

Hank Aaron's name will replace a Confederate general's on an Atlanta school

By **Cindy Boren**

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An Atlanta high school that bears the name of a Confederate Army general who was a leader of the Ku Klux Klan will be renamed for Hank Aaron, the Hall of Famer who broke baseball's career home record and challenged racial barriers.

The Atlanta Board of Education voted unanimously Monday to change the name of Forrest Hill Academy, named after Nathan Bedford Forrest, to Hank Aaron New Beginnings Academy. School district policy requires a five-year waiting period after the death of a notable person unless the vote to change the name of a school building is unanimous. Aaron died in January at the age of 86, and the name of the public alternative school for middle and high school students will occur sometime this year.

"It is very important that we understand our history," board member Michelle Olympiadis said during the Monday meeting ([via the Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#)). "It's very important that we understand where we are coming from."

Aaron, the legendary No. 44 of the Atlanta Braves, was one of the greatest players in baseball history, and never forgot the taunts he received while playing in the South during segregation. He smashed Babe Ruth's career home run record while enduring racism and threats to his life and went on to use his career as a platform to champion civil rights. Aaron spent most of his 23-year career with the Braves in Milwaukee and then Atlanta beginning in 1966.

"Henry had never considered himself as important a historical figure as Jackie Robinson," sports journalist Howard Bryant wrote in "The Last Hero," a 2010 Aaron biography, "and yet by twice integrating the South — first in the Sally [South Atlantic] League and later as the first Black star on the first major league team in the South (during the apex of the civil rights movement, no less) — his road in many ways was no less lonely, and in other ways far more difficult."

Forrest was a Confederate Army general during the Civil War and the first KKK Grand Wizard, from 1867 to 1869.

Over the last few months, the board has approved renaming four other schools that honored historic figures who held racist views.

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