

A Resolution Acknowledging the Racist History of Joseph Le Conte and Calling for the Renaming of Le Conte Avenue

WHEREAS, Le Conte Avenue is named after Joseph LeConte, a UC Berkeley professor, natural sciences researcher, and co-founder of the Sierra Club;¹

WHEREAS, Joseph LeConte was also a plantation owner and slaveholder who worked for the Confederate Army's Nitre and Munitions Bureau during the Civil War and who was also associated with the Confederate Secret Service;²

WHEREAS, LeConte opposed Reconstruction and Black enfranchisement after the Civil War, believed in the biological and thus political superiority of white people, endorsed Klan intimidation of Black voters, and believed that "Race-prejudice, or race-repulsion, to use a stronger term [. . .] is probably an instinct necessary to preserve the blood purity of the higher race;"³

WHEREAS, LeConte's notions of white supremacy as a justification for natural preservation completely disregards the indigenous ownership of many national conservation spaces by exploiting them for profit⁴;

WHEREAS, LeConte's name has been stripped by the Sierra Club, an organization he co-founded, from Le Conte Memorial Lodge, now called the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center;⁵

WHEREAS, LeConte's name has also been removed from Le Conte Elementary School in Berkeley, now called Sylvia Mendez Elementary School;⁶

WHEREAS, the Daily Cal Editorial Board has recently endorsed the renaming of Le Conte Hall at UC Berkeley, citing LeConte's "noxious views" on race;⁷

WHEREAS, the naming of a prominent street in the UCLA community after someone who embodied white supremacy and racism enables an unsafe campus culture, especially for Black, Indigenous, and other students of color;

¹ <https://boomcalifornia.com/2018/11/05/the-golden-states-scientific-white-supremacist/>

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ <https://www.sierraclub.org/change/2017/03/deeper-shade-green>

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ <https://www.dailycal.org/2018/05/25/le-conte-elementary-school-renamed-sylvia-mendez-key-figure-california-desegregation/>

⁷ <https://www.dailycal.org/2020/02/04/support-student-body-by-reviewing-all-controversial-building-names/>

WHEREAS, the public veneration of slave owners and Confederates is incompatible with a culture which values Black people and Black lives;

WHEREAS, there are many people with ties to UCLA, Westwood, and Los Angeles more deserving of public honor;

WHEREAS, the North Westwood Neighborhood Council, representing UCLA, has unanimously supported a resolution to change the name of Le Conte Avenue;

LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the USAC calls for Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Koretz to introduce a motion to the Los Angeles City Council to rename Le Conte Avenue to better reflect the values of the district;

LET IT THEREFORE BE RESOLVED, that the USAC condemns racism and white supremacy in any of its forms, including but not limited to the glorification of racist individuals via public infrastructure naming, and calls for the UCLA community to actively investigate the people they choose to glorify in and around our campus.