Renaming Phelan Residence Hall
ASUSF Resolution 16-17-01

Whereas: The University of San Francisco currently has a residence hall built in 1955 and named after former Mayor of San Francisco and USF Alumnus James Phelan; and

Whereas: Phelan was a major antagonist of Japanese immigrants who argued that they would “destroy American civilization as surely as Europe exterminated the American Indian.” He also remarked on the floor of the U.S. Senate that African Americans were “a non-assimilable body, a foreign substance;” and

Whereas: In 1920, Phelan’s campaign slogan for the Senatorial Election was ‘Keep California White;’ and

Whereas: SF Weekly named USF as a location “Where You Can Find Sites Named After Racist San Francisco Mayor James D. Phelan;” and

Whereas: Phelan Hall houses three living learning communities (Esther Madriz Diversity Scholars, Erasmus, and Gender Inclusive Housing) that focus on social justice and provide space for these identities to be included and celebrated; and

Whereas: USF prides itself on its commitment to its Jesuit values, and mission which include the moral dimension of every human choice, inclusive excellence, and social responsibility; therefore, be it

Resolved by the Associated Students of the University of San Francisco Senate, representing all undergraduate students of the University: That the university change the name of Phelan hall to a title that reflects the vision and values of our institution; furthermore, be it

Resolved: That in line with Catholic social teaching of a preferential option for the poor and historically oppressed, we urge a preferential consideration for names of people of color and historically marginalized people; furthermore, be it

Resolved: That after surveying our constituencies, the Associated Students have identified potential new titles for the building. Namely we suggest, Yuri Kochiyama Hall, Bill Russell Hall, Harvey Milk Hall, or Ollie Matson Hall.

Submitted by: Sean McCarthy, ASUSF Vice President of Advocacy
Presented: Tuesday, August 23, 2016
Signed: Tuesday, August 30, 2016

Shaya Kara, ASUSF President
Addendum A
Phelan’s Senatorial Campaign Material


Here's Where You Can Find Sites Named After Racist San Francisco Mayor James D. Phelan

By Ida Mojadad
Wednesday, Apr 22 2015

Want to see how impossible it is to avoid James D. Phelan's name in California? It recurs so often, you’d think it was a subliminal message.

James D. Phelan Memorial Beach (fixed)
Even after his death, Phelan was erasing Chinese immigrants from California. The small cove between Lands End and Baker Beach was said to have been a camp for Chinese fishermen in the 1800s and was dubbed China Beach. But because of the discriminatory legislation brought forth by Phelan and his cronies, the Chinese fishing community dwindled. When tCalifornia took ownership in 1933, it named the beach for Phelan in a giant slap to the minimal clout immigrants had at the time. More than 20 years later, the National Park Service acquired the property from the state and had the sense to change the name back.

Phelan Hall – University of San Francisco
Built in 1955, the university's first student residence hall stands at seven stories to welcome college freshman, while tipping its hat to its shady political alumnus. Phelan graduated with the Class of 1881 when it was still called St. Ignatius College.
Addendum C
Explanation behind the Suggested Names Provided by the Associated Students

Yuri Kochiyama was a “prominent Japanese activist who was heavily influenced by her family's internment and advocated for reparations for internees”. She also “fought for racial equality and worked with political figures like Malcolm X”.

Bill Russell “Mr. Russell, USF's most famous Alum, and who largely, through his sports performance at USF, landing two national championships, and subsequent NBA legend (11 NBA Championship in 13 years) reflects the best of USF ideals, has no recognition on USF's campus. To name a building formerly dedicated to the memory of a man on record for his resentments toward racial minorities in San Francisco, after USF's most famous—and neglected African American Alum (while he is still alive), would be a generational legacy of this USF Senate.”

Harvey Milk was one of the first openly gay officials when elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in the late 1970’s. He is known as a LGBTQ+ activist. He was assassinated while in office along with San Francisco Mayor Moscone.

Ollie Matson “was one of two African American football players on the 1951 USF Dons Football team. As many know, 1951 was the last year for USF football. An undefeated team, USF was not invited to any bowl game, as two of our players were Black. Rather than accept a bid that required the two footballers to stay home, the entire football team did not attend, and so closed the season knowing they would not be renewed. Ollie Matson grew up in SF, attending George Washington high school prior to his time at USF. Not only play football, Matson joined a fraternity at USF, was also selected as an All-American, and inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame. Matson also won both a silver and a bronze medal at the 1952 Summer Olympics. Matson later played on several NFL teams and would eventually be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Ollie Matson is an ideal name for a residence hall, as Matson was so heavily embedded in the school culture. As a member of the '51 Dons, Ollie Matson is a name that represents the values of USF, that social justice can be more important than winning a championship. While we no longer have a football team, the USF Dons will forever be a part of football lore”. 