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Media, Culture, and Identity

Dr. Tilton

### Field Investigation

Bree Newsome came to the university and presented a talk titled “Tearing Hate from the Sky” on the evening of February 19<sup>th</sup>. Newsome has multiple roles of interest such as filmmaker and musician but the ones that she presented to the audience on February 19<sup>th</sup> was speaker and activist. She spoke from these positions on her experience of removing the Confederate flag from the grounds of the South Carolina statehouse. While Newsome spoke of her experience, I was reflecting to our Media, Culture, and identity course to see what keywords would be most applicable. I was able to determine that representation and ideology both were the best keywords to relate to Newsome’s talk.

At the most fundamental level, representation was defined by Lisa Henderson who is a professor of communications at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She wrote that representation is as “standing for something or a portrayal” (*Keywords for Media Studies*, 56). As Newsome spoke of the conversation amongst the other civil activists she was working with, she mentioned that it was a conversation to determine who was going to scale the flagpole to remove the flag. It ultimately came down to either Newsome or her good friend James, who was a white male. Newsome was the one who was chosen due to her ability to actually scale the flagpole. After receiving training on how to properly scale the flagpole, Newsome then went to remove the flag during a shift change amongst the police who were standing near the flag. Once

Newsome removed the flag, she was arrested but there was an image that was taken while she was at the top of the flagpole.



This image shows Newsome as a representation of all the African Americans who had died during the Civil War. It represented power and spoke volumes as to how bold Newsome was to remove the flag.

The power that the flag demonstrated was that the white man would always be the superior race. It also represented triumph on the behalf of all African Americans because of all of the previous history that the flag carried behind it.

The deep history rooted in the Confederate flag that Newsome took down showcases the ideologies behind the flag. Newsome explained the context of which the Civil War was fought, which was slavery. The Confederate states wanted to secede from the northern states because they still wanted to allow slavery to be legal. Because slavery was the main way the economy thrived, the Confederate states did not want slavery to be abolished. This ideology is represented within the flag through the history of what the flag represented. Without this flag, I do not think there would not have been a tangible object to represent the ideologies of the southern states who wanted to secede in order to form their own Confederacy. These were the ideologies of the very people who wanted to see African American slaves to continue to be treated like animals. These were also ideologies that were passed along from generation to generation through slave owning families who passed the idea that the white man was superior to everyone else on this planet.