

Govern with Courage

Nikki Haley has been a controversial and courageous governor. Often criticized for her “backroom relationships” with corporations and negotiating business deals that undermine state businesses, to criticizing her own party and her leadership role in bringing down the controversial Confederate Flag, Governor Haley has been decisive.

But if the governor really wants to crown her historic governorship, she can commit to another courageous and bold act: open an official investigation into the Orangeburg Massacre.

This tragic event occurred February 8, 1968, on the campus of the then South Carolina State College. It involved the killing of three students and the wounding of 27 others. The shooting occurred on the third night of growing tension over the town’s only bowling alley’s refusal to allow black patrons. Nine highway patrolmen had been issued deadly buckshot and given authority to fire into a crowd of students if they felt their lives were being threatened.

The officers were later acquitted of imposing summary justice and then Governor Robert McNair blamed “black power” influences on this tragic event. Cleveland Seller, a civil rights activist, was the only one held accountable and jailed. Twenty-five years later, he received a full pardon. He now serves as president of Voorhees College in Denmark, South Carolina.

If three students were killed and 27 others wounded at the University of South Carolina or Clemson University in 1968, do you think there would not have been a full investigation into the matter and someone held accountable?

It would be a new day in South Carolina if the facts to this ugly chapter in our history were brought to light and an official apology tendered from the seat of our government.

Truth and reconciliation could lead to a brighter day in South Carolina, and Governor Haley could lead the way.

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