



## **Woodrow Wilson's racism isn't the only reason for Princeton to shun his name**

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Presidential candidate Ted Cruz, a Princeton graduate, calls Princeton protesters who want Woodrow Wilson's name removed from the university "pampered teenagers who are scared of an idea that challenges their world view."

The protesters, led by the Black Justice League, are challenging the omnipresence of Wilson on campus. Wilson served as president of Princeton before going on to be governor of New Jersey and finally president of the United States. Both the prestigious Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and a residential complex, Wilson College, bear his name.

The protesters demand that "the university administration publicly acknowledge the racist legacy of Woodrow Wilson" and take steps to rename the dormitory and the Wilson School.

Cruz agrees with the protesters that Wilson was an "unmitigated racist." He re-segregated the federal workforce after gains made in the Reconstruction era, and removed black officials. This was no accident. In his 1901 book, "A History of the American People," he extolled the Ku Klux Klan for helping "the white men of the South" to rid themselves of "the intolerable burden of governments sustained by the votes of ignorant Negroes."

But here's the thing: Racism isn't the only aspect of Wilson's character and career that should give Princeton pause about honoring him.

Most notably, President Wilson led the United States into an unnecessary and disastrous war. World War I has been called "probably history's worst catastrophe." Certainly it was the United States' greatest foreign-policy mistake. British and then US involvement turned a central European conflict into a world war. The war and its consequences arguably led to the Communist takeover of Russia, National Socialism in Germany, World War II and the Cold War.

Wilson had long advocated a federal government with "unstinted power," and as president he quickly set about expanding federal power. He pushed for the creation of the Federal Reserve Bank, to centralize control over money and credit.

He imposed the first income tax under the new Sixteenth Amendment, and then sharply raised rates. He signed the first federal drug prohibition.

When war began, centralization accelerated. Historian Robert Higgs writes that the government “virtually nationalized the ocean shipping industry. It did nationalize the railroad, telephone, domestic telegraph, and international telegraphic cable industries.” Notably, World War I was the first American war to be fought primarily with conscript soldiers, who made up 72 percent of the Army.

Wilson pressed for the Espionage and Sedition acts, which virtually outlawed criticism of the government, the armed forces or the war effort. More than 2,000 people were prosecuted under the acts, including Socialist Party presidential candidate Eugene Debs, Socialist congressman and publisher Victor Berger, and Robert Goldstein, the producer of a film about the American Revolution, “The Spirit of ’76,” which was accused of bringing the British government into disrepute.

And that was before the Red Scare and the notorious Palmer Raids, carried out by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer in 1919-20. Sociologist and historian James W. Loewen wrote, “Neither before nor since these campaigns has the United States come closer to being a police state.”

A lesser-known feature of Wilson’s civil-liberties record was the administration’s attempt to hunt down, entrap and discharge gay sailors in Newport, RI, in 1919.

Wilson disliked checks and balances, saying that the government is a living organism and “no living thing can have its organs offset against each other as checks, and live.” More than a century after Thomas Jefferson refused to deliver a State of the Union address, calling it a “Speech from the Throne,” Wilson resumed the practice of speaking to a joint session of Congress.

There’s a reason that Ivan Eland rated Wilson last of all presidents on “peace, prosperity, and liberty” in his book “Recarving Rushmore.” And that’s reason enough for a great university to be embarrassed by its association with him.

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