

6/28/2015

Dear Governor Haley,

I am writing you this letter to express my gratitude for your call to remove the confederate flag from South Carolina statehouse. You see, I was born in the great city of Charleston, and grew up in Virginia Beach and Atlanta. I still have a large portion of my family living in Newberry. I may not be one of your constituents, and I may not agree with all of your political stances, however fully support your vocal call to remove a symbol that hurts and angers so many. There is no need or use for divisive symbolism in this era of our nation. What has pushed me to write you is that it pains me to see my birthplace swirled in such controversy, with two sides of an argument that seemingly have no common ground. However, I firmly believe that most who support the flag, do so without mal-intent, and really do see this as an issue of southern pride. This is where I believe the dialogue should change, with consideration to both sides of this issue.

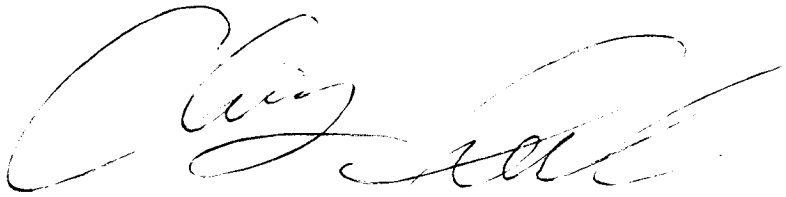
South Carolina, and the whole south, has so much more to be proud of rather than an antiquated symbol. I have seen where some call this an attack on our heritage. Is our heritage really as simple as to be boiled down to the battle flag of Virginia? I urge you to add to the dialogue that southerners should be proud of so much more than a remnant of a horrible era in our history. We can be proud of our heritage, without causing pain and resentment in our fellow citizens. Here is a little of what I consider my southern heritage.

As I spent the summers of my youth working at my grandfather's farm in Newberry, SC, and the school year in the suburbs of Atlanta, I can say that our we are so much more. We have so much more to be proud of. Hard work was a keystone of my childhood, working with and watching my grandfather tend to his farm, a 12-hour, 7 day a week, 365 days a year job. During the school year, I witnessed my mother work as a nurse grueling hours, while my father worked tirelessly on his P.H.D from Georgia Tech. Both still found the time to ensure that I had a great family support system, my father

always finding time to play catch with me, my mother nurturing me as only a mother can. But I digress. My point is that if many of the people who claim to support the flag, I hope that you may remind them it's not the flag itself we are proud of. It's the family values, hard work ethic, hospitality to others, beautiful landscapes, and general perseverance (not to mention food, which I miss dearly everyday). We no longer need a battle flag to express our pride. We can still honor confederate soldiers without a flag that hurts our fellow Americans. Because in the end that's what we all are, aren't we? I believe you have the national spotlight to usher in a new south. Please use it.

I live in New Jersey now, however the south is my home. South Carolina is my home. Atlanta is my home. I represent my heritage everyday, as anyone who knows me can attest. I wear it like a badge of honor as only a southerner can. Never needing a flag to do it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Chris Spell', written in black ink.

Christopher J. Spell