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EDINBURG

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Sometime between then and now the district took concrete action to signify the decision, removing a large metal arch that prominently displayed the confederate general's name.
What name may one day replace that arch is anyone's guess, and there's no shortage of possibilities.
Nominations received by The Monitor through an open records request total 836 submissions between Aug. 12 and Sept. 12, a number that drops to 828 when you exclude a handful of submissions from individuals who didn't take the process seriously and suggested slurs, jokes or Adolf Hitler for the replacement namesake.
The submissions overwhelmingly seek to commemorate people, mostly educators, politicians, law enforcement officers, soldiers, community leaders and civil rights icons. Although some submissions came from individuals as far away as Baltimore and New York, the majority were submitted from Valley residents who attached their names, addresses, emails and thoughts behind the submission.
It's not clear exactly how those submissions will be used or what exactly the remaining process will look like.
A request to interview interim Superintendent Gilbert Garza Jr. about those questions, in addition to the number of submissions the district received since Sept. 12, was declined.
"The district established a nomination process that is still ongoing," administration and Board of Trustees have not officially reviewed the submissions," a statement from the district reads. "Therefore, the interim superintendent chooses not to comment until the nomination process is completed as to not interfere with the outcome."
School board President Oscar Salinas did not respond to a request for comment as of press time.
The district may not be giving the public much information on the renaming process, but those hundreds of submissions indicate that the public certainly wants to give the district their thoughts on the matter.
Four names topping the list of suggestions for the school's name: Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Felipe Huerta Jr., Tim Smith and Robert E. Lee himself.
From prominent Chicana scholar and feminist Gloria E. Anzaldúa received the most submissions of any candidate by far in that month-long period—217, accounting for over a quarter of the suggestions.
A Valley native, Anzaldúa was born in Harlingen and raised in Hargill.
She's known nationally for authoring "Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza," along with her other poetry, writing and scholarship.
Anzaldúa died in 2004.
"Few public intellectuals anywhere have had the kind of global influence as Anzaldúa," Museum of South Texas History CEO Francisco Guajardo wrote in his submission. "When I presented at the Gloria Anzaldúa International Conference at the University of Paris in 2019, I came to appreciate the intellectual prowess of this person who grew up in Hargill, graduated from Edinburg High School, and who was a classic product of South Texas. With the possible excep-

tion of Américo Paredes, no other South Texas thinker has had a greater impact on the world, and indeed on our community, than Gloria Anzaldúa.
The unfortunate thing is that most local folks don't know about Anzaldúa. But the world does, and I think at least one school in Edinburg should be named after her.
Miranda Garza, a relative of Anzaldúa, fondly remembers her tia's visits to the Valley growing up. She remembers going for evening walks together with her aunt and hearing Anzaldúa tell stories that would later be turned into children's books.
Garza says Anzaldúa attended Edinburg schools and later the University of Texas-Pan American (now UTRGV), before teaching at PSIA for a time, and says that Anzaldúa's deep connection with the Valley was a constant through her career.
"She loved the Valley, she never forgot about the Valley," Garza said. "That's all she would write about everywhere she would go. Even in her talks she always talked about the borderlands, the Rio Grande, about Mexico and the United States here."
Garza said she was proud and honored that so many people submitted Anzaldúa's names, saying that she thought the honor was overdue.
"I feel that she hasn't gotten the recognition that she deserves," she said. "I know UTRGV has been recognizing her on a yearly basis, they have the fountain and some other events in her name, but the Edinburg school district, I feel that they've never really honored her in any way even though she went there."
Anzaldúa's name may have gotten the most submissions, but it didn't receive a majority and the name with the second-most amount of submissions indicates that there's some opposition to changing the school's name at all.
Keeping Robert E. Lee as the namesake of the school received 63 submissions, many of those entries citing resisting liberal activism or preserving history as the motivation for their support.
Cynthia Gonzalez, an Edinburg resident, submitted Lee's name in the interest of preserving history, both large and small scale.
"It's the original name to this school, it makes no sense in changing its name because of past history," she wrote. "History is and will be in the past, it does not make up our future. People need to understand a school name does not define who you are or what political view you have on others. This was the same school I attended all of my elementary years it holds a special place in my heart."
Others argued that Lee's personal characteristics as a military man earned him the honor.
"Before he was the General in the confederate army, he served with dignity and honor for the USA in countless battles including the Spanish American War," Ruben E. Saenz Jr. of Edinburg wrote.
Other entries supported public servants from the Valley who died tragically, among them Texas Department of Public Safety Trooper Moises Sanchez and McAllen police officer Ismael "Smiles" Chavez.
Felipe Huerta Jr., a Marine and EMS provider who died in a car crash on the job in 2018, received the third-most submissions with 44 entries in favor of his name.
Almost all of those entries had the same text, describing Huerta's military service and the impact of his death on the community, although they were submitted by different people.
Some of them were more personal.
"He was a coworker a best friend and someone I miss

every day," David Garcia of Edinburg included in his entry.
Huerta's sister, Yvonne Huerta, said she'd heard people were planning on submitting her brother's name and was proud they had.
"To have an elementary named after him would be a great honor for our family and for my little brother, and it would keep his memory alive," she said.
Huerta says her brother attended school in the district before becoming a Purple Heart recipient while serving with the U.S. Marines. She described her brother as caring and personable, sometimes patients would even wait for him to come on duty to be transported by ambulance.
"My little brother was one of a kind," she said. "He could literally walk into a room of strangers and come out invited to a wedding, or invited to go fishing. He would just get along with anybody and everybody. He didn't care about your social status, he didn't care about anything like that."
Many of the remaining entries argue in favor of naming the school after educators from the district, among them Susan Smith, Audrey Chapman and Homero Cano.
Entries also supported slightly less traditional educators, including KRGV Chief Meteorologist Tim Smith.
Smith was the only living candidate to break the top four and received the most submissions for any living candidate by far with 42 submissions arguing the name of the school should honor him.
He's lived in the Valley since 1981 and his wife is an assistant principal at South Middle School in Edinburg.
Most of those entries cited Smith's status as a fixture on Valley television for decades as a reason he should be honored, along with his work educating children through science programs and his charity work with Tim's Coats, which has provided more than 100,000 coats to Valley individuals in need over the last three decades.
More recently, Smith became something of an internet sensation over the summer when he presented an impromptu cartography lesson during a newscast on Hurricane Hanna.
"Tim Smith is very active in his community. He visits with thousands of school children and has been teaching residents of the RGV about the weather. He has been doing so for the past 35 years and deserves recognition," Juan Segura of Edinburg wrote in his submission. "He hosted 'kids you should know' to spotlight gifted children in the rgv. He brings thousands of coats to the needy with Tim's Coats. He serves on a bunch of boards to help the community and teach science. He deserves to be recognized for his actions and is a better name than a confederate general."
Smith says he was humbled by his name even coming up in the discussion.
"I am deeply honored to have my name mentioned in the same breath as some of our community's pillars of education, military heroes and community leaders," he wrote in an email. "KRGV has always been an advocate for education and supported my efforts to share my passion for learning with school children. Often children need an 'ah-ha' moment, when some aspect of science makes a connection with them and it encourages them to learn more."
Nominations for the new name were still being accepted as of Saturday and can be submitted at https://www.ecsd.us/apps/pages/facility_name_nominations.

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George Floyd's funeral procession arrives at Houston Memorial Gardens cemetery on June 9 in Pearland, Texas.

Documents show large police presence at George Floyd burial

BY JUAN A. LOZANO
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — Authorities deployed hundreds of law enforcement personnel, including six super teams and Border Patrol agents, during George Floyd's June burial in suburban Houston, due in part to online rumors of possible protests and riots, according to documents obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas.
Authorities prepared for the possibility of "violent protesting" and vandalism at the Pearland police department and municipal court building, which were near the cemetery, according to the documents first exposed by VICE News.
Floyd's entombment in a mausoleum took place without any major incidents. Hundreds of mourners, including

families with children, peacefully lined the street leading to the cemetery, setting up tents and chairs and waiting for hours in stifling 93-degree heat and humidity on June 9 for the arrival of his casket. The most dangerous time during the burial ended up being the weather, eight people were hospitalized for heat-related illnesses.
Pearland Police Chief Johnny Spires defended the large law enforcement presence.
"Our job was to do all we could to ensure Mr. Floyd was entombed in peace and his family, the attendees, and our residents were safe. We had a responsibility to protect people and property that day," Spires said in a letter posted Friday on Facebook.
The ACLU of Texas and a Houston-area activist were critical of how the

burial was patrolled, calling it an unjustified and massive militarized police response.
"Just a comprehensive and deeply problematic example of a disproportionate policing response that deployed the potential for the violent use of force to an event where George Floyd's family and the community were mourning the tragic loss of life at the hands of police officers," said Shaw Drake, policy counsel of the ACLU of Texas Border Rights Center.
Ashton Woods, the lead organizer with Black Lives Matter Houston, said the police response could have put mourners in danger.
"No one was looking to take away attention from the funeral of George Floyd," Woods said. "I feel like we never got room and space to breathe and grieve."

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