

A Statement from Members of the Law School Faculty and Staff

The faculty and staff of the University of Richmond School of Law express their support for the removal of the names of Robert Ryland and Douglas Southall Freeman from University buildings. This expression of support is based on a vote in which more than 80% of all Law School faculty and staff participated and that resulted in support for this statement from 96% of those voting.

Upon the recommendation of the Presidential Commission for University History and Identity, President Crutcher commissioned reports regarding Ryland, Freeman, and the University's role in the practice of enslavement. On February 25, 2021, the University of Richmond Inclusive History Project released their two reports—[“A Season of Discipline”: Enslavement, Education & Faith in the Life of Robert Ryland](#) and [“The Virginia Way”: Race, The “Lost Cause,” & The Social Influence of Douglas Southall Freeman](#). Further, last November, [the University for the first time recognized](#) a burial ground of enslaved persons that had been largely disregarded for the previous 180 years.

These reports as well as the University's ongoing reconciliation with its part in the history of enslavement were intended to deepen the University's engagement in in the work of making excellence inclusive—one of its core [strategic initiatives](#). As part of the University's [mission](#) to “educate students for lives of purpose, thoughtful inquiry, and responsible leadership in a diverse world,” the goal of the strategic initiative is also a challenge to us all to “work together to make Richmond a welcoming place for people from all backgrounds, identities, viewpoints, and experiences.”

Given the University of Richmond's close association with the history of enslavement and segregation, we believe that the removal of the names of Ryland and Freeman from University buildings is necessary. Doing so would allow us to fulfill our strategic initiative and live the University's mission. Our campus will not be a welcoming place if it continues to valorize the names of two individuals whose actions in life sought to marginalize and oppress. Further, we will not be modeling responsible leadership in a diverse world if we fail to act in this moment.

Removing these names is not the end of our University's work to cultivate and nurture a meaningfully diverse and inclusive community. We recognize that hard work lies ahead, in which compassion, courage, and collaboration will be required. If the University fails to take even just this first step—removing the names of Ryland and Freeman from our buildings—we risk hobbling our work in all future endeavors.