

An Open Letter to The Citadel Military College of South Carolina Community on Homecoming Weekend, 2015.

Homecoming does not feel like coming home for far too many of us. . .

A growing number of African-American alumni and others who stand in solidarity are writing to express our ongoing concern about the Confederate Naval Jack (flag) hanging in Summerall Chapel. That the flag hangs anywhere on The Citadel campus is an affront to many; the fact that it hangs in the Chapel is a clear indication of how sacred it is to many in The Citadel family and its extended representative bodies.

We are aware that The Citadel's Board of Visitors (B.O.V.) voted on June 23, 2015 (in a 9-3 vote) to authorize the *"Chair of the Board of Visitors and the President to engage appropriate members of the legislature to obtain the authority to explore options of relocating the Confederate Naval Jack from Summerall Chapel to an appropriate campus location,"* (B.O.V Minutes, Dated June 23, 2015). We further understand that the school did pursue these actions via correspondence with James H. Lucas, Speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives, who thus far has refused to bring the matter to the House floor for a vote as required by the Heritage Act. While this is disappointing and, in our opinion, an abuse of political power, we are further concerned by the fact that The Citadel's B.O.V. has reported the matter as "settled" (as cited in the B.O.V. July 28th-29th meeting's minutes). It is unclear to us how the matter could be settled in any way while the flag still hangs in Summerall Chapel.

As a consequence, we are moved to exert an increased level of urgency and intensity around the effort to remove the flag from the Chapel. With this call, we are requesting that The Citadel and/or its representatives:

1. Make the correspondence between the school and Speaker Lucas available to the Citadel community and the larger public so that we can clearly ascertain the school's position on this issue.
2. Make a public statement, with African-American graduates and others in solidarity with us about The Citadel's intentions to address the issue of the flag and its immediate removal from the Chapel.
3. Advocate for the withdrawal of any public or private support for the Medal of Honor Bowl currently being proposed as South Carolina's first NCAA-sanctioned, post-season bowl—until the flag is removed from the Chapel.

Pertaining to the bowl game, we understand NCAA support and sanction for the proposed bowl has recently become possible because the flag was removed earlier this year from the statehouse in Columbia, thus invoking the repeal of a statewide economic boycott by the NAACP. Yet, unbeknownst to many, the flag still hangs in Summerall Chapel, only a few hundred yards from the projected site for the Medal of Honor Bowl Game—Johnson Hagood Stadium—which is also home to the school's own football team--The Citadel Bulldogs. For us, this contradiction is too great to accept or ignore.

Still there is another sad contradiction that is not lost on many of us. We are clear that the flag represents an ideology of hate, violence, and terror against black life. It was this same sentiment that fueled the senseless murder of Cynthia Hurd, Ethel Lance, Tywanza Sanders, Myra Thompson, Susie Jackson, Rev. Daniel Simmons, Rev. Sharonda Singleton, Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, and the Honorable Rev. Clementa Pickney at Emanuel AME Church. Nearly six months after that horrific day, that flag and what it represents still hangs in a church across town from Mother Emanuel, on The Citadel's campus in Summerall Chapel. This also for many of us is too much to accept or ignore—and we certainly cannot remain silent.

To be clear, this matter is far from being "settled," and it will not be settled until the Confederate Naval Jack is removed from the Chapel.

Take it down now.