June 19, 2019

To:

James Ryan, President of UVA, president@virginia.edu
Mark M. Luellen, Chair of UVA Committee on Names, mml2r@virginia.edu
Eric Swensen, UVA Health System Public Information Officer, ews3j@virginia.edu

To President Ryan, Mr. Luellen, and Mr. Swensen,

Why does a portion of UVA Hospital continue to be named after Paul Barringer?

Please rename it!

The Barringer Wing is currently part of the West Complex, home to outpatient clinics and close to the hotels of the East Range and Hospital Drive. Barringer's name is set in bold, all-capital letters at the entrance to the facility and somehow remained during the period of reflection and historical investigation that led to naming of Gibbons House ('15), Skipwith Hall ('17), and the change from Lewis to Yen House ('17). The history of Paul Brandon Barringer (b. February 13, 1857-d. January 9, 1941) is well-known but the UVA Health System seems uninclined to make a change. I ask that you remove the Barringer name as soon as possible.

In "What's in a name? UVA buildings bear names of white supremacists," *Cville Weekly* reporter Samantha Baars quotes UVA Hospital spokesman Eric Swensen, one of the recipients of this letter, as saying: "The university is updating its naming policy; once that update is complete, we plan to follow the new process and seek Board of Visitors approval to change the name." That article was published on 9/26/2018, almost nine months ago, and according to Policy Directory EXT-004, "Naming Policies for the University of Virginia," its contents were, in fact, revised on 10/12/2018.

My question is: what has been done, since? Is permission sought from the current BOV?

I am aware of Barringer's role at the university and the Hospital, in particular. As many other historians have shown, Barringer oversaw the construction of the UVA Hospital and became its first superintendent in 1901. He was also an alumnus of UVA, a professor for over twenty years, and chairmen of the faculty from 1897-1903. Beyond that, he was photographed by Rufus Holsinger (image here), had a dedication addressed to him in *Corks and Curls* (1904), retired to Charlottesville after serving as president of Virginia Polytechnic Institute from 1907-14, and was buried in a family plot in the UVA cemetery.

Barringer's ties to the university are undeniably deep but as UVA professor of medicine P. Preston Reynolds writes, "Barringer joined the UVA faculty in 1883, the same year Francis Galton coined the term 'eugenics' to describe an area of scientific inquiry" (Reynolds, "Eugenics at the University of Virginia," in *Charlottesville 2017*, 121). In addition to his interests in racial pseudo-science, Barringer served as leader of the UVA chapter of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America (ASCOA), a white supremacist organization whose self-declared purpose was "to preserve the purity of the white race and to maintain the qualities and purposes of the Anglo-Saxon race" (Virginius Dabney, *Mr. Jefferson's University*, 66). The ASCOA was founded to perpetuate the mythology of white superiority and, among other activities, was an important lobbying group for the Racial Integrity Act of 1924, a

law that "stripped Native Americans, and members of other 'non-white' groups, of their land, voting rights, and legal identity" (sources here and here).

There is no doubt that Barringer was a leading eugenicist of his day, someone who both swore the Hippocratic Oath and contributed to white backlash in the era after Reconstruction and during Jim Crow. One of Barringer's most chilling legacies is a speech he gave at the Tri-State Medical Association in Charleston, South Carolina, entitled *The American Negro: His Past and Future* (1900). In his address Barringer speculated on what he repeatedly referred to as "the negro problem," or what the secretary of the sponsoring society called the "influence of heredity upon the negro" (source here). Barringer's speech became a considerable contribution to the professor's national standing, and as such is an example of how his professional success and esteem was built on an ability to articulate the supposed medical evidence for the superiority of whites over blacks.

I ask you to remove Paul Barringer's name from the West Complex wing as soon as possible. Seek permission from the current BOV and, more importantly, put your own abilities and powers behind this much-needed change.

Please feel free to respond via email or Twitter, and all the best,

Sincerely,

Justin Greenlee