Date : 9/26/2017 6:24:46 PM
From : "Jodi Rhoden"
To : "shaunda.sandford@ashevillecityschools.net" , "martha.geitner@ashevillecityschools.net" , "james.lee@ashevillecityschools.net" , "patricia.griffin@ashevillecityschools.net" , "joyce.brown@ashevillecityschools.net"
Subject : Bree Newsome Event

Dear members of the school board,

I am the parent of an Asheville Middle School student. I was very disheartened to hear that activist Bree Newsome's scheduled appearance this week at Asheville Middle has been cancelled. I am writing to urge you to reinstate the talk and align yourself and the school with the ongoing movement for civil rights and racial equity, rather than against it.

My 6th grade son recently wrote a biography of Bree Newsome as a school assignment about someone he admires. He spoke of her bravery and her act of justice in taking down the Confederate flag from the State House of South Carolina. What must he make of his hero being barred from entering his school? (I'll tell you what he makes of it: he's confused, disappointed, and frustrated). I have heard that you feel that she would be an "inappropriate" speaker for the school since she has been arrested. Would Martin Luther King be considered "inappropriate?" Rosa Parks? Gandhi? Nelson Mandela? Desmond Tutu? Susan B. Anthony? Dorothy Day? The faces and stories of these heroes line the halls of your school. You cannot, in good faith, stand before the students and praise those activists while repudiating the one among us who walks in their footsteps in every way.

Civil disobedience is an effective, time-honored human tradition and a sacred obligation. Bree Newsome's actions at the State House that day ultimately lead to South Carolina removing that symbol of slavery, racism, and hate from their grounds permanently. She is changing the world. Her example is exactly the kind of brave leadership our children are called upon to exhibit in these fraught and tumultuous times.

I've also heard that there was a concern about white supremacists showing up to the event. Cancelling the event because you're afraid of hate groups is absolutely acquiescing to their agenda, letting them control the narrative, and essentially "negotiating with terrorists," which ultimately always gives them more power.

Please do the right thing and reverse the decision to cancel the Bree Newsome event. Our kids are watching.

Sincerely,
Jodi Rhoden

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