



Media Contact:

Nanette Blake
Senior Public Relations Manager
InspireNOLA Charter Schools
Nanette.blake@inspirenolaschools.org
Cell (914) 625-3528

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stakeholders ask Superintendent to remove McDonogh 35 from the OPSB renaming initiative

NEW ORLEANS (April 20,2021) — Several stakeholders of McDonogh 35 Senior High School, including students, faculty, and alumni, recently submitted letters to the Orleans Parish School Board Superintendent, Board members, and the Facilities Renaming Initiative Committee asking that McDonogh 35 be removed from consideration from the committee’s renaming initiative.

“The Student Government Association (SGA) has collectively decided to support the prospective of the McD 35 Alumni Association and its local, national, and global members; the consensus of the current student body; the administration and collective faculty; as well as the thousands of community members and supporters of the school in their quest to not remove or change the name of the school,” writes McDonogh 35 Student Government President Taylor Pittman. [[view letter](#)]

The School Board said it is fundamentally opposed to retaining names of school facilities named for persons who were slave owners, confederate officials and segregation supporters. However, those submitting letters also believe that McDonogh 35’s history and reputation as a school has transcended any association with the eponymous man after whom it was named and has taken on a meaning and legacy of its own these last 100 years.

“The legacy of the school far exceeds any minor connections to an individual who may have had the same name. Being that McDonogh 35 has always been called such, never bearing the full name of any person, it should remain separate from the life and actions of any individual who may bear that name,” the letter from the McDonogh 35 Alumni Association states. [[view letter](#)]

The SGA acknowledged that while “there is a need to have such conversation and reform as it relates to the impact of societal perception surrounding the choice of names for public spaces

and institutions, there must be a clear understanding that McD 35 does not have a positive or negative connection or reflection to the late John McDonogh.”

Current McDonogh 35 school administrator as well as Class of 2004 alumnus, Romero J. Stewart writes: “To rename McD 35, ultimately erasing its legacy of academic excellence and the beginning of secondary education for African Americans in the southern state of Louisiana, is a greater injustice than any action John McDonogh could have taken in his seventy years of life.”

“The history of this great institution, my school, is much too important to be erased, our name must unequivocally remain McDonogh 35 Senior High School,” he says. [[view letter](#)]

McDonogh 35 Senior High School was the first public high school for African American students in the state and has been recognized by the city for its the historical relevance and monumental heritage.

“For more than one hundred years, McD 35 has cultivated an environment where professionals educated and produced an extensive list of citizens who left to become local, national, and in many cases global phenomenon,” Pittman writes. “Removing McD 35 from local, state, and national histories will instantly send a message that this great institution of learning for disenfranchised students of all socio-economic backgrounds, primarily African Americans, has no significance in the lives and communities of which it has poured into.”

“As the Student Government Association in proxy of our collective student body, we ask that you stand with us in support of McD 35’s stakeholders in their quest to retain the name of the school as its legacy and history has filled an indelible space in the hearts and minds of those products of its programs and communities-at-large,” Pittman concluded.

The Alumni Association stated that the school’s legacy has been built by graduates over the years and the school’s name is a highly valued part of their history.

“Changing McDonogh 35 would not be a progressive thing to do nor will it erase the sordid history of the past,” the letter states. “What it will do is slowly erase the hard work and efforts graduates put in to make the name and thought of the school as revered as it is.”

###

About McDonogh 35 Senior High School

Opened in 1917, McDonogh 35 is the first public high school for African American students in Louisiana. Located in the Bayou District at 4000 Cadillac Street, the school serves nearly 650 students and has a 100 percent graduation rate. Besides excellence in the classroom, the school is also known for its stellar music program including its marching band and choir. The Roneagles have an active and supportive alumni association spanning several generations of notables in the city. It joined the InspireNOLA Charter Schools network in 2019. For more information, visit www.mcdonogh35shs.org.