

Date : 9/28/2017 6:05:58 PM

From : "Facebook"

To : "Asheville Schools"

Subject : Jodi Rhoden commented on Asheville City Schools's post.



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**Jodi Rhoden**

September 28 at 6:05pm

Here's what I wrote back to the school board yesterday when I received this statement via email. First, let me express my sincere condolences for the grief and tragedy that the ACS community has suffered since yesterday evening. It is going to be a long road of healing and I know the community will come together to wrap around this family with love. Secondly, I thank you for your response regarding the Bree Newsome talk. Your words shed some clarity on the situation, however, they don't fully address my concerns. Can you please address these concerns more specifically: -You seem to say that Ms. Newsome was never invited in the first place, but it seems that she was actually very recently dis-invited. If you found out late in summer that Bree was the one coming, why were you unable or unwilling to create an event that was "correctly structured?" -Can you give me more details on what "correctly structured" entails? -It seems in this case, that the policy against "advocating illegal acts" has been racially selectively enforced. NC Senator Terry Van Duyn, who is white, actively advocates civil disobedience, and has been arrested for illegal acts in the name of justice (as have many of the people in the AWTT project), and she has been a visitor and speaker at AMS with no consequence. There is no reason to assume that Ms. Newsome, who is African-American, would vocally advocate breaking the law any more than Ms. Van Duyn would. Furthermore, why not discuss these concerns in advance of the event with Ms. Newsome? For me, these issues come on the heels of several years as a parent and PTO board member at Hall Fletcher Elementary, where I was frustrated beyond belief at seeing the school board make decisions and institute policies that support structural racism. Whether motivated by money or a desire to avoid controversy (indeed, it is controversial to stand up for students of color when the wider society is structured against them!) I have sadly witnessed up close policies that disadvantage kids that are already the most vulnerable. Examples include the detrimental restructuring conversation, the reversal of the balanced calendar, racial bias in disciplining students as well as handling of staff and parent relations, lack of communications in Spanish, barring of undocumented parents from volunteering, the broken promises of the Outdoor Learning Center, lack of direct communication from the board regarding these issues, and the list goes on and on. It seems to me that, while the ACS Board expresses a desire to act in racially just ways, their actions are the opposite. It seems to me that there are policies and procedures AS AN INSTITUTION (I don't doubt the sincere intentions of the individuals involved) that reinforce racism even when the desire is to begin to institute equity. I believe that the board of Asheville City Schools needs to do some serious soul-searching to acknowledge the damage that has been done, be open to discussing the unhealed wounds of the recent, local past in regards to racism, segregation, the mismanagement of desegregation, and the problem of ongoing institutional racism, and discern which side of racial equity they are truly on. Hopefully this process will lead you to re-evaluate and reform policies and procedures to reflect a consistent commitment to racial justice. I have not received a response.



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