



changing HISTORY

Locals reflect on the removal of the Confederate flag

She said it must come down.

She said it did not represent the unity of South Carolina.

And in the end, Governor Nikki Haley brought the Confederate flag down.

On June 17, 2015, tragedy struck the city of Charleston, South Carolina. Dylann Roof walked into the Mother Emmanuel AME Church during a Wednesday night prayer service and shot 9 people dead. The rest of South Carolina was shocked and baffled that anyone would have enough hate in them to take the lives of innocent, welcoming church-goers.

Over the next few days, it became clear: this mass murder had been racially motivated. Photos of the shooter proudly displaying the Confederate flag emerged, causing many to believe that flag was a motivating symbol for this heinous crime. Controversy arose in the fact that the Confederate flag still flew high on the South Carolina state house in the capital city Columbia.

However, after much debate, the disputed flag was removed.

This moment, along with the Mother Emmanuel AME shooting, was pivotal in student and professional journalism. Destiny Chance, a morning reporter for the WACH Fox station in Columbia, SC, recalls this as a momentous event in her personal and journalistic life.

"As it was coming down, I was thinking that I was going to remember this for the rest of my life and will be telling my children about this because it's going to be something that will end up in their history books...For me, I was a journalist covering this, but also a real person whose family members were probably waiting for that to come down," Chance said. Covering this sensitive issue and the removal of the flag not only affected career journalists, but

also the American youth of today too.

"I think [the elimination of the flag] has definitely affected journalism now, in the way that journalists now have to be extremely careful of what they say to prevent being targeted as racist," SIPA High School journalist, Joel Bryant, said.

In spite of the success of the flag being taken down, the decision has caused much disagreement among students and adults.

"I think the Confederate flag symbolized hate, and it wasn't any different from the hate between the Nazis and Jews. You can call it history, but you don't see the Nazi flag flying anymore in Germany," SIPA High School journalist, Kayland Hagwood, said. Some side with Hagwood, over the fact that it does stand for racial hate, but others believe it is tied to the southern heritage.

"The removal of the flag made me really angry. I felt like a lot of ignorant people took something and tried to make it racist when it really wasn't, so I'm trying to spread the word that it is a part of history instead of racism," Beau Drayton, Columbia local, said.

Even though the eradication of the Confederate flag flying on state grounds was and still is argued, it stands as a climactic point for student journalism.

"I think this should teach the youth to have their eyes more on current events, so they know reasons why things happen instead of when they happen. I think our youth should be educated to want to learn and not be afraid to ask question. Students should tune in to the local news, and read articles, and form their own opinions," Chance said.



-Brooke Fletcher



SHOWING HERITAGE: (left) Protester, Joseph Fieldman expresses his discontent in a Confederate Flag rally. "When they took the confederate flag down, they took my heritage down. My family fought in south carolina for the independence of the southern states, so they're taking away my history," Fieldman said.



"I have been waiting for a long time for the removal, so it was a great feeling when it finally happened. It's definitely good for the future of this city and the state."



"I feel like it didn't solve much because there's still a lot of racial tension."



"I thought that it was kind of ridiculous because I didn't see how the flag related to racism. It's part of southern history, so I believe it should have stayed up."



"I was glad that it came down. That symbol means a lot of things to different people, but the majority of people think it means the division of blacks and whites."



"We know that the civil war was fought over slavery, and so the confederate flag i know represents negative feelings. but my personal feelings is that yes it's historical."

all photos by m.chantepie

A STATE OF MIND: (top right) Tourist, Rick Lutgens visits the State House and comments on the missing Confederate flag. "I think it's appropriate to be sensitive to that issue and to think of the confederate flag in terms of history and not as a current symbol," Lutgens said.

TO THE BEAT OF HIS OWN DRUM: (above) Local musician, Don Johnson plays his drum on a street corner in downtown Columbia. "There's nothing wrong with you know... a place having its own idea of history even if it's skewed from the actuality. But what always been a problem was for the flag of a foreign nation to fly out on top of the US state capital... so that was flying up there with the US flag and i was like 'guys this was another country,' and this country was at war with your country," Johnson said.

