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OUR OPINION

Recognition of Margaret Munday long overdue, well-deserved

Aug 15, 2021



Margaret Munday is shown in 2013 at her Auburn home.

Daily News File

More than half a century after she attended Western Kentucky University and led the charge in integrating the institution as its first Black student and graduate, Margaret Munday was given her rightful due Aug. 6.

Munday, a graduate of the class of 1960, was honored by WKU's board of regents, which voted to rename Northeast Hall in her honor.

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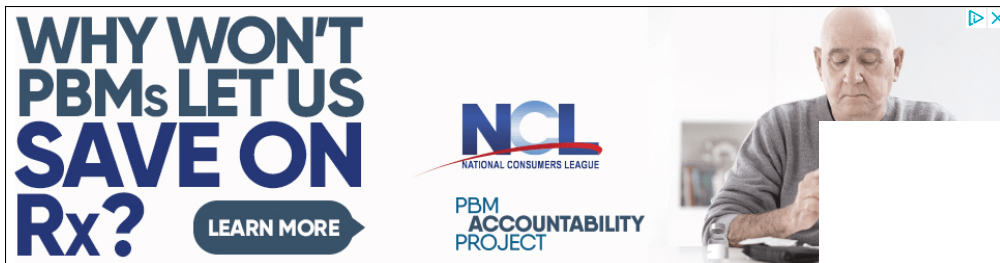
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It's recognition that's clearly well-deserved and long overdue, though we suppose better late than never. As WKU President Timothy Caboni noted, Munday is the first African American individual to have a building on campus named in her honor.



We previously made the case that Caboni made the right call in rejecting a university task force's recommendations to drop several prominent names on campus – including the Ogden College of Science and Engineering, the Potter College of Arts and Letters and Van Meter Hall – because their namesakes either owned slaves or directly profited from them.

Caboni soundly stated at the time that “while we fervently disagree with their views on slavery, we also acknowledge that their perspectives were not unlike many of their time.”



“We should exercise caution when judging those in the past using a modern lens,” Caboni continued, addressing the campus community in a memorandum last month. “The decisions we make today also will meet with the scrutiny of future generations. We hope our choices will be evaluated with the same humility and the understanding that after decades or longer of history, views and perspectives necessarily will change.”

For good or ill, the legacies of these historical figures should not be swept under a carpet. As a newspaper, we stand for the First Amendment and support more free speech, not less.

In that spirit, we welcome the public recognition of local Black luminaries, who have not always received the credit they deserve.

Munday – as an estimable educator who shared her love of music with no doubt hundreds of students over the course of her career – is a worthy start. We hope she will not be the last such individual the university honors.

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