

**Agendum
Oakland University
Board of Trustees Formal Session
February 7, 2022**

**APPROVAL OF HONORARY DEGREE FOR SARAH COLLINS RUDOLPH
A Recommendation**

1. **Division and Department:** Academic Affairs, Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.
2. **Introduction:** In accordance with Article IX of the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees, honorary degrees may be awarded by the Board of Trustees in recognition of distinguished accomplishment and service within the scope of the arts and letters, sciences, professions, and public service as recognized and supported by the University. The awarding of honorary degrees reaffirms Oakland University's scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and ties the University to the community at large.

On September 15, 1963 the explosion at the 16th Street Baptist Church killed 4 young girls, maimed Sarah Collins Rudolph, and shook not only the City of Birmingham, Alabama, but the entire United States. While she survived the bombing at the 16th Street Baptist Church, the event set in motion a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement. The blast was described by Martin Luther King Jr. as "one of the most vicious and tragic crimes ever perpetrated against humanity." The aftermath footage and photos of the tragedy provided the nation and the wider world with a visual of racism and its horrors. That moment in history had a profound influence on future civil rights legislation and advocacy, ultimately creating support for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by Congress.

Sarah has given numerous talks about her experiences. In 2002, she was honored by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) with a Harmony Award for demonstrating bravery at the time of the tragedy. Her story has been told in several books, most recently in a collaborative work with Wright State University professor, Tracy Snipe, entitled, *The Fifth Little Girl: Soul Survivor of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing*. Sarah participated in the 50th anniversary events in the City of Birmingham around the events of 1963. She has become a civil rights icon as she continues to use her voice to advocate and educate.

Sarah's dream of achieving a degree in nursing was taken from her on that fateful day in 1963 by the Ku Klux Klan, who perpetuated the horrific attack on Sarah's church. Not only did she lose her sister in the blast, but her right eye as well. She still has a piece of glass in her left eye, which cannot be removed without the complete loss of her sight. Sarah has spent years seeking restitution for the physical and mental trauma that she suffered as a result of the bombing.

Despite all she lost on September 15, 1963, Sarah is a shining example of overcoming trauma and advocating for a better society for all, and merit the conferral of an honorary degree from Oakland University.

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3. **Previous Board Action:** The Board of Trustees periodically awards honorary degrees at its Formal Sessions.
4. **Budget Implications:** None.
5. **Educational Implications:** The awarding of honorary degrees is an established tradition in academe, by which the University reaffirms its scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and its ties to the wider community.
6. **Personnel Implications:** None.
7. **University Reviews/Approvals:** The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost has recommended approval of the recipient to receive an Honorary Degree.
8. **Recommendation**

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees awards the honorary degree of Doctor of Science *Honoris Causa* to Sarah Collins Rudolph.

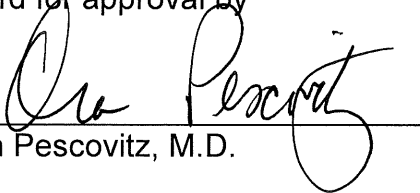
9. **Attachments:** None.

Submitted to the President
on 2/3, 2022 by



Britt Rios-Ellis, M.S., Ph.D.
Executive Vice President for
Academic Affairs and Provost

Recommended on 2/4, 2022
to the Board for approval by



Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.
President

Reviewed by

