

Date : 9/28/2017 11:21:40 PM

From : "Denise Patterson"

To : "Heather Miracle"

Subject : Re: Bree Newsome

Dear Ms. Miracle,

Thank you for sharing your feedback. We appreciate your thoughts and concerns.Â

As part of its collaboration with Asheville Middle School (â€œAMSâ€), Americans Who Tell the Truth (â€œAWTTâ€), a project that, through portraits and narratives, highlights citizens who address issues of social, environmental and economic fairness, informed AMS that the author of *Hidden Figures*, Margot Lee Shetterly, would be available to speak with the eighth-grade class on September 29, 2017.Â *Hidden Figures* is the non-fiction, biographical novel and recent motion picture which chronicles the lives of three African American women working at NASA during the space race in the early 1960s.Â Â Â

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In preparation for Ms. Shetterly's visit to AMS, eighth graders attended a screening of *Hidden Figures* and copies of the novel were purchased for eighth graders to read.Â In addition,Â using *Hidden Figures* as its primary text, AMS aligned its curriculum with AWTT to implement a Paideia project.Â The project resulted in students learning about active citizenship and their future selves.Â Additionally, several students created portraits of local heroes that will be displayed at the YMI Cultural Center in Asheville.

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Late this summer, AWTT notified AMS that Ms. Shetterly had a scheduling conflict and would not be available to speak at AMS on September 29th.Â As an alternative to Ms. Shetterly,Â AWTT invited Bree Newsome; she was not invited by Asheville City Schools.Â Ms. Newsome is a filmmaker, speaker and activist from Charlotte, North Carolina.Â In July 2015, Ms. Newsome was arrested in Columbia, South Carolina for removing the Confederate battle flag that was on display on the grounds of the South Carolina State House.

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School Board Policy 3535 states that the involvement of any visiting speaker regarding citizenship issues must be "correctly structured" by the school's professional staff.Â The policy also states that the advocacy of illegal acts by a speaker is not permitted.Â This Paideia project was specifically based upon Ms. Shetterly's novel and its themes regarding citizenship.Â The policy strikes a balance between the vital role of our schools in exposing students to differing viewpoints with the need to present those viewpoints within the school curriculum.Â Given these considerations, the Asheville City Schools declined the offer of Ms. Newsome to participate as an alternative to Ms. Shetterly.Â

Thank you again for your time and thoughts.Â

Educationally yours,Â

Dr. Denise Q. Patterson
Superintendent

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On Thu, Sep 28, 2017 at 10:12 PM, Heather Miracle <hamiracle@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Ms. Patterson,Â Â

I was shocked to learn that the scheduled appearance of Bree Newsome was cancelled supposedly because she had been arrested for civil disobedience.Â As the parent of two Asheville City School children, I felt proud and excited that AMS was asking a bright and intelligent woman to speak to our young people.Â Bree Newsome is an activist who would bring a unique and inspiring viewpoint to our children's lives.Â I completely disagree with the decision that was made to cancel her appearance and fear that it was based solely on ACSs fear of controversy.Â Our lives and our children's lives are surrounded by controversy about racism and gender and sexuality and freedom these days.Â To pretend that isn't happening and try to mute the voices of our young people was, I believe,Â a misguided and telling decision.Â Please reconsider this cancellation and understand that you have sorely disappointed me as a parent and an ACS advocate and proponent.Â Â

Sincerely,
Heather A. Miracle

