

Our View: Autherine Lucy Foster's name does not belong beside a Klansman's

[CW Editorial Board](#)

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The Crimson White published its [Justice Edition](#) on Thursday morning. On Thursday afternoon, the board of trustees [renamed Graves Hall](#) — named for former Alabama governor and Ku Klux Klan member Bibb Graves — to Lucy-Graves Hall.

The addition was meant to honor Autherine Lucy Foster, the first Black student at The University of Alabama, on the 66th anniversary of her enrollment.

Lucy was enrolled at the University for three days before riots led to her removal from campus. She hid from protesters in Graves Hall. Now her legacy is preserved alongside its namesake.

The trustees' latest renaming effort shows the University's [inability to abandon its racist legacy](#) despite researching campus building namesakes for a year and a half.

The committee's efforts have led to five renamings. Four of those buildings have placeholder names: the English Building, Honors Hall, Presidents Hall and the University of Alabama Student Center. Only one received a permanent name that aligns with the board of trustees' initial goals.

The group of trustees renamed [Wade Hall](#) to honor Archie Wade, the first Black faculty member at the University. Much like Lucy, Wade faced racism that devolved into violence during his time on campus. The trustees determined his legacy deserved a building in his sole honor. Why doesn't Lucy?

Combining Lucy's and Graves' names conflates two legacies — one the University should embrace, and another it needs to shed. Attempting to commemorate them as equals is unjust.

Lucy risked everything to desegregate The University of Alabama. For her efforts, she was driven out of the University and was not permitted to return as a student until more than 30 years later.

Graves' Klan membership was a convenient stepping stone in his political career. He shed his white robes once they no longer suited his political purpose. While he became known as one of the most progressive governors in the South, his ability to do so came with the endorsement of a white supremacist organization.

Graves was a prominent figure in the Klan. He received a gold passport and carried the title of Grand Cyclops. White supremacy protected Graves and endangered Lucy. Commemorating their legacies together is disingenuous, but such false comparisons are par for the course in the state of Alabama.

Alabama and Mississippi celebrate Robert E. Lee Day on the third Monday in January while the rest of the United States commemorates the life of Martin Luther King Jr. The state of Alabama clings to two incompatible identities as it tries to reconcile its history. Any hesitation to condemn its racist history is a confirmation that racism persists.

Lucy remains an inspiration to UA students. Our sister publication, Nineteen Fifty-Six Magazine, draws its name and mission from her courage. Lucy's Legacy in John England Jr. Hall is a hub for young women to learn about her and other women of color who paved the way.

At a dedication of a marker in Lucy's honor in 2017 — a marker that stands in front of Graves Hall — UA President Stuart Bell recognized Lucy's courage. The historical marker, he said, is a sign of her courage.

Lucy spoke of courage today as well.

"I am so grateful to all who think that this naming opportunity has the potential to motivate and encourage others to embrace the importance of education," Lucy said on Thursday, "and to have the courage to commit to things that seek to make a difference in the lives of others."

We wish The University of Alabama had the courage to commit to things that make a difference in the lives of others. We wish the University had the courage to commit to change.

Today's decision was a cowardly compromise that presents the illusion of forward momentum while clinging to a racist past.

Lucy acted with courage. Now it's time for the University to do the same.



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