Date : 9/27/2017 9:57:05 AM
From : "Kristin Marsh Shepard"
To : "shaunda.sandford@ashevillecityschools.net" , "martha.geitner@ashevillecityschools.net" , "james.lee@ashevillecityschools.net" , "patricia.griffin@ashevillecityschools.net" , "joyce.brown@ashevillecityschools.net"
Subject : Bree Newsome
As an educator and an Asheville City resident, I am terribly disappointed to learn of the decision made to dis-invite Bree Newsome to speak at Asheville Middle School. I hope the board will reconsider this decision.

According to the news report from Jason Sandford, this decision was based on the fact that Ms. Newsome was arrested for her act of civil disobedience. This reasoning makes no sense: anyone who engages in civil disobedience risks arrest--that is the point. Courageous people like Ms. Newsome risk their own liberty to stand up to social injustice. I see them as positive role models, for myself and for my child.Â

It is curious that state senator Terry Van Duyn, also arrested for civil disobedience, was previously allowed to speak to ACS students. The board members who made the decision to dis-invite Ms. Newsome on these grounds need to closely examine this inconsistency and any implicit bias in their thinking.

It happens to be Banned Books week, a time to focus attention on voices that some people want censored from public life and the motivation of those who seek to repress these voices. Most educators are keenly aware of how essential it is to create an environment that encourages the expression of diverse points of view, and this often involves amplifying marginalized voices and refusing to run away from controversy. If we hide and silence voices with which we disagree, we hinder critical thinking and foster oppression.

A free and just society needs people like Ms. Newsome. If you cannot bring yourselves to reconsider and rescind this decision, the Asheville community deserves a public statement with a full and honest account of your reasoning. Please don't evade the significance and potential repercussions of your choice in this matter.

Sincerely,

Kristin Marsh Shepard

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I don't want a happy ending, I want more story. -- Frances Hardinge