
ARTICLE 23

TWENTY-THIRD ARTICLE

Submitted by: Deborah Brown, Anne Greenwald

To see if the Town will change the name of the Edward Devotion School to the Roland B. Hayes School, or other appropriate name consistent with 21st century values and the Town's commitment to diversity and inclusion by September 1, 2018.

or act on anything relative thereto.

PETITIONER'S ARTICLE DESCRIPTION

This Article calls for changing the name of a popular public school named after a slaveholder, Edward Devotion. Holding a slaveholder up as a beacon of virtue to young people sends the wrong message to our youth, people of color, allies and the broader Brookline community. Brookline cannot claim to be taking the moral high ground and also be comfortable having a school named after a slaveholder.

By way of background, in 1744, Edward Devotion, Brookline resident and slave-owner, bequeathed property to the Town for the building of a new school. Over two centuries passed when some residents had an interest in establishing the role that slavery played in the Town's development. In response to such interests, in 2006, the Hidden Brookline Committee was established by the Town to bring to light the history of slavery in Brookline. In the ensuing years, the Committee performed a great deal of research which resulted in 2012 a warrant article. In it, the Town acknowledged the history and pledged "vigilance against all practices and institutions that dehumanize and discriminate against people." It was the first time in Town Meeting that slavery in Brookline had been discussed since the 18th century.

On May 24, 2012, the Town passed the resolution called "A Resolution Regarding Slavery in Brookline." The Town has continued its commitment to inclusion. In 2017, the Town entered into a compact with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), agreeing to implement racial equity, eliminate implicit and explicit bias, and eradicate individual, institutional, and structural racism. Signs around Town celebrate the Town's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Despite some best efforts to support diversity and inclusion, few knew that Edward Devotion was a slaveholder. In August 2017, the Brookline School Committee received multiple requests, in writing, to discuss changing the name of the Edward Devotion School to something more compatible with 21th century values. Despite multiple attempts by residents to get the School Committee's attention, the request went without a substantive reply until a February 2017 article appeared in the *Brookline TAB*. Deborah

Brown published an open letter to the community pressing that the School's name be changed. A subsequent editorial appeared two weeks later in the *Boston Globe* expressing a similar sentiment. The communication in the papers and direct communications with the School Committee provide actual and apparent notice of our intent to have the School's name changed. Following the Brookline TAB article, residents formed an organization to advocate for the name change. In March 2017, the School Committee agreed to discuss a renaming the Edward Devotion School.

Retaining the Edward Devotion's name on a school or a protracted debate creates a variety of issues for the Town. Beyond the social issues it has brought to light, there are potentially economic repercussions. While there are few Towns as livable as Brookline, people may choose to live elsewhere. In a competitive job market, people may actually elect to work elsewhere. Businesses may have concerns about whether people will want to travel to Brookline to do business. Finally, protracted debate may draw a heinous and horrific element to the community.

We believe that we have described why it is in the best interest of the Town to change the name of the Edward Devotion School to a more appropriate name.

SELECT BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION

ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION