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International Astronomical Union
Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature
Chairwoman Rita M. Schulz
Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature
c/o Institut d'astrophysique de Paris
98bis Boulevard Arago
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St.Gallen, 6th September, 2017

Subject: Lunar "Agassiz Promontory" (42.0°N 1.8°E) to be Renamed

Dear Madam

Allow us first to introduce ourselves: Hans Fässler (63), historian and teacher of English at the cantonal grammar school of Ausserrhoden, living in St.Gallen (Switzerland, near Lake Constance), and Hans Barth (70), graduate in Romance studies, working as a kinesiologist and living in Fribourg (Switzerland, near the capital Berne). For these past ten years we have been involved in a campaign to reassess the life and work of Louis Agassiz (1807-1873).

Until very recently, public opinion (and, sadly, a great part of the scientific one as well) saw in Louis Agassiz merely the great scholar (ichthyology, geology, glaciology), the renowned university professor, the important popularizer of scientific ideas, and the meritorious creator of scientific institutions (e.g. the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard). These activities and their reception by the general public have resulted in over 80 places and animals bearing his name, among them a crater on Mars and "Agassiz Promontory" on the lunar surface.

The same Louis Agassiz, however, was one of the most influential "scientific" racists of the 19th century. His ideas can be traced – via "Hitler's American teachers" such as Madison Grant, Charles Davenport and Lothrop Stoddard – to such infamous Nazi ideologists as Eugen Fischer, to blatant Mussolini admirers such as Ezra Pound, and to rabid Ku-Klux-Klan activists such as John Kasper.

Consequently, an elementary school in Harvard (attended by numerous pupils of African-American background) changed its name from "Agassiz School" to "Maria L. Baldwin School" in 2002, thus honouring the school's first black principal.

We are therefore submitting to you as the chair of the "Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature" the proposal to rename "Agassiz Promontory" on the lunar surface. At a time when Neo-Nazis, Klansmen and rightwing-extremists are beginning to march again, we consider it unacceptable to see the name of a white supremacist immortalized by an outstanding lunar structure in the context of international space research.

Let us add that Louis Agassiz must under no circumstances whatsoever be partitioned into a "good scientist" and an "evil racist" because – also according to himself – his ideas on race (polygenesis, a superior white race, a deficient and "ape-like" black race, disastrous consequences of racial mixing, the necessity to hinder the reproduction of "undefined bastards") were part and parcel of the same (as he saw it) "scientific" view of the world.

To further illustrate the calamitous impact of Louis Agassiz, we are enclosing a study by Hans Barth: "Louis Agassiz and Adolf Hitler. Documents in Racist Mania." It has been published in: Huber, Sasha (Ed.) (2010) : Rentyhorn. Kiasma. Helsinki, 2010. pp. 22-32. Should you need more material to analyse the validity of our cause, do not hesitate to contact us via e-mail.

Hoping that you will give due consideration to our request, we remain

yours faithfully,

Hans Fässler

Hans Barth

Enclosure: Hans Barth: "Louis Agassiz and Adolf Hitler. Documents in Racist Mania." In: Huber, Sasha (Ed.) (2010) : Rentyhorn. Kiasma. Helsinki, 2010. pp. 22-32.