

Date : 9/27/2017 3:33:33 PM

From : "Shaunda Sandford"

To : "Kim Roney"

Cc : "Shaunda Sandford" , "Martha Geitner" , "James Lee" , "Patricia Griffin" , "Joyce Brown" , "Denise Patterson"

Subject : Re: Request to reinstate Bree Newsome event at AMS

Ms. Roney,

Thank you for taking the time to express your concerns. We value your feedback and we understand how this contributes to strong school communities as well as the success of our students.

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. *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.

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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. In addition, using *Hidden Figures* as its primary text, AMS aligned its curriculum with AWTT to implement a Paideia project. The project resulted in students learning about active citizenship and their future selves. 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. As an alternative to Ms. Shetterly, AWTT invited Bree Newsome; she was not invited by Asheville City Schools. Ms. Newsome is a filmmaker, speaker and activist from Charlotte, North Carolina. 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. The policy also states that the advocacy of illegal acts by a speaker is not permitted. This Paideia project was specifically based upon Ms. Shetterly's novel and its themes regarding citizenship. 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. Given these considerations, the Asheville City Schools declined the offer of Ms. Newsome to participate as an alternative to Ms. Shetterly.

Thank you again for your passion and commitment to Asheville City Schools, and I hope we can all work together to ensure the success of all students.

Best,

Shaunda

On Wed, Sep 27, 2017 at 10:45 AM, Kim Roney <mskimroney@gmail.com> wrote:

Shaunda, Martha, James, Patricia, and Joyce, thank you for your service on the Asheville Board of Education.

My name is Kim Roney, and I am a piano teacher that currently works with 38 students in 12 schools across Asheville and Buncombe County, including several at Asheville Middle School.

I first heard that Bree Newsome would be speaking at AMS because of the news that the event had been cancelled. I am writing today as a teacher, as an ally, and from my position of privilege to request that her speaking event be reinstated.

I grew up in South Carolina, and as a child, I remember seeing the confederate flag flying in front of the State House when we would visit Columbia. Bree Newsome's peaceful act of civil disobedience on June 27, 2015, led to her arrest, which is what I understand to be the primary reason for her event being cancelled. Her action eventually led to the permanent removal of the flag, a historical symbol of hate and white supremacy.

I have been following Bree Newsome and her story, hearing her speak to some of the most challenging issues facing our country today. During this time of political uncertainty, our nation and our city are grappling with reconciliation of hate and trauma as we address institutional and structural racism, which is precisely why our students need brave, inspirational leaders. Bree Newsome is a North Carolinian and a true shero of our time. I join my community in naming similar leaders and (s)heroes that are upheld for our students: Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, and Susan B. Anthony.

I don't want to see this opportunity missed for the young people of Asheville to hear Bree Newsome speak. For my students and for the future of our beloved city, I implore you to please use your influence to reverse this decision.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kim

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Kim Roney - Piano Teacher
Asheville City Multi-Modal Transportation Commission & Transit Committee Member

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Shaunda Sandford
Board Chair
Asheville City Schools
cell: 828-273-9445

"We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."

