

## **Union Council Minutes Summer 2018**

**June 28, 2018**

**Council Room, Memorial Union**

Present: Brennan Bahr, Yogev Ben-Yitschak (by phone), Farhat Bhuiyan, Mills Botham, George Cutlip, Susan Dibbell, Mark Guthier, Fernanda Martinez, Liz Preston, Erin Roberge, Argyle Wade

Guests: Shauna Breneman, Lori DeMeuse, Doug Erickson, Miguel Guevara, Sherrill Butts Randall and Doug Randall.

Absent: Dan Grabois, Heidi Lang, Chris Verhaeghe

### **Call to Order and Introductions**

Mills Botham called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

### **Approval of Agenda and Meeting Minutes**

Liz Preston made a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Farhat Bhuiyan seconded the motion. Liz Preston made a motion to approve the June 6, 2018 meeting minutes. Mark Guthier seconded the motion.

### **Open Forum**

There were no issues brought forth.

### **Review of Yale Naming Criteria**

Mark Guthier recommended, that as suggested at the June 6 meeting, the Yale "Report of the Committee to Establish Principles on Renaming" be used as a framework for making a decision on our named spaces issue. Mark reviewed an excerpt of the report (which is available on the Union website) which contains the presumptions and principles used in arriving at their decision. The Yale report was recommended by the co-chairs of the Chancellor's ad hoc study group. Mills Botham pointed out that we are not limited to this criteria but could use it as a guiding framework. Mark Guthier replied that it is critical to determine the criteria before the decision making process is underway.

Liz Preston noted that there are different types of spaces in the Yale study and our spaces are blank rooms within a building. George Cutlip pointed out that student programmers will determine what fills our spaces; they are a blank canvas. Farhat Bhuiyan expressed her feeling that naming of programming spaces is more impactful. It was agreed to use the Yale report as the general guiding principle for decision making. Any motions to change or amend the document will be entertained at the beginning of the next meeting on July 17. Farhat Bhuiyan agreed to bring a recommended amendment to that meeting.

### **Presentation by Sherrill and Doug Randall Regarding Porter Butts**

Sherrill Randall stated that she is representing the nine living relatives of Mr. Butts. They assumed that once the Chancellor's study was complete it would conclude that her father was not a member of the Ku Klux Klan and the issue would be resolved. This has been a very difficult experience for the family and she has spent the past couple of months doing research. She noted that their family has had a long history of Union involvement. Ms. Randall stated that Porter was not a member of the Ku Klux Klan and that the family is 100% certain of this. His values of equality and open discussion were there when he was a student and continued on throughout his life. He was a man of great vision and could put that

vision into action – he really created the Wisconsin Union. He also made major contributions to College Unions around the world.

Ms. Randall expressed that the family was very distressed with the part of the Chancellor's study report that singled Porter out. She reviewed the report and asked Council members to see it through Porter's eyes. They feel that the media did not do due diligence prior to writing the initial articles. They are very pleased at how Union Council is moving forward with this issue, but are unhappy with the recommendation to cover names while studying the issue further, as that presumes guilt.

The family decided to conduct its own research and reviewed all issues of the 1922-24 *Daily Cardinal*. Ms. Randall stated that the family has issues with the hate and bias claim and feel that the filers of the claim did not do due diligence before filing the claim. Mr. Randall pointed out that deep and thorough research was not done on the lives of Mr. Butts and Mr. March before the reports were written and the claim was filed.

Ms. Randall presented two *Daily Cardinal* editorials from March 11, 1924 and March 29, 1924 issues that her father either wrote or supervised as the editor. The family feels this is a significant document in proving that Mr. Butts was not involved with the Klan. She then reviewed a timeline from 1919 – 1924 that shows Mr. Butts time on campus as it relates to the history of the KKK. Mr. Randall pointed out that it is important to envision what life was like at that time while considering this material.

Liz Preston asked for clarification on the appointment of Mr. Butts to the honor society KKK in spring 1922 and the April 17, 1923 renaming of the KKK to Tumas. That indicates that Porter was a member of the KKK for nearly one year. Ms. Randall pointed out that appointments were made in spring for the following academic year, thus Mr. Butts was technically a member of the KKK from September 1922 to April 17, 1923. She surmised that he could have been working to change the name to Tumas during that time period.

Ms. Randall added that after her father retired her parents built a home in Bequia, West Indies, whose inhabitants are of African and Indian descent and that the home remains in the family today.

Argyle Wade noted the irony of having the honor society group name be the same as the national Knights of the Ku Klux Klan when there were millions of other naming options. Ms. Randall stated that this is unknown and the name was originally adopted by the Illinois honor society. George Cutlip shared his theory that the name may be derived from the Greek word for circle, Kirkos. He also stated that the *Daily Cardinals* referenced are historical documents and are in very fragile condition. Union Council should stand behind an effort to preserve them.

Mr. Randall stated that he is confident that the family's research will exonerate Porter should legal action be taken.

#### **Presentation by Miguel Guevara, WUA Chairperson**

Mills Botham introduced Wisconsin Union Association Chair Miguel Guevara. Mr. Guevara stated he is in attendance to give WUA's perspective on the naming issue. He went on to give some background on WUA noting it was founded in the 1920's as the Memorial Union Building Association.

Miguel prefaced his presentation saying that he was a student at UW-Madison in the 1990's and experienced racism during his time here. Having personal experience with racism, he admitted that he

was very conflicted in reading through the documents. He added that he feels there is still much work that needs to be done to make the Wisconsin Union a welcoming space.

He then gave a presentation on the research on Porter Butts done by the Wisconsin Union Association and noted that many of the media reports haven't been factual. There is a strong feeling among WUA Trustees that they should combat the inaccuracies. Mr. Guevara stated that the Wisconsin Union Association has many individuals with various skills and talents who are willing to assist Union Council with this issue if desired.

George Cutlip stated that we need to clarify which Ku Klux Klan organization we are referring to – the fraternity honor society or the national organization. Mills added that we need to be very diligent about the accuracy and consistency of the information we present. What the media reports cannot be controlled, but how we respond can. Miguel noted that WUA is tracking media reports and classifying them by the degree of accuracy and whether a response is warranted. He reiterated that WUA is here to support Union Council and his opinion is that they are an appropriate organization to fight facts. George added that we need to be seen as the irrefutable source of facts on the matter.

Brennan Bahr stated his concern regarding assumptions being made between the facts. There are many things we don't know and how much is speculation vs fact will be taken into account. Mills added that speculation is a dangerous error and we would be more apt to point out missing information than speculating on what missing information could be.

Mark Guthrie indicated that the repository of facts should be deemed complete before Council moves ahead with a decision.

#### **Next Steps: Q&A and Verification Process**

Mills noted that Heidi Lang was unable to attend. Farhat Bhuiyan reported in her absence that given the sensitivity of the information Heidi feels all facts need to be double and triple checked. She is working with the UW Archives to verify accuracy. Heidi also is proposing a discussion or listening session in July with the hope of moving forward toward a decision in August.

Liz Preston requested minutes from previous Union Council meetings where the issue was discussed. She also requested the text from the hate and bias claim. Argyle Wade will provide the basic text of the claim with the names of filers redacted. If Council wants to reach out to the individuals filing the claims the Dean of Students Office can assist. She also requested to hear from the WUD Directors and students impacted by the naming issue.

#### **Open Forum Dates**

The purpose and format of the open forums was discussed. Susan Dibbell stated there will be two open forums, July 11 from 12:00 – 1:00 pm and July 12 from 5:00 – 6:30 pm. We are also creating a separate page on the Union website devoted to the named space issue. Farhat will share brief statements provided by last years Directors. Council Exec will write a message for the Dean of Students Office to send to the student body and those filing the hate and bias claims.

#### **Adjourn**

Farhat Bhuiyan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. George Cutlip seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.