

Malverne students have led on inclusion

OPINION

My work on a federal panel also aims to change derogatory place names

BY RACHEL PEREIRA
Guest essay

From a distance, it was hard not to applaud the efforts of Malverne High School students, who successfully led a movement to re-name a street that honored a village settler who was also a leader of the local Ku Klux Klan chapter.

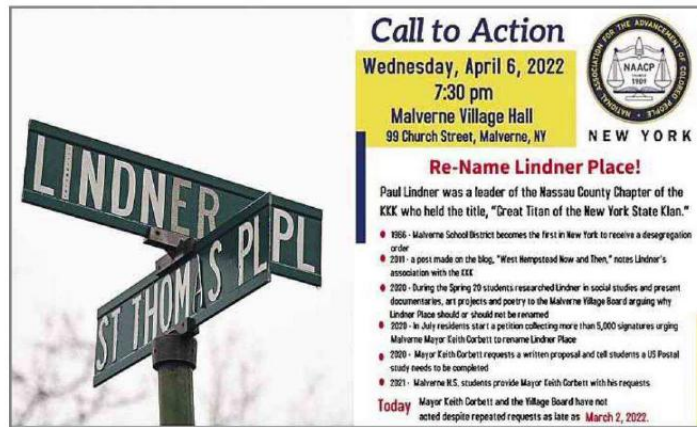
Lindner Place was named for Paul Lindner, a farmer who historians say led cross burnings and marches for the white supremacist KKK in the 1920s. In the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd by police, the students petitioned the village board for a more racially inclusive name for the street, which sits next to a school once named after Lindner.

Like the former Lindner Place Elementary School, now the Maurice W. Downing Primary School, the street has been renamed. What began as a student inclusivity project has changed the landscape of Malverne.

That it took since April for a consensus to develop on a new street name — Acorn Place — illustrates the complexities of inclusivity. As a member of the U.S. Department of the Interior's new Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names, I am tasked to work with the committee and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to identify federal lands with derogatory names. When meetings begin later this year, the committee is expected to engage with the public and Haaland to solicit and assist with proposals to change such names.

This committee is restricted to reviewing the names of federal properties. Debate over seemingly derogatory names has simmered for years; the committee is a step toward accelerating the process of reassessment, which previously had been done on a case-by-case basis.

Even before the announcement of the committee members in August, Haaland, the first American Indian cabinet



The old Lindner Place sign in Malverne, left, and a flyer announcing a village meeting on the students' project to rename the street, which was named for a local Klansman.

secretary, identified the word 'squaw' as sexist and derogatory to the American Indian community and took action to remove the word from nearly 650 geographic features across the country.

The Department of the Interior has received more than 1,000 recommendations for new names for those 650 locations. Nearly 70 tribal governments participated in consultations that yielded another several hundred recommendations. The new names chosen went into use immedi-

ately. Haaland was right when she said, "Our nation's lands and waters should be places to celebrate the outdoors and our shared cultural heritage." Our national commitment to inclusivity and diversity is embedded in whom we are as Americans.

My 16 colleagues come from backgrounds as diverse as the United States itself. They include one member of a Native Hawaiian organization, one member of a Native American tribal organization, four

members of a Native American tribe, scholars, civil rights authorities, experts in anthropology and cultural studies, and more.

It is no surprise that students led the call for change in Malverne. Young people remain among the most spirited elements of our population, confident in their conviction that activism in pursuit of a universal truth is the most American of values.

As I begin this appointment, I am confident the great experiment chartered in 1776 to bring together people from across the world to "form a more perfect union" will be a fulfillment of the ideals of our founding. The outcome of this committee will prove that we are more perfect as a union than we are siloed. I am proud to be a part of the American ideal and dream.

■ **THIS GUEST ESSAY** reflects the views of Rachel Pereira, vice president of equity and inclusion at St. John's University and one of 17 members of the Department of the Interior's Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names.



Dan Visconti as a passenger during five laps in a Lamborghini Aventador on Aug. 13 at Nassau Coliseum, a 90th birthday gift.

learning, and family complications such as job loss, food insecurity, and homelessness.

The passing score was lowered to accommodate the "missed learning" that occurred. It is disingenuous to not mention the pandemic when discussing this temporary change to graduation

requirements. The op-ed is also ironic because by offering a temporary appeal process, the state is actually working to leave no children behind and allow them to move forward out of the pandemic's shadow.

— JEANNE KNUDSEN, RIDGE

The writer teaches social studies at Longwood High School.

New LIRR patrols will have issues

In January, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority police finally will be leaving the safety of Penn Station and actually will be riding the Long Island Rail Road from 5 a.m. until the evening rush hour ["LIRR 'patrol' coming," News, Sept. 20].

Once again, the MTA/LIRR demonstrates poor leadership skills. I imagine the brain trust will have them in uniforms instead of plain clothes, which is more effective.

Most problems occur at night, especially after concerts and sporting events. That's when drunks are out causing fights, among other issues on the trains. Now, career criminals and the like will know to adjust their working hours to limit crimes from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. To me, these hours conveniently keep the MTA cops out of danger at the expense of the riders who always have had to

fend for themselves. Thanks for nothing.

— RICHARD J. TRENTACOSTA, VALLEY STREAM

At 90, he can have his pasta and eat it, too

In the scheme of life, this letter is a lightweight. But I felt compelled to tell another side to the health article "Secret to long life?" [exploreLI, Sept. 13], a study predicting that healthy diet adds to life expectancy.

My husband, Dan, just celebrated his 90th birthday, and his diet looks nothing like the one printed: daily servings of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, legumes, and fish.

The only vegetable he eats is

garlic-soaked spinach or string beans. Fish? Never, and also no veal but plenty of beef and pork, especially processed, and chicken only if smothered in rich sauces. Nuts, yes, if they're fried in oil and heavily salted.

Legumes are doable in lentil soup, richly seasoned, and as beans in beef chili. Whole grains like quinoa, buckwheat and bulgur do not reside in our pantry. Coffee, yes; sugared drinks, yes. And lots and lots of pasta. And what did this 90-year-old do to celebrate his momentous birthday?

He enjoyed five laps around a course in a Lamborghini driven by a professional. Sometimes studies miss an exception.

— PAT VISCONTI, ISLIP TERRACE

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