer who the Mercer Magisterial District was named after founded the American Colonization Society along with a few others, including Henry Clay, whose family owned my ancestors as property.

[00:18:46] The ACS was built on the premise that black and white people could not coexist as equals in America. Many white supporters, even some who opposed slavery, believed that free blacks did not qualify as Americans and did not truly belong in the United States. The ACS's solution was colonization, a plan of deportation presented as if it were liberal reform.

[00:19:07] This allowed slaveholders and sympathizers to appear anti-slavery while actually denying that black Americans could ever be equal citizens in the U.S., and in effect, the ACS's program was an epic endorsement of racial segregation, premised on the notion that equality required black people's removal.

[00:19:26] Although the ACS claimed to send people to Africa voluntarily, many black Americans were pressured or effectively forced to choose exile. Free black people in the early 1800s faced harsh legal and social pressures to leave. In some states, like Virginia after 1806, laws required emancipated slaves to depart the state within a year or be re-enslaved, which funneled many into the colonization scheme.

[00:19:53] Historic records confirm that contrary to claims that their departure was voluntary, many African Americans, both free and enslaved, were pressured into immigrating. Some slaveholders made emancipation conditional on exile. In other instances, black people were directly expelled.

[00:20:10] For example, in 1832, the state of Maryland began forcibly deporting recaptured enslaved persons to Liberia. The colonization process itself had deadly outcomes for the people who were sent to Africa. For example, a group of 30 black Virginians who migrated from Loudoun County in 1830, by 1843, two-thirds of the group had died.

[00:20:33] Thank you. Erica Okededbe, followed by Kathy Benet. Good evening. Thank you. As a nation, racism is an ongoing problem that impacts people's lives, employment, and health.

[00:20:55] Decades after the end of the Civil War, during the Jim Crow era, Statues were raised, often in publicly visible and intimidating locations, to send a message that seats of power were white spaces. School names should not be used to commemorate or honor individuals or organizations that supported the Confederate cause, racial segregation, or the massive resistance in Virginia, which we in Loudoun County should be well aware of since we didn't desegregate our schools until 1968, 14 years after the Brown versus the Board of Education decision. Per the school board policy

[00:21:35] on naming school facilities, committees were formed to consider renaming of the schools identified through the school renaming project that was initiated in 2020. Both committees recommended renaming the schools and the board now has to vote on accepting modifying or rejecting the recommendations I support the committee recommendations to rename the schools and more specifically appreciate the suggestion Loving Elementary for the school in Leesburg where I am a resident the story of Richard and Mildred Loving was one I was not aware of growing up

[00:22:14] but as an adult is personally meaningful thanks to their courage my interracial marriage is legal. Though in 2025 my husband Nathaniel and I still get looks and my children have faced all manner of odd and intrusive questions and assumptions about their existence and identities. Finally with regard to the discussion about nicknames for Richard last night it is irrelevant and just silly. Please vote yes to support the committee recommendations and please also continue to take action on the renaming initiative in general. Thank you.

[00:22:50] Thank you. Kathy Benet followed by Victoria Spiato.

[00:23:13] I thought we had seen Loudoun County school board meetings hit the bottom of the barrel a long time ago, but no. Last night, Lauren Chernoff licked the bottom of the barrel. She looked it good, like she was performing a licking show for her top campaign donor who had just threatened to sue the school board and the superintendent if he doesn't get the outcome he wants in the renaming procedures.

[00:23:40] He also said that school board candidates will lose if things don't go his way. A little Loudoun County Elon Musk. Richard Loving is considered a truly great American, Virginian, and a human rights pioneer by everyone.

[00:24:00] Everyone who knows the remarkable story of Richard and Mildred Loving. Everyone, that is, except for racists. Lauren Chernoff said, despite the fact that Richard Loving was always called Richard, that there are other Richards who go by the familiar name Dick, like Dick Black, Dick Cheney, and Dick is a very bad word.

[00:24:26] so she and her girlfriend were off to the races fantasizing about dicks and what would happen if a school board honored the loving name mercifully chair mansfield shut that down i served on the committee to consider renaming francis hazel reed elementary and i promise you i assure you that we did comprehensive and serious research into the racist affiliations of francis hazel

[00:25:00] read, and likewise into the variety of alternative names. We heard from parents, teachers who don't feel respected by the name of their school. Not a theoretical study, that school. Please respect our work and our recommendation, and for the love of God, respect Mr. and Mrs.

[00:25:18] Loving. Victoria Spiato, followed by Carol Lynn. Carol Lynn, followed by Heather Gottlieb.

[00:25:57] Another really popular cost-cutting measure was kidnapping and owning people. And most people People who weren't forced into it didn't think that was wrong either. So much talk about the cost of renaming. And if women like Frances hadn't partnered with the Klan to reframe the narrative and turn treasonous cowards into celebratory icons, we would not even be having this conversation.

[00:26:22] Your job does not define you, neither do the dates on your tombstone. What's important is what you do with the dash in between. Francis used her free time to promote hate and Mercer thought only white kids deserved an education and that their counterparts whose labor built this country should be deported.

[00:26:41] So I can totally see a connection to why people today are advocating on behalf of them. This country and our community has so much to learn about radical empathy and it begins with renaming these hateful reminders of injustice.

[00:26:57] You can't claim to advocate for inclusion, equity, compassion, and understanding in education in a Mercer sweatshirt, or wear a Francis Hazel Reed hoodie without celebrating people who abused, mistreated, and dehumanized other people.

[00:27:14] Radical empathy means putting in the work to educate oneself and to listen with a humble heart to understand another's experience from their perspective, not as we imagine we would feel. Radical empathy is not about you and what you think you would do in a situation you have never been in and perhaps never will.

[00:27:35] It is the kindred connection from a place of deep knowing that opens your spirit to the pain of another as they perceive it. Empathy is no substitute for the experience itself. We don't get to tell a person with a bullet wound or a broken leg that they are not in pain. When people who have hit the caste lottery are not in a position to tell a person who has suffered under the tyranny of caste what is offensive or hurtful or demeaning to those at the bottom.

[00:28:00] Thank you. Those were Isabel Wilkerson's words at the end, not mine. Heather Gottlieb followed by Jude Armstrong. No one should have to follow Carolyn.

[00:28:16] We are living in a time when black voices, black history, and black experiences are being erased. The decisions we make here locally matter now more than ever. The issue of renaming schools is

not just about budget lines or signage, it's about the values we imprint on the next generation. I suspect the board will try to appease both sides by voting to rename one school and not the other.

[00:28:35] But now is not the time to reach across the aisle, not when we're talking about whether or not to continue honoring white supremacy. Frances Hazel Reed was a founding and lifelong member of the United Daughters of Confederacy. She actively promoted the Lost Cause narrative, distorting the realities of slavery and the Civil War.

[00:28:51] The renaming committee even searched for any evidence that later she recognized the harm of that legacy or any sign that she at any point condemned the enslavement of human beings. They found nothing. Continuing to honor her name is harmful, intentional or not, especially to black students who deserve to learn in spaces that uplift them, not erase or rewrite the pain of their ancestors.

[00:29:13] I want to acknowledge the community members who gave their time and labor to this process. The black woman who chaired the Mercer committee led with strength and integrity, and for that she has been targeted with racism and personal attacks right here at this mic. During the committee meetings, we heard repeated claims that certain people weren't members of the Mercer community, even though this was a requirement to serve on the committee. While I completely missed this microaggression, many in the room felt it deeply. To now dismiss the committee's work is to say that black leadership and black labor can be undermined by intimidation, by racism, and by the threats of lawsuits that we saw last night. Before you decide to compromise, know that you have the

[00:29:52] power to do more than rename a school. You have the power to send a message to every student in this county that they matter, that their history matters, and that we will not honor legacies rooted in exclusion and white supremacy. Do not obey in advance. Thank you. Jude Armstrong, followed by Bill Wilkin. I love to spot a good pattern, some sort of order in the chaos.

[00:30:26] When the evidence is laid out in front of you here, it's not hard to see the most obvious pattern, which is a pattern of shock, anger, and denial. Shocked that these committees, built in community stakeholders, voted overwhelmingly to rename their schools.

[00:30:43] Anger that their voices were clearly heard, but the group disagreed. The denial, scrambling for a reason, any reason except the simplest truth. The majority chose a different path. But there's another pattern that I see. I see the incredible amount of labor that my dear friend and chair of the Mercer Renaming Committee put into making sure that voices, feelings, beliefs of every single person on her committee were heard.

[00:31:08] Her role in this is more than any of us will ever know, and more than we had any right to ask. Labor on the backs of black women is not ours to demand. I see a pattern of asking black people to defend their very existence, to ignore the generational abuse that was forced on them.

[00:31:32] Just get over it. It's in the past, right? Not if it's still on our schools. Not if it's still written on the chests of our children. In their most amazing moments of their young lives, written on their chest is going to be somebody who enslaved people or somebody who supported the lost cause.

[00:31:53] The very least we can do is make sure that our kids don't have to bear the burden of this. Being asked just to let it go for the comfort of others. Give black kids the space they deserve. Break the pattern of putting others' comfort over the health and well-being of black people.

[00:32:10] Change the names. Thank you. Thank you. Bill Wilkin, followed by Julia Holcomb. Thank you, school board. My name is Bill Wilkin.

[00:32:26] I live in the Ashburn District. I was a Loudoun County history teacher for 18 years. I'm currently a member of the Loudoun County Heritage Commission, but I'm with you tonight in my own personal capacity. I ask you, do not do this. Facts matter.

[00:32:42] We are not here holding a referendum on general subjects. We're trying to create a way to ease people's pain of many, many things. We're talking about specific names for specific schools. We have other schools and other names to go through that also deserve to be attended to appropriately.

[00:33:02] Evidence that an editor bravely refused Klan advertising when she was, Francis Hazel Reed was an editor here in town, against pressure, seems to contradict the vibrations that you're picking up of someone who was so terrible.

[00:33:19] We also, our renaming chair at the Francis Hazel Reed Committee candidly reported in his research to the committee, the United Daughters of the Confederacy passed national resolutions against the Klan from 1921 onward.

[00:33:34] And that was the time frame that we're talking about in Francis Hazel Reed's era. The opinions on opinion line in Wikipedia can't change those facts. This renaming maligns a fine woman's name unnecessarily, unfairly, and dishonestly.

[00:33:55] Don't do this. I also warn you about the precedent if you go after the Mercer district name. All place names in Virginia from 1619 to 1865 bear the taint of slavery. Places in Virginia were frequently named for the nearest mill crossroads or the nearest family farm.

[00:34:15] You may find that you're condemning yourself to an awful lot of change meetings. Back away from this. Thank you very much. Thank you. Julia Holcomb followed by Victoria Rashid. As a teacher, I very much dislike hearing somebody use their discipline as a way to tell untruth.

[00:34:42] But we should at least be able to agree that public schools should not be named for members of the losing side of a war which ended 160 years ago, but let's choose an appropriate tone for the discussion of those possible names. Somebody spoke about this already, but I think it bears repeating.

[00:35:05] It bears repeating that we should abandon playground invective and smut and assume the virtue of maturity if we have it not. To be clear, I think that I'm not the best person or a member of the best community to choose the new name for Frances Hazel Reed. But that said, I agree with other speakers who have spoken in favor of the name Loving for our school. It honors brave citizens, and that makes it very appropriate. And with all due respect to, I believe, the first

[00:35:40] speaker tonight, there is nothing more important than leaving Confederates' names behind. Thank you. Thank you. Victoria Rashid, followed by Brenda Bankson. When I initially signed up to volunteer, I believed that this would be an exercise in futility.

[00:36:07] I hadn't expected that through the process of renaming, I would encounter interactions with two gloating school board members sitting up here today who loudly heckled me in one of our meetings with a sleeping baby on my chest, yelling about their privilege to speak because they were school board members.

[00:36:22] I would loathe to be proven correct. However, I'd like to point out that my fellow volunteer committee members and I performed extensive hours of research and openly listened to both sides of our community concerning FHR's contributions in any capacity. While she may have led the Loudon Times Mirror for many years and founded a woman's business and professional club, she also raised money for Stone Mountain, a site with a history directly tied to the second and third national KKK.

[00:36:51] Colonel Simmons, founder and imperial wizard, proudly had a cross burning atop that mountain and sent postcards around Virginia regaling a cross-burning that was going to be seen on November 25, 1915, for miles. FHR knew that history.

[00:37:07] She raised money for the relief carving of three Confederate generals anyway. Nowhere else in the world are there monuments to losers of a war. LCPS didn't even bother to integrate schools until 1968, as someone else mentioned. That's 57 years ago.

[00:37:24] 14 years after it was already told to stop. It seems members of the community here would like logical and well-reasoning adults not to be able to connect the dots that the United Daughters of the Confederacy, founded in 1924, would have had interaction with the local KKK.

[00:37:42] As a recently passed exemplary committee member Larry Branch said, "If people understand why the name is being changed, then they can take a look within their own hearts. runs deep and to try and move to the next level of humanity is not easy. What's in a name?"

[00:37:58] Everything. Thank you. Brenda Bankson followed by Lori Tanzi. Thanks to Mr. Rader and Ms. Ray for their challenging work. I apologize to them for last night's churlish attitude from one side of the dais and a childish middle school name gaming from the other. It was a stretch to infer that a

[00:38:34] suggested name of Loving would be a school referred to as anything else. Was last night's show simply about excuses, last-ditch efforts, lowering the conversation to the basest instincts, garnering attention for crassness? Maybe it makes for great social media salaciousness or good television, but I learned more about renaming efforts from committee reports and the effects of derogatory speech and symbols in data shared by another member. The Loudoun Now

[00:39:10] reported this today. We've also heard complaints about cancel culture. Please tell that to the residents who had to wait years for Loudoun to integrate schools, to swim in a Leesburg public pool, to change an offensive mascot at LCHS, to the bigotry and bullying of today. Historical precedence takes a backseat to student needs for a welcoming learning environment. Dialogue and

[00:39:43] dissent are key to a functioning democracy. It would have been appropriate to show respect for the renaming committee chairs last night instead of what had to be curtailed by the chair for its tackiness. Please support students when you consider the committee's recommended renaming choices all shall overcome someday thank you thank you laura tansy followed by christine dean

[00:40:14] thank you guys for your time it sounds like you've had a very busy week um so francis hazel reed i was on the pta board there for many years she was a female leader in her time of her time um was she flawed of course we're all flawed but she wasn't so flawed that 25 years ago the school couldn't be named for her in September I know during a town hall meeting that only 11 or I'm

[00:40:49] sorry only one person was in favor of renaming the school 11 were against changing the name and I think when consultants and activists are making decisions for our community this is a problem and

everything I see on Facebook and other public forums and surveys you know the typical regular person who isn't paying attention as much is not for this you're busy we're busy we're raising kids we're going to you know practices we're doing homework people don't have time to

[00:41:23] come out to these meetings it's just not efficient but they they can put a comment on online on Facebook they can fill out a quick survey and from what I've seen nobody's for this at all for the Francis Hazel Reed renaming I think that when this board I mean the board that preceded you ventured into this kind of political arena in 2020 you know we've moved beyond that that really undermines your credibility like let's let's move past that I mean I'm just a taxpayer

[00:41:59] and a parent and a sub and I can think of better uses for your time and our money so I'm sure you can too. How about just education, improving academic performance and outcomes? Let's just deal with that. And if you want to drift into more fringe areas, how about healthier kids? Let's make a dent in the obesity epidemic with better food in our school, more outlets for physical activity and achievement. I'm done. Thank you. Christine Dean followed by Ron Campbell. Hi there. My name

[00:42:35] is Christine Dean. I have five children in the school system. I have one left. They've all gone on to other schools, and JMU and Virginia Tech, and JMU did the same thing. They changed dorms because they were named after somebody. Nobody knew. These kids just were partying.

[00:42:52] They slept in it. Nobody even had any idea. It was a political stunt that they did. Nobody knew who she was, Frances Hazel Reed. They didn't know all the detail in the background. I don't know all the stuff about Mercer, but I wonder where your due diligence was 20 years ago when you were doing the naming of the schools. And I understand the efforts that you guys are putting forth to rename and it's to desire the historical wrongs of somebody, particularly those related to slavery and racism. These are deeply significant, these are deeply significant topics

[00:43:28] and I appreciate the board's effort to reflect on our history. By the way, for all those, you know, naming and stuff did you look up Berkeley USC or whatever the one out in California look up Berkeley there was the same thing but they decided not to so people are talking about wearing a Mercer Franz Hazel Reed on your chest and you're in for that it's it's not that cut and dry and I don't think people even know until they dive in or until it's brought up by you guys in this kind of a format and I know that while certain historical figures and events may be troubling they are part of our collective history and that's what

[00:44:08] we have to remember we are in Virginia and my husband's from California and they have no idea like they didn't even learn about civil war it's incredible that we have this here and this is part of our history and what we are what we have here and removing their names could prevent us from engaging in meaningful conversations about the past instead of erasing our history. We should focus on educating students of why these names are controversial. Thank you. Thank you. Ron

[00:44:40] Campbell followed by Susan Cox. Good evening. I watched the meeting last night and heard the comments and generally I stay out of the fray. I'm a former Leesburg Town Council member. I'm current chair of the Town Planning Commission. I'm a veteran of many difficult conversations between ourselves and our community and even our commonwealth. I can

[00:45:17] tell you that in 2016, my wife and I were on the front page of the Washington Post for the 50th anniversary of the Loving v. Virginia case. There were four other Virginia couples. The Lovings our American and Virginia heroes. Their descendants and their legacy, which I am a part of because I'm a part

of this community for 24 years, belongs to this community. They're not just some distant people who did a thing for America and who were selfish about it. They sacrificed their

[00:45:54] life, their time, and their families, their happiness, the sense of self and self-being, so that we all could enjoy the freedoms of marriage. I know that this is not an easy conversation to have, but it must be had.

[00:46:11] No matter who started it, our history, your history says that we have to finish it with some grace, some dignity, and some respect, not just for our community, but for the world that we also leave behind. So I just urge you to seriously consider not the noise, but the facts and the honest integrity of the outcomes that have to be achieved I do that in my professional work and I call my work with the Planning Commission my volunteer work and I urge you to do the

[00:46:43] same thank you thank you Susan Cox followed by Lynn Davis hello we do not have an endless supply of money siphoning money away from literacy is not sound we have bullying gang and fentanyl issues that need to be prioritized renaming causes division and confusion I want you to learn from a neighboring school system renaming didn't help with literacy rates lawsuits were filed and a prominent community member scott taylor received death threats when he spoke for keeping the name scott taylor in his

[00:47:23] youth attended a segregated school he ran the black heritage museum in arlington when the school board insisted on renaming don't take my word for it here are his words from an interview on channel 9 quote i think we are tearing down history and we don't think you should tear down history you build history up you have conversations about things you don't want to talk about you don't just get rid of it that's not how you calm quell or fix things end quote surely

[00:47:55] you can find a good in all of the loudon county school names focusing on only the flaws and paying people to find them isn't wise let's not have lcps in the news for more division and scandal Teach our children to learn from history and from the names.

[00:48:15] Teach our next generation to find the good. See the progress. Be forgiving. Love the freedoms we have here in America. See the light. Reconsider renaming. Thank you. And if someone was to spend a lot of money to look only for the negative in loving, someone might come up with for an elementary school, an unwed mother with different fathers.

[00:48:41] Now, I think lovings represent a loving couple. But if you pay somebody enough money to find the negative, you're going to find it with any name. Thank you. Thank you. Our last public comment is Lynn Davis. Loudoun County has an appalling history when it comes to its treatment of black students.

[00:49:06] In 1954, Brown v. the Board of Education, a case decided by the U.S. Supreme Court, ruled that segregation in schools is inherently illegal and violates the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. But Loudoun didn't comply.

[00:49:23] A 1963 lawsuit filed by black students and families in Loudoun ultimately led to a 1967 court order to fully integrate Loudoun County Public Schools. It took 14 years to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court.

[00:49:38] The Mercer legacy represents exclusion, not inclusion. Mercer family was deeply invested in systems that excluded and removed black Americans from public life. Francis Hazel Reed was a founding

and lifelong member of the Percival chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

[00:50:02] The UDC funded and erected hundreds of Confederate monuments, particularly during the Jim Crow movement and during the Civil Rights Movement. These two periods directly correlate with efforts to suppress African American rights and reinforce white supremacy.

[00:50:22] Honoring the Mercer and Reed name sends the message racial separation and exclusion are part of our school's values that was true in 1967 but it is unacceptable in 2025 names carry symbolic power what you choose to honor publicly reflects your values i would implore that you please change the names thank you thank you all for coming out today

[00:50:55] and for providing your public comment um we are going to sing as there's no more business today the April 9th, 2025 Loudoun County School Board public hearing on the proposed naming of Francis Hazel Reed Elementary School and Mercer Middle School is now adjourned.

[00:51:12] Please drive safely home.



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