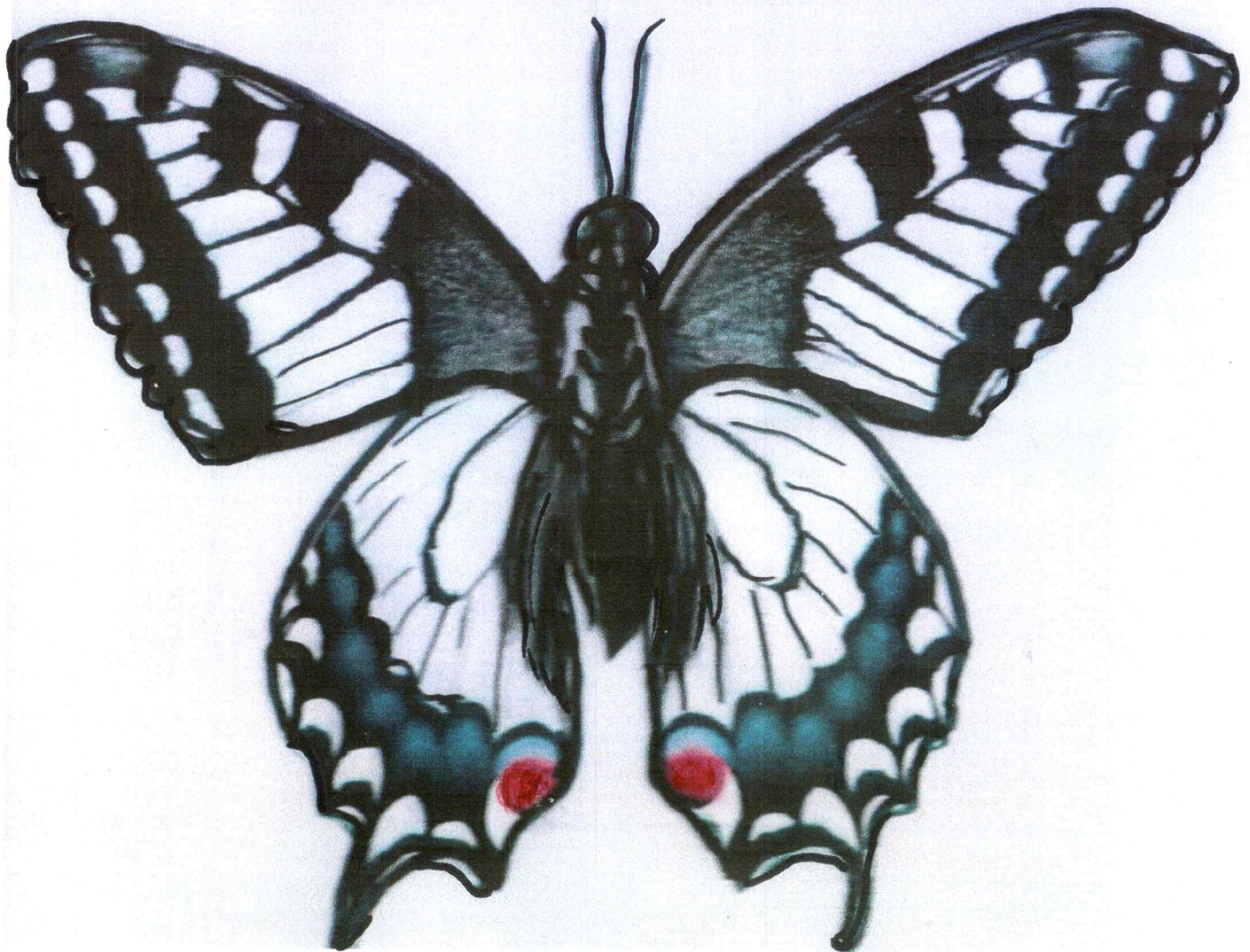


Change  
the  
Names



## **PURPOSE OF THE PETITION**

**Change the Names ([changethenames.org](http://changethenames.org)) is a grassroots movement based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.**

**We are petitioning the Mayor and Council of Chapel Hill to remove and replace racist street signs. These signs of shame, memorialize white supremacists of the past, maligning and offending our current residents.**

**They have no place in the enlightened Chapel Hill environment of 2024 which celebrates equity, diversity, and inclusion.**

**Individual residents are not equipped to execute a solution. The architecture of change will only be successful if the town of Chapel Hill commits to structure the change with the revenue, personnel, and legal authority which only they can provide.**



## CHANGE THE NAMES PROJECT: A BRIEF HISTORY

### 2021

- Project conceptualized as part of the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting antiracism mission.
- [Change the Names \(CtN\)](#) expands into the greater Chapel Hill community as a grassroots movement.
- Random survey of Chapel Hill residents indicates widespread support for replacement of racist street signs. Survey data results in designation of Cameron Ave to Pauli Murray Ave as first name change project.
- [changethenames.org](http://changethenames.org) website established
- Cameron Ave property ownership information collected from Orange County GIS staff

### 2022

- Series of three informational flyers mailed to Cameron Ave property owners
- CtN Volunteers canvass property on Cameron Ave (homes, businesses, and UNC fraternal organizations)
- Nonresidential property owners contacted in Raleigh, NC, Richmond, VA and Los Angeles, CA

### 2022-2023

- Petitions signed by Cameron Ave property owners and by Chapel Hill residents
- CtN Project Endorsements provided by:

Binkley Baptist Church

Gerrie Richards, President, Chapel Hill NOW

Emily Kunz, manager, Charlotte NC Legacy Name Change Project

Craig Little, Montford Point Marines Association

Rosita Stevens-Holsey, Founder, Pauli Murray Foundation

Tom Munk, Chapel Hill Friends Meeting

John Manley, Jr., Cameron Avenue Property Owner

Barry Nakell, Chapel Hill Resident and Civil Rights Attorney

Vera Cecelski, Stagville Plantation Historian

The ***Change the Names*** project seeks to remove the vestiges of racism from street names throughout the town of Chapel Hill.

We believe that the honor of a street name given to past slaveholders amplifies the daily negative impact of their words and deeds in both our individual lives and that of our community as a whole. As caring residents who believe in equality for all, we seek instead to honor those whose very lives embody the positive values to which we all aspire.

The replacement name of Pauli Murray Avenue was chosen based on research and informal canvassing of black and white residents of Chapel Hill. Community input continues to be the source for future replacement names. We, the people of Chapel Hill, must decide whom from our past we will honor.

This petition for changing Cameron Avenue to Pauli Murray Avenue to be followed by other name replacements is a complex and serious undertaking. Our grassroots movement, which originated at the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting, is now reaching out to the Mayor and Council of Chapel Hill to play a substantial role in this significant endeavor.

It's time to end the practice of memorializing names that represent racial harm. It's time to honor the names of those who have worked so hard and sacrificed so much to advance humanity. It's time for Chapel Hill to represent itself as the progressive, mindful, diverse community that we know it to be.

In doing so, we join other NC communities of Raleigh, Durham, Hillsborough, Charlotte, Fayetteville, and Asheville who have completed this important work.

When we know better, we do better.

## **Signs of Shame**

**In 1863 at the end of the Civil War, the United States closed a dark and brutal chapter in our nation's history and moved forward to create a better life for all our citizens. Since then, we have witnessed a slow and steady march of 160 years toward a brighter future.**

**It's therefore jarring to recognize that myriad streets throughout the southern United States are named after white supremacists. These inappropriate memorials are unmistakable signs of shame. This practice has finally been recognized by many as divisive to entire communities, and as a taunting reminder to descendants of the past victims. Many communities in the state of North Carolina have opted to remove these signs of shame. Raleigh, Hillsborough, Durham, Asheville, Fayetteville, and Charlotte have all been successful. These municipalities have provided the focused government support and financing necessary to accomplish this.**

**What about Chapel Hill? Is the town of Chapel Hill out of step in the march toward equity and inclusion? Why is our beautiful town, a beacon of education and healthcare, still the site of numerous inappropriate and offensive street names?**

**Change the Names ([www.changethenames.org](http://www.changethenames.org)) is a grassroots movement dedicated to engendering inclusive change within our community by reassigning honor: the accomplishments of many have gone unacknowledged, while the cruelty of others has been commemorated.**

**Is the town of Chapel Hill ready to join other communities in the statewide movement to finally remove and replace these signs of shame?**

## **REMOVAL LIST OF SIGNS OF SHAME IN CHAPEL HILL**

### **Cameron Avenue and Cameron Court**

Paul Cameron enslaved 900 humans in North Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi. Many of the 900 enslaved persons in this area were forced to build UNC and were in servitude there for years after the Civil War. UNC bought, sold, and was gifted/escheated enslaved persons throughout this time.

### **Vance Street**

Zebulon Vance, Governor of North Carolina, and enslaver who told the US House of Representatives in 1860, of strong opposition to emancipation. He spoke of the “disgust and loathing of mixing the quick and jealous blood of the European with the putrid stream of African barbarism”

### **Kenan Street**

William R. Kenan Sr., confederate soldier and white supremacist led an 1898 insurrection of 400 white supremacists in Wilmington, North Carolina. They overthrew the duly elected government, burned down the Black businesses and killed more than 60 Black residents and expelled many others.

**Pauli Murray** is an excellent choice for renaming the Chapel Hill street currently known as Cameron Avenue. Cameron Avenue is named for Paul Cameron, an infamous white supremacist who enslaved 900 in Durham, and continued their servitude at UNC after the Emancipation Proclamation.

Pauli Murray was born in 1910 with strong ties to Chapel Hill which can be traced back 200 years. Cornelia, Murray's grandmother, was born into slavery in Chapel Hill and lived on the street now known as Smith Level Road. Cornelia is acknowledged as the daughter of an enslaved woman named Harriet Day and her enslaver's son James Sidney Smith.

Pauli Murray graduated from Hunter College, earned law degrees at Howard and Berkeley, and was the first Black person to obtain a Doctorate of Law from Yale.

In 1938, Murray applied to UNC's graduate school of sociology. Her rejection letter stated "members of your race are not admitted to the University."

Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP used Murray's law school thesis from Howard University as the core of their legal theory when they argued before the Supreme Court during Brown vs. Board of Education, which desegregated schools in the entire United States. Murray was also a founder of NOW National Organization for Women, and taught at Brandeis University for ten years.

In 1977, Murray was ordained as the first female Episcopal priest and her connection with Chapel Hill came full circle when she presided over her first Holy Eucharist at Chapel Hill's Chapel of the Cross Church.

Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray died in 1985 and in 2012 the Episcopal Church made her a saint.



13001 Roberson Place  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774

September 25, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this letter as my declaration of support for Change the Names. This worthwhile organization is seeking to change the names of street signs in Chapel Hill that are named for those with a racist history. According to the 2020 US Census, 29% of Chapel Hill's population are people of color. Street signs with names of slave owners and Confederate soldiers are an unfortunate daily reminder of the brutal history of plantation culture. Changing these signs allows a reflection of the diversity of the town and will bring about a sense of pride for all residents.

Currently Change the Names aims to change "Cameron Avenue" to "Pauli Murray Avenue". "Cameron Avenue" is named for Paul Cameron who was once the largest slaveholder in North Carolina. Cameron leaves behind a legacy of violence towards African Americans. If we are successful at changing "Cameron Avenue" to "Pauli Murray Avenue" we will be naming the street after one of the most important civil rights and women's rights activists of the 20th century. Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray's law school thesis was the basis of the legal theory used by Thurgood Marshall when he successfully argued *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which effectively desegregated schools in the United States. Pauli worked tirelessly as she strived for human rights and the dignity of life for all.

As we continue to navigate an increasingly volatile social and political climate, "Pauli Murray Avenue" would be a tribute to diversity, equity and inclusion for all citizens. Murray has numerous ties to Chapel Hill. She presided over her first Holy Eucharist at Chapel Hill's Chapel of the Cross as a newly ordained (and first Black female) Episcopal Priest. Murray's grandmother was born in Chapel Hill and had worshipped regularly in that church. As a niece of Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray, I am hopeful that you are willing to help us remove these reminders of our country's darkest history. I urge you to please support Change the Names in any way you possibly can.

Sincerely,

Rosita Stevens-Holsey  
Preserving Pauli Murray, LLC  
Founder  
202-445-4648



**Dear members of the Chapel Hill Town Council,**

**The work of the "Change the Names" organization is an important part in the ongoing effort to recognize and acknowledge the part that Black, Indigenous, and women residents have played in the history and current development of Chapel Hill. For example, the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray, whose strong connections to Chapel Hill are commemorated by the Chapel of the Cross communicants, was also a founding member of the National Organization for Women. This is only one example of her accomplishments.**

**Pauli Murray's impact on local and national history is unequivocal. Yet, she receives no public recognition in Chapel Hill. A street named in her honor would be an excellent beginning to moving the history of Chapel Hill beyond its 19th Century roots in plantation culture and slavery. This is true of all too many streets and landmarks in our town.**

**The Chapel Hill chapter of the National Organization for Women (Chapel Hill NOW) is dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls. We recognize the work of "Change the Names" as complementary to our efforts. Young women should be able to take pride in the place they call home rather than be reminded daily of those that enslaved their ancestors.**

**As the president of Chapel Hill NOW, I endorse the work of "Change the Names" and call on the town council of Chapel Hill to support "Change the Names" in every and all ways possible.**

**Respectfully,**

**Gerrie Richards  
Chapel Hill NOW, president**

**From: Craig Little,**  
**Subject: Support Name Change Initiative**

**Message Body: The importance of supporting a street name change, and recognizing a person with strong Chapel Hill connections who made an impact on American History.**

**Just as the Original Montford Point Marines chose Lt. Frederick C. Branch and Howard Perry who both have significant ties to Charlotte NC, "Change the Names" has chosen Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray as a recipient from their local area to be recognized. Pauli Murray, a civil rights activist, was the first Black person to earn a JSD (Doctor of the Science of Law) degree from Yale Law School, a founder of the National Organization for Women, and the first Black woman to be ordained as an Episcopal priest.**

**In order to move toward the future with greater understanding, we need to address the past. Changing a street name in Chapel Hill to honor someone that has made a positive impact in the past, that is still relevant now in the present, is an uplifting historic connection for all to embrace.**

**Craig Little,  
National Veterans Affairs Officer  
Charlotte Chapter President #40**

**Craig Little, PMP, CISM, CISA, CSM  
Accredited Claims Agent: 53814- POA Code: J1X  
National Montford Point Marine Association, Inc.  
veteransaffairs@montfordpointmarines.org  
(704) 726-4860 (Cell)  
(704) 702-8804 (Cell)**

- Building an equitable society requires us to dismantle the tributes to racists, slave owners, white supremacists, and confederate leaders that exist throughout our country in the form of memorials, monuments, street names, and other symbols. Violence against African Americans and other people of color is perpetuated by these racist symbols. We must be intentional and committed to changing our cities' landscapes to reflect the true diversity of our populations and ensure the well-being of all our residents.
- The work of the Charlotte community to change street names reflects a reckoning with Charlotte's complex history. While, eliminating tributes to racism and white supremacy, the Charlotte community renamed streets to elevate and honor Charlotte's rich African American history as part of its permanent landscape; namely, Brooklyn Village Avenue, Druid Hills Way, Good Samaritan Way, Montford Point Street and Revolution Park Drive.
- The opportunity to lead the implementation of the Legacy Commission's recommendations has been some of the most meaningful work of my career. I am so proud of the work the City of Charlotte and the Charlotte community have accomplished. It is a real testament to Charlotte, North Carolina's emergence as a progressive city that is not bound by an oppressive history. We know we have much more work to do in this regard, but it is important to acknowledge and celebrate progress when it occurs.

Thanks,

**Emily A. Kunze**

*Administrative & Executive Support Manager*

**Charlotte Area Transit System**

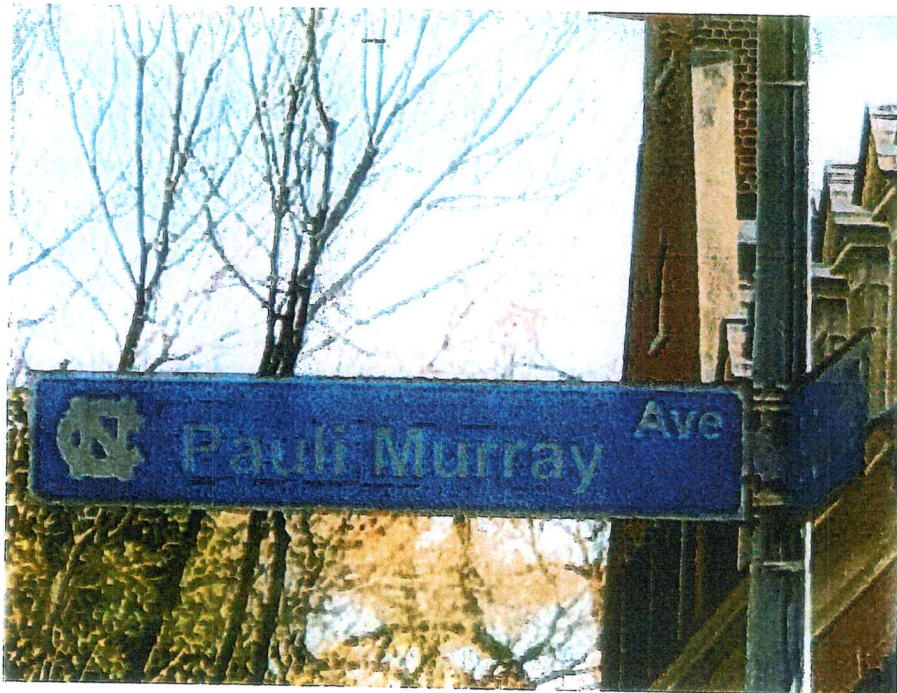
**600 East 4th Street | 7th Floor, Suite 741 | Charlotte, NC 28202**

**(980) 264-9301 | [Emily.Kunze@charlottenc.gov](mailto:Emily.Kunze@charlottenc.gov) | [charlottenc.gov](http://charlottenc.gov)**

 **CITY of CHARLOTTE**

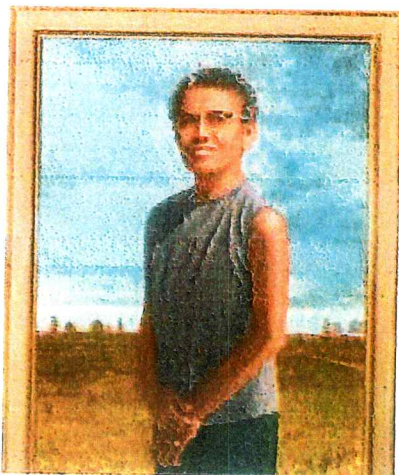


*Chapel Hill is better than this!*



Find out more about Pauli Murray's work for justice, and learn about Paul Cameron, the slaveowner whose slaves were the early builders of the UNC campus.

# CHANGE *the* NAMES!



It's time for Chapel Hill to reject the dark symbols of the past, and lift up the powerful and inspiring people of color who made Chapel Hill what it is today. To learn more go to [www.changethenames.org](http://www.changethenames.org)