

To the Forrest Hall Task Force Committee:

The enclosed document is the official position of the Change Forrest Hall organization.

Contacts and representatives may be found below:

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**Representative:**

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Dear committee,

On the evening of June 17, 2015, a young white supremacist named Dylan Roof murdered 9 African Americans at the Emanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Roof who had been photographed with not only White supremacist emblems and symbols, but also the Confederate “battle flag,” (a flag that was never adopted or formerly recognized by the confederacy, and didn’t gain popularity until after the civil War in the early 20th century by segregationists and members of the Ku Klux Klan) helped stir a national debate and awakening of the link between confederate symbols and their use in modern day racism, when the South Carolina state house the following day flew the Confederate “battle flag” over their Confederate monument, due to a law that prohibited its removal without a two thirds vote from the state legislature.

These events became the synthesis that brought students, alumni, faculty, and community members to form a group focused on the removal of Nathan Bedford Forrest’s name from their campus, and to finally help put MTSU’s racist past behind it, instead of forcing its African American students to live through it every day. We at Change Forrest Hall demand the name be taken down for the following reasons:

1. The actual naming of the building had nothing to do with Forrest, himself, but was rather a strategic maneuver to defy the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement at the time and to help further the white supremacist agenda of keeping schools segregated. This is proven not only by the time period at which this building was named, but also the actions the school took. The Supreme Court passed Brown V. Board of Education in 1954 requiring the complete desegregation of schools in America. “Oddly” enough the Confederate “battle flag at the South Carolina state house began to fly outside its windows that very same year, along with many of the state governments in the South completely refusing to desegregate their schools. Here is where we tie MTSU and Forrest Hall into this clearly racist narrative, which follows the historical attempts at maintaining the segregation of schools. Forrest Hall was built in 1954, but was not officially named “Forrest Hall” until 1958. That being said, it was always known as Forrest Hall. At the same time, Confederate “battle flags,” Nathan Bedford Forrest clubs, monuments, and even the mascot and sports teams were named and built to maintain the white pride and the racist heritage these people embraced. MTSU didn’t desegregate until 1961, 7 years after Brown V. Board of education. But even then the racist tensions remained high at the university, with African American students having to endure not only the monuments and symbols of the first grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, but also the overt display of racism from their fellow white students with a cross being burned in the Dean’s yard, a fraternity that had a lynching party outside of their frat house, and the constant display of confederate flags at football games. It has taken many years, and many struggles from students, faculty, alumni, and community members

to destroy the institutionalized racism MTSU built up in those years, and it is now the time and all of our responsibilities to finally put this racist past to rest, and to continue furthering diversity and brotherhood throughout MTSU's campus.

2. MTSU is a school that promotes diversity, a word that is promoted in its True Blue pledge. But if the Forrest Hall name remains, this completely undermines what the university has been promoting. It is utterly ridiculous and disrespectful that a campus whose African American population that has exceeded over 20% of the students enrolled at MTSU are being forced to pass a building that was named from a racial intolerance to their race. MTSU has vowed to these students to be a safe place that not only helps to further their careers and education, but to enrich their lives and instill values that will aid them for years to come. As long as this name remains, this promise, this "True Blue" pledge that the school advertises so effectively, is completely dismantled with the very existence of Forrest Hall.

You have heard from us many times over the past year, and this fight does not stop here. There is only one solution to fixing this problem, and that is removing the name of Forrest Hall from MTSU's campus. Any other action, or "middle ground" will only further elevate the racial tensions this school has maintained for so many years. There are very few things that are as black and white as this problem you are now facing, and let us tell you, you are either against racism, or you support it with the decision you make on the naming of this building. The middle holds no ground.