

From: John Mitchell
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To:
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Subject: Unedited Embargoed column by Jesse Jackson

Will the Crucifixion in Charleston Lead to a Resurrection?

On Friday, the confederate flag came down in Charleston, South Carolina. This symbolic, long overdue gesture has significant meaning. The flag celebrated the sedition, slavery and succession of the Civil War. When Robert E. Lee surrendered, that flag was taken down. It was raised again over the statehouse in 1961 to celebrate segregation, suppression and states rights. Previous efforts to remove it failed. Former Governor David Beasley called for it to come down, and probably lost his re-election as a result. Even after the triumph of the Civil Rights Movement, South Carolina burnished this symbol of racial division.

This symbolic victory came in the wake of bloodshed: the murders of the Emanuel Nine, brutally slain while in church at a prayer meeting. It came because of the amazing grace of the relatives of the slain, offering forgiveness to the hateful killer who killed the nine in cold blood. It came because of the leadership and courage of the Governor, Nikki Haley, who stood up and spoke out in the wake of the horror, calling on the legislature to take the flag down. It came because of the pressure of the Chamber of Commerce and business leaders – from Boeing, Volkswagen and others – making it clear that they would find it difficult to invest in a South Carolina still intent on honoring this symbol of racial division.

The question now is whether South Carolina can discard not just the symbol of the flag but also the substance of the flag's agenda. Could the Governor now grasp this moment to lead in resurrecting the South?

Bringing down the flag has opened the way. The NCAA lifted its ban on post-season championship events in South Carolina, a decision that could produce millions in tourist revenues. New investments are likely to go forward now that the flag is down. Last month, Governor Haley signed into law a bill requiring police to wear body cameras, putting the state in the national leadership on that

issue. But much more needs to be done.

[<http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/10/politics/nikki-haley-confederate-flag-south-carolina/>](http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/10/politics/nikki-haley-confederate-flag-south-carolina/)

South Carolina is one of the states that chose to reject the expansion of Medicaid offered by health care reform, even though the federal government would pick up virtually all of the expense. It turned its back on 12 billion dollars over the next five years, money that its hospitals and health system desperately needs. It deprived over 160,000 of its working people, more whites than blacks, from getting health insurance. Surely this is the time to reverse that decision.

[<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20150604/PC16/150609670/white-house-says-medicaid-expansion-in-south-carolina-would-save-lives>](http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20150604/PC16/150609670/white-house-says-medicaid-expansion-in-south-carolina-would-save-lives)

South Carolina has joined other Southern states in erecting voter ID laws designed to make voting more difficult, with disproportionate impact on the elderly, people of color and the poor. This too was discriminatory in effect and in intent. The more extreme North Carolina law is now being challenged in the Supreme Court. South Carolina could lead the South in reforming its laws to ease registration and voting rather than restricting it.

[<http://billmoyers.com/2015/03/06/challenges-voter-id-laws-national-perspective/>](http://billmoyers.com/2015/03/06/challenges-voter-id-laws-national-perspective/)

South Carolina's representatives tend to support the assault on public investment favored by national Republicans. The US Army Corps of Engineers has just announced that it plans to go forward with deepening the ports at Charleston and Jasper; South Carolina will benefit greatly once the port is able to handle the larger modern container ships. As the state benefits from federal investment in its ports, surely it is time for its representatives to push for greater public investment in infrastructure, and not continue to starve it.