

Date : 9/26/2017 10:54:33 PM

From : "Jennifer Griffin"

To : "Candrice Thul"

Subject : Re: in the meantime

On Cecil Bothwell's FB page:

Not one step back! Let Bree Newsome speak at AMS!

Bree Newsome is a courageous champion of racial and social justice following in the footsteps of Rosa Parks, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, Rev. Dr. William Barber, Ella Baker and others willing to take direct action in furtherance of those goals. But she won't be permitted to tell her story to students at Asheville Middle School.

Bree was arrested on June 27, 2015, for taking down the Confederate battle flag displayed on the grounds of the South Carolina State House. While she was scaling the 30-foot pole, she was hailed by policemen who told her to get down.

She responded, "In the name of Jesus, this flag has to come down. You come against me with hatred and oppression and violence. I come against you in the name of God. This flag comes down today."

As she lowered the flag and descended into the arms of waiting officers, she announced she was prepared to be arrested. Onlookers applauded Newsome's efforts as she was being cuffed. As she was led away, she recited the 23rd Psalm from the Bible. The flag was raised again 45 minutes later but was permanently brought down on July 10th.

This Friday and Saturday, Bree will be honored at the third annual Americans Who Tell the Truth event in Asheville. Artist Robert Shetterly initiated his series of portraits of Americans unafraid to speak truth to power several years ago, and his portrait of Bree is the latest in the series. Bree will deliver speeches addressing the issues that moved her to activism.

Sadly, Asheville City Schools have shown less courage than Bree and the tens of thousands of supporters who have rallied to her call for social justice. Bree was slated to speak to the students of Asheville Middle School during her visit here, but her speech was abruptly cancelled by school administrators.

This cancellation was apparently triggered by fear of white supremacist reaction and it clearly demonstrates that events like the violence in Charlottesville are having an effect. You don't have to lynch everyone to make lynching effective—you only need to create fear.

In denying Bree a podium, ACS has cited a rule that prohibits arrestees from addressing students. School Policy Code 3535 states: "In no instance shall a speaker who advocates unconstitutional or illegal acts or procedures be permitted to address students." This would seem to eliminate the whole pantheon of Civil Rights activists over the past half century.

I am deeply saddened that the Asheville City Schools have been frightened into preventing a modern progressive and racial justice hero from speaking to our students. Bree is a sterling role model who could inspire students to step up and step out.

In the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, who's image will also appear at the Americans Who Tell the Truth event, "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'"

The Americans Who Tell the Truth exhibit begins with an opening reception this Friday, Sept. 29, at AB Tech. There will be an unveiling of Shetterly's portrait of Newsome, and she will deliver a talk. The reception is free and open to the public. Doors open at 5 p.m.

On Tue, Sep 26, 2017 at 10:53 PM, Jennifer Griffin <jennifer.griffin@acsgmail.net> wrote:

Bree, a civil rights activist who will be in Asheville on Sat, was uninvited to speak at AMS bc she got arrested when she removed the civil rights flag (herself - climbing up there) in SC. Some parents are outraged and wanting to flood the school with calls tom. bc it was reported that Dockery uninvited her. So, AMS will be dealing with this tomorrow as well. It is blowing up on FB.

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