



December 5, 2022

To: UC President Michael Drake

Re: Proposal to Remove the Name of Moses Hall

Dear President Drake,

On May 25, 2022, the UC Berkeley Building Name Review Committee (BNRC) submitted their response commending to remove the name Moses Hall from our university building. Throughout the 2021-2022 academic year, the BNRC completed a thorough review of the proposal and voted unanimously to remove the Moses name. Based on the BNRC's recommendation, and in keeping with the University of California's *Policy on Naming University Properties, Academic and Non-Academic Programs*, I am writing to request the removal of the name Moses Hall from our university building. Additionally, the BNRC requested that Bernard Moses' name be removed from the adjacent parking lot and any other campus features carrying the Moses name. They also recommended the campus investigate removal of the Moses name from programmatic uses, such as the Bernard Moses Memorial Lecture.

Moses Hall is named after Bernard Moses, who was a prominent and influential faculty member at the University of California. He was appointed professor of history and political economy in 1875 just seven years after the founding of the University. He taught almost all of the economics, history and jurisprudence courses over the next fifteen years, and he created and chaired the Department of History and Political Science in 1883. He was extremely influential in the development of the social sciences in a time of increased specialization, and played an important role in the creation of the Department of Political Science in 1903. Later in his career, Moses became a pre-eminent authority on the history of imperial Spain and Latin America. He was a proponent of trying to understand "Hispanic" economic history from the perspective of Latin American peoples and states, and he traveled widely in Mexico and South America. Moses continued to be an influential presence in the area of economics and retired in 1911.

Moses' made important academic and professional contributions that should be recognized and lauded. However, the BNRC's recommendation and the un-naming proposal submitted by the faculty, graduate students and staff of the Department of Philosophy, with the support of Global, International & Area Studies and of the Institute of Governmental Studies, highlight that some of his writings include expressions of racist and white supremacist views which stand in opposition to our university's values of inclusion and our belief in the relationship between diversity and excellence. According to the un-naming proposal, there is "significant evidence of Moses' acceptance of a view called classical racialism or racial essentialism".

Classical racialism asserts that races are differentiated from one another by inheritable physical, intellectual, aesthetic, and moral characteristics, and racial essentialism claims that the white race is superior to the other races with respect to these characteristics. In some of Moses' writings, he appears to suggest that race is socio-cultural, or socio-historical, rather than biological. However, there are examples in which it seems clear that Moses is talking about traits that refer to biology or "blood". The BNRC and un-naming proposal state that even if Moses considered race as socio-historical, rather than a matter of blood, when taken together with the

second idea just described—the idea that the white race is superior—the result is still a racist and white supremacist perspective. The proposal indicates that Moses' white supremacist views are central to his views about history, society, and politics. They are reflected in his academic writings about colonized people, both in the Americas and elsewhere in the world, and in his discussion of Black ex-slaves and their descendants in the U.S. They are also central to a “problem” that he discusses in several works: how white people ought to relate to non-white people, and how to ensure that their interaction does not impede the progression of Western civilization.” (p. 2-3)

Following is an example of Moses' belief that races were distinguished by inheritable physical and mental characteristics, i.e., that race is a matter of “blood”.

There are undeniably certain characteristics which pass by inheritance from generation to generation. These may be the mental and physical peculiarities of the family, or the more general characteristics or qualities by which one race is distinguished from another. There is no doubt, however, that the persistence of a national or race character may be explained, to a certain extent, by the fact of imitation, but, at the same time, there survives, by inheritance, in the nation as well as in the individual man, somewhat that can be accounted for neither on the ground of imitation nor on the ground of previous instruction. There exists an inherited bias, aptitude, or propensity, which makes certain ideas acceptable and other repugnant, and will, therefore, be likely to insure the adoption of the one and the rejection of the other. (*Data of Mexican and United States History*, p.8)

The following examples highlight the racial superiority and discriminatory language that Moses used to describe “negative inheritable characteristics associated non-white races and positive characteristics associated with the white race.” According to the Moses Un-Naming proposal, Moses believed that non-white races are inferior to the white race (Moses Un-Naming Proposal, p. 3).

“The United States were settled by a people who, throughout a most remarkable career of conquest and colonization, have never truckled to the savage, nor for the sake of influence over inferior races, been willing to give up their purity of blood... Wherever they [Spaniards] have met the native tribes of the America, they have been willing to descend from their European standard of civilization and affiliate with them on a lower plane. In Mexico, the Spaniards have mingled their blood with the natives....” (*Data of Mexican and United States History*, p.17)

“The Spaniards, who settled Mexico and South America intermarried with the Indians, and as a consequence their descendants fell below the European standard.” (*The Government of the United States*, 1906, p.2)

“It was understood that **the Indians, like all savages, lacked the habit of consecutive work**, and that compulsion would be necessary to make them persistent laborers.” (*Spain's Declining Power in South America 1730-1806*, p.387)

“**The Spanish-negro union might produce only a member of a subject class.**” (*Spain's Declining Power in South America 1730-1806*, p.396)

In Moses' *South America on the Eve of Emancipation (1898)*, he develops claims about the characteristics and abilities of certain races or sub-groups, some of which suggest that he regarded non-white people as, among other things, intellectually limited—“only a good beginner in learning” (228)—and incapable of innovation or any real enterprise.

“The combination of the Indian stock with that of the arrogant, adventurous Spaniard produced the mestizo, who had some of the qualities of both races, but whatever of the Spaniard was re-produced was belittled and vulgarized. Neither the Indian nor the mestizo was capable of originating and carrying on great enterprises.” (73)

It is also important to note that there are examples where Moses either presents opposing views about white supremacy and disapproval of some of the cruelest expressions of a white supremacist worldview. However, according to the proposal, “he is strikingly quick to excuse these” views. For example, he describes the subjection of certain countries to colonial rule (by “dominant nation of the superior race”) as an “inevitable [...] misfortune” traceable to the “lack of civilization” of the peoples colonized (“Results of the War between Russia and Japan,” 1905, pp.121-2). “Moses describes with alarming coolness the actions of English colonizers”:

“their advance has been marked by the disappearance of the uncultivated aborigines. The English in colonizing have been uncompromising. To the barbarians whose territory they have overrun, they have held out two simple alternatives, either to accept the English standard of civilization, or to fold their tents and depart.” (Data of Mexican and United States History, p.17)

Another example provided in the proposal was Moses’ suggestion that the dwindling of colonized populations might not be grounds for morally condemning the colonizer:

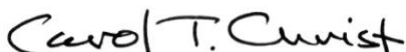
“A savage people unused to the regular tasks which civilized man imposes upon himself appears unable to maintain itself when subjected to the conditions of civilized life. The mere fact, therefore, that savages disappear when brought into contact with civilized society does not necessarily involve a condemnation of the superior race.” (Spain’s Declining Power in South America, 1730-1806, 1919, p.406)

The BNRC solicited campus community feedback and collected 154 responses. Approximately, 66% of the responses supported removing the name, and 34% of the responses opposed the proposal. According to the BNRC, numerous comments highlighted concerns over Moses’ racist views, support for white supremacy, and the harm caused to students of color. The opposing comments focused on the principle that buildings should not be un-named in general, as doing so strikes from the record a component of our history that, while not consistent with our values, the campus should be able to admit and learn from. Overall, the proposal and the public comments revealed significant support for un-naming Moses Hall, stressing that the name is an obstacle to creating a sense of belonging for all Berkeley students, faculty, and staff.

Based on the thorough review process, community feedback, and information received, I support the Committee’s proposal to remove the name of Moses from our campus building. I hereby submit the proposal to you for consideration. I include two documents in support of this proposal: our Building Name Review Committee’s recommendation, and the proposal to remove the name from Moses Hall.

I believe that removing the Moses name from our campus - and acknowledging our historical ties to Bernard Moses - will help Berkeley recognize a challenging part of our history while better supporting the diversity of today’s academic community. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Carol T. Christ
Chancellor

Attachments:

- The UC Berkeley Building Name Review Committee’s Recommendation to the Chancellor on the Moses Name
- Proposal from the faculty, graduate students and staff of the Department of Philosophy, with the support of Global, International & Area Studies and of the Institute of Governmental Studies