

A Park Named after Mullaly is Politically Incorrect

The Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ) is calling for the renaming of Mullaly Park in the Bronx. A large body of evidence demonstrates there is no longer any reason why a park should be named after John Mullaly. While the park is beloved by a diverse community of Bronxites, it is named after a historical figure who contributed materially to the violence and racial inhumanities of the past. It is a daily reminder that such vile contributions to our history belong in the newspaper and history books, and not memorialized and enshrined in our neighborhoods.

We urge the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to join us. Though cited on the DPR website as the “father” of Parks, Mullaly’s place in history is equally secure as prime instigator of the 1863 Draft Riots. These riots remain one of the most devastating incidents in NYC history and have left a lasting mark on US race relations.^{1 2 3 4}

Without confronting this past, the City of New York is giving its tacit blessing to political acts no one would condone or contemplate. Given this new information, research and scholarship undertaken by DPR and its Historical Signs division should be reconsidered to accurately portray the impact of 19th century history, and particularly John Mullaly’s role in the Draft Riots, on our body politic.

It is time to work with the people to make the name for that park respectful and equal to the great progressive traditions of NYC. Nothing racist should be allowed to stain our parks, and/or the city agencies that sustain them.

BCEQ is holding a popup rally either Wednesday or Thursday this week. Due to the tenuous nature of the City’s Budget Approval process, notice will be by social media #MullalyRename.

¹ “Meanwhile, though, the editor of the Metropolitan Record, John Mullaly, had gone to the extreme of encouraging armed resistance to the draft in the March 14, 1863 issue of the newspaper.” [Man, Albon P. “The Church and the New York Draft Riots of 1863.” Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, vol. 62, no. 1, 1951, pp. 33–50. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/44210148.]

² “I uncovered a dark side of Mullaly’s past while studying about how New Yorkers reacted the American Civil War. Mullaly was an anti-war “Copperhead” Democrat. At a Union Square rally on May 19, 1863, Mullaly declared “the war to be wicked, cruel and unnecessary, and carried on solely to benefit the negroes, and advised resistance to conscription if ever the attempt should be made to enforce the law.” As editor of the Metropolitan Record, Mullaly’s call for armed resistance to the military draft led to his arrest following the July 1863 New York City Draft Riots. Over one hundred people died and at least nineteen Black men were beaten to death or lynched by rioters in the worst urban unrest in the United States during the 19th century. Although a racist, Mullaly did not support the murder of Blacks during the rioting. In one Metropolitan Record editorial he advised members of the “superior” race not to turn their anger against an “inferior” one.” Alan Singer, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-singer/stop-honoring-racists--sa_b_9608344.html 4/4/16]

³ “One of the more offensive place names is John Mullaly Park in the Bronx. Mullaly’s call for armed resistance to the military draft led to his arrest following the July 1863 New York City Draft riots. Over one hundred people died and at least nineteen Black men were beaten to death or lynched by rioters in the worst urban unrest in the United States during the 19th century.” Alan Singer [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/columbus-hijacks-new-york-statue-commission-debate_us_5a1feb4e4b064ca3c15122b 11/30/17]

⁴ “The Metropolitan Record persisted in inciting the labourers of New York even during the riots [11]. An editorial by John Mullaly on July 14, the second day of the disturbances, stated: “We have a few words to say to the working classes of New York, and particularly to those among you who have been or who may be conscripted. You are about to be from your families to carry out at the sacrifice of your lives the most iniquitous measures ever devised by any Government. Your wives and your little ones are to be deprived of their only protectors, and left dependent upon the cold charity of the world. What will you do under the circumstances? ... Call upon the Governor to defend you and your State ... Then offer your services to him as a State militia for defensive purposes ... There are, we should think, arms enough in this city to supply at least twenty thousand men [11]. Mullaly regretted the anti-Negro excesses, but he did not conceal his approval of the resistance which had been offered to conscription. He merely cautioned participants in any future riots against the draft, as members of a “superior” race, to disdain to vent their passions on an “inferior” race [11].” David Fox [<http://atlantic-cable.com/CablePioneers/Mullaly/index.htm>]