

What You Can Do If Your High School/ College/Street Is Named After a Confederate

From the Author of *Robert E. Lee and Me*

How to change the name of a street or school that honors a Confederate

1. Research the name.

- a.** Who is the street or school named for? Look up the person using local records, newspapers, history books, or the [National Archives](#). Your research should help you understand why the person does not reflect local values. A librarian can help with your research.
- b.** Understand the context. When was the street, school, or park named? Often the period of the naming coincides with the height of legal and extralegal subjugation of Black people. Some streets or schools were named as a reaction to equal rights demanded by the 1954 US Supreme Court desegregation law. Understanding the context will make your case even stronger.
- c.** Create a story, a narrative, based on research. Tell it to family and friends. Can you convince others with your compelling research and story? Practice telling the story concisely.

2. Develop a campaign plan, including media engagement.

- a.** Understand the process. How does your town change street names? Is there an existing process? Who makes the decision?
- b.** Create a social media presence to tell your story, again and again.
- c.** Think about an online petition. Organize a rally and alert local media.

3. Develop advocates among stakeholders.

- a.** Tell the story to people who live on the street or go to the school. Will they support change?
- b.** Tell the story to city leaders. Tell the story to advocacy groups such as the NAACP, Urban League, church groups, Rotary, unions, etc. Will they support change?
- c.** Canvass local schools. Are there school groups willing to support change?

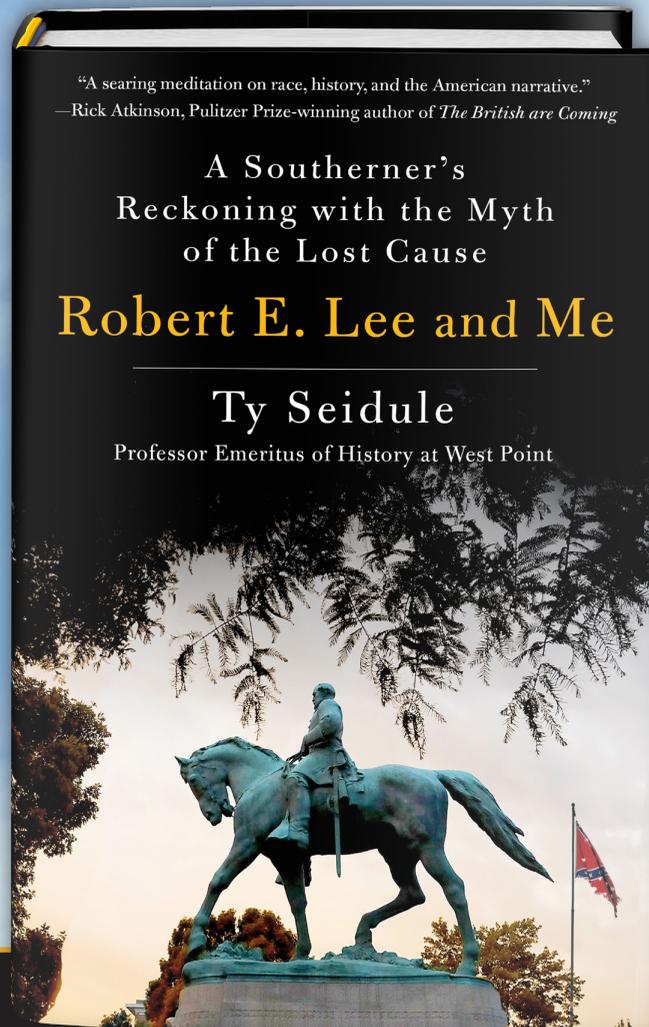


4. Make your case through official channels.

- a. Designate a spokesperson. Be ready to talk at a city council meeting. Use your well-researched story to talk concisely. Remember one phrase: “Confederates committed treason to preserve slavery.” Be prepared for hecklers. Stick to your points.
- b. Gain commitment for the change first. Don’t worry about the new name. Your goal is to rid your street of a name that does not represent the values of the community. When the town agrees to a name change, ask for a committee to select the new name.

5. Plan for success!

- a. Create a street party when the name change happens. You’ve made your community a better place. Celebrate!



For more resources see the Southern Poverty Law Center.

[Whose Heritage: Public Symbols of the Confederacy](#)