

August 29, 2017

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Lt. General John W. Rosa, President, The Citadel Military College of South Carolina
Col. Fred L. Price, Chair, The Citadel Board of Visitors
Jay Lucas, Speaker, South Carolina House of Representatives

Almost two years ago a group of African American graduates organized to establish the #TakeItDownNow Campaign. Our goal: To build public awareness of the Confederate Naval Jack currently hanging in The Citadel's Summerall Chapel and to build public pressure for its removal. We offered these words to our Citadel family in an open letter expressing our concerns:

"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."

Almost two years later the flag still hangs in Summerall Chapel.

The school continues to suggest that the flag remains in the chapel as a matter of law—specifically that the Heritage Act requires that the flag stay in place. We have a different view. We reject the excuse that this is a matter of law. We contend that this is rather a matter of will-- or in this case thus far the lack thereof. As we have communicated on previous occasions, the Heritage Act is an unjust and immoral piece of legislation that was originally invoked to protect symbols of the fallen Confederacy. These symbols, including the flag, also affirm the false ideology of racial superiority as the primary driver for structuralized injustice and inequity in America. Its effects can be seen on the Citadel campus, in the city of Charleston, and in the state of South Carolina. As we address the flag, we also fully intend to address the legacy of these issues.

While The Citadel feigns paralysis by politics, jurisdictional leaders and schools of higher education all over the country are moving swiftly to remove Confederate symbols from public places. With their actions they are signaling that they refuse to venerate or be identified with this history and the public face of White supremacy. It saddens us, and in a sense cheapens the significance of the Band of Gold that we don as graduates, knowing that others have acted decisively on this issue, while The Citadel has apparently chosen to invoke the right to remain silent. The silence is not only deafening, but it is very telling. As African American graduates we are once again reminded of what is most sacred to our school and its alumni—and what is not. That The Citadel, highly regarded for producing principled leaders, has chosen not to lead on this issue is especially disappointing.

Nevertheless, the #TakeItDownNow Campaign is once again calling for the immediate removal of the Confederate Naval Jack from Summerall Chapel. We are also calling for a public accounting of the status of racial injustice and inequity on campus. We and many others who stand in solidarity with us will no longer mince our words. We reject the idea of gradualism and the call to move at the pace of politics and convenience. We will continue to hold both The Citadel and the South Carolina legislature accountable as we build the public's awareness and energy on this matter.

Take it down now. #TakeItDownNow.

The Undersigned

Hillery P. Douglas, Jr. '82

Reverend W. Reginald Simmons, '87