

Background:

“I am apt to suspect the Negroes [sic] to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even individual eminent in action or speculation...”

David Hume, “Of National Characters,” 1777 (revised version of an essay first published 1748)

“Naming the most prevalent building on campus after Hume sends a very clear message to BIPOC students at Edinburgh that we are willing to overlook this racism for the sake of alumni glory...[Renaming the tower] is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to ending racism at Edinburgh.”

[“Rename David Hume Tower at UoE”](#), petition on change.org, summer 2020

“From the start of the new academic year the David Hume Tower will be known as 40 George Square...The interim decision has been taken because of the sensitivities around asking students to use a building named after the 18th century philosopher whose comments on matters of race, though not uncommon at the time, rightly cause distress today.”

[“An update on the work of the University’s Equality & Diversity Committee and its Race Equality and Anti-Racist Sub-committee”](#), 10 Sep 2020

Commentary in some British dailies:

“In Hume’s case, the history and morality of the matter is clear: Hume was an unashamed racist, who was directly involved in the slave trade.”

Dr. Felix Waldmann, [“David Hume's ties to Grenadian plantations revealed”](#), *The Scotsman*, 17 July 2020 - Waldmann was the David Hume Fellow at UoE in 2016

“I do not agree with this decision. David Hume’s thought has inspired me throughout a 20-year career working to further constitutional democracy in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. As an employee of Edinburgh University I was not consulted in this.”

Dr. Asanga Welikaka, Lecturer in Public Law, quoted in [“Edinburgh University ditches David Hume over slavery link,”](#) *The Times*, Sep 14 2020

“We should see that [Hume’s] racism is not merely detachable from his philosophy, it actually goes against its spirit and substance”

Dr. Julian Baggini, philosopher and writer, quoted in [“Thinkers criticise Edinburgh University’s move to rename David Hume Tower,”](#) in *The Times*, Sep 16, 2020

“No one would object to a public statement, such as signage on the building in question, recognising and criticising Hume’s racist views.”

Letter from UoE academics to their vice-chancellor, quoted in [“Edinburgh academics warn of 'damage' to institution in wake of 'denaming' controversy,”](#) in *The Scotsman*, Wed 16 Sep 2020

“Neither history nor biography cleaves easily into “good” and “bad”. Fewer cheap gestures, more real questioning, both of the past and the present, would be useful.”

Kenan Malik, journalist, [“David Hume was a complex man,”](#) *The Guardian*, 20 Sep 2020