

## House Bill HJ0012

### Support

My name is Lynn Bowman. I retired from teaching English and Speech from Allegany College of Maryland last spring. I continue to work online as an ACM adjunct professor, teaching African American Literature and Speech Communications. I have authored five books on Western Maryland African American history. I am a member of the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture, as well as the Western Maryland Civil Rights Advisory Council. I am also a member of Branch 7007 of the NAACP, the Allegany County branch.

I approach civil rights issues from the perspective of a teacher. I know the successful student feels comfortable in his or her learning situation. I believe that institutions inviting students into their communities have an ethical obligation to concern themselves with that comfort. Although I understand the cultural significance of the word “Negro” to some older African Americans, I also understand that younger African Americans approach that cultural identifier differently.

While the official name of the mountain has been Negro Mountain since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, colloquially it was and is often called something pejorative. That colloquial term can be found in newspapers and documents of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. My experiences passing the “Negro Mountain” sign on Route 68 with African American students in my vehicle tell me that no one needs to tell African American students how some Caucasian Americans read that sign as they pass it. Those same experiences tell me that African American students are disinclined to visit the area because of the sign.

When the sign was first removed, some people assumed that I had something to do with it. While I was glad to see it go, I had nothing to do with its removal. Regardless, many people, including students and an African American truck driver, have reached out to thank me for the effort. That response suggests to me that removing it was the ethical thing to do.

In response to the newspaper accounts, I have been attacked on Facebook. The attacks come from Caucasian Americans upset about losing their history. One of

those comments said something to the effect that everything was fine until some “black bitch from Baltimore” drove past the sign several years ago. Clearly, her characterization of me was inaccurate. Just as clearly, her statement illustrates the problem.

I support the removal of the Negro Mountain signs. I also support the resolution to form a commission to study the history of Negro Mountain to determine a more appropriate name.

Lynn Bowman