

CHARLESTON MASSACRE

S.C. governor calls on removal of Confederate flag from Statehouse grounds



Photo by Tim Dominick/The State via AP

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley speaks during a news conference in the South Carolina State House, Monday, June 22, 2015, in Columbia, S.C. Haley said that the Confederate flag should come down from the grounds of the state capitol, reversing her position on the divisive symbol amid growing calls for it to be removed. Also pictured are U.S. Rep. James Clyburn, front, second from left; U.S. Senator Tim Scott, second from right; and U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, right.

BY SEANNA ADCOX,
JEFFREY COLLINS AND
MEG KINNARD
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON, S.C. — South Carolina's governor declared Monday that the Confederate flag should be removed from the Statehouse grounds as she acknowledged that its use as a symbol of hatred by the man accused of killing nine black church members has made it too divisive to display in such a public space.

Gov. Nikki Haley's about-face comes just days after authorities charged Dylann Storm Roof, 21, with murder. The white man appeared in photos waving Confederate flags and burning or desecrating U.S. flags, and purportedly wrote of fomenting racial violence. Survivors told police he hurled racial insults during the attack.

"The murderer now locked up in Charleston said he hoped his actions would start a race war. We have an opportunity to show that not only was he wrong, but that just the opposite is happening," Haley said, flanked by Democrats and Republicans, blacks and whites who joined her call.

"My hope is that by removing a symbol that divides us, we can move our state forward in harmony, and we can honor the nine blessed souls who are now in Heaven," Haley said.

The massacre inside the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church has suddenly made removing the flag — long thought politically impossible in South Carolina — the go-to position, even for conservative Republican politicians.

Haley was flanked by Republican U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, now running for president, as well as South Carolina's junior Republican senator, Tim Scott, and Democratic Rep. Jim Clyburn, both of whom are black. Within moments, her call was echoed by the Republican Party chairman and the top GOP lawmaker, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

The governor's declarations sparked

action in other arenas as well on Monday: Mississippi House Speaker Philip Gunn called for the Confederate emblem to be removed from the state flag, becoming the first top-tier Republican to do so.

In Tennessee, both Democrats and Republicans called for the removal of a bust of Confederate general and early Ku Klux Klan leader Nathan Bedford Forrest from an alcove outside the Senate's chambers.

And Wal-Mart announced Monday that it is removing any items from its store shelves and website that feature the Confederate flag.

Haley urged South Carolina's GOP-led House and Senate to debate the issue no later than this summer. If not, she said she will call a special session and force them to resolve it. "I will use that authority for the purpose of the legislature removing the flag from the Statehouse grounds," she said.

South Carolina House Minority Leader Todd Rutherford says he's confident after talking to members of both parties that the Confederate flag will be taken down within the next two months.

"A lot of people understand this is a moment we have to respond to," said Rep. Rick Quinn, a Republican and former House majority leader who said he will vote to take it down.

Lawmakers have proposed moving it to the state-run Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum.

Making any changes to the banner requires a two-thirds supermajority in both houses under the terms of a 15-year-old deal that moved it from atop the Statehouse to a position next to a monument to Confederate soldiers out front.

The last governor who called for the flag's removal, Republican David Beasley, was hounded out of office in 1998 by the Sons of Confederate Veterans. The group's influence also doomed his front-running Senate campaign for the seat won by Republican Jim DeMint.

"Do not associate the cowardly actions

of a racist to our Confederate Banner," the group's South Carolina commander, Leland Summers, said in a statement. "There is absolutely no link between The Charleston Massacre and The Confederate Memorial Banner. Don't try to create one."

As recently as November 2014, a poll of 852 people by Winthrop University found 42 percent of South Carolina residents strongly believed the flag should stay, while only 26 percent strongly believed it should be removed.

But South Carolina's population is slowly becoming more diverse, more educated, wealthier and more exposed to people from outside the state. And the pollster, Scott Huffman, predicts that his August 2015 survey will show that people who didn't have strong feelings before "will have flipped and now prefer it to come

down."

Haley acknowledged there are very different views about what it symbolizes.

"For many people in our state, the flag stands for traditions that are noble," she said. "The hate-filled murderer who massacred our brothers and sisters in Charleston has a sick and twisted view of the flag. In no way does he reflect the people in our state who respect, and in many ways, revere it."

For many others, "the flag is a deeply offensive symbol of a brutally oppressive past," she said.

South Carolina can survive and thrive "while still being home to both of those viewpoints."

Adcox reported from Columbia; Steve Peoples contributed from Washington, D.C.

Songs, prayer grace 1st service at church since shooting

BY PHILLIP LUCAS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church opened its tall, wooden doors to the world Sunday, June 21, embracing strangers who walked in from the street or tuned in from home for the first worship service since a white gunman was accused of killing nine black church members.

It was that same hospitality that allowed the suspected gunman to be welcomed into a Bible study for about an hour before he allegedly stood up, made racially offensive remarks and opened fire in the church known as "Mother Emanuel" because it is one of the oldest black congregations in the South.

"I was so pleased when authorities told us you can go back into 'Mother Emanuel' to worship," said the Rev. Norvel Goff, a presiding elder of the 7th District AME Church in South Carolina, before adding a note of defiance to a service sprinkled with themes of love, recovery and healing. For added security, police officers stood watch over worshippers.

Goff was appointed to lead the historic Charleston church after Emanuel's senior pastor, the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, was fatally shot during the massacre. A black sheet was draped over Pinckney's usual chair, which sat empty. At least one parishioner knelt down in front of it and prayed.

Pinckney was also a state senator and married father of two children. Goff acknowledged Father's Day and said: "The only way evil can triumph is for good folks to sit down and do nothing."

The slayings have renewed calls for the flag to be removed from the South Carolina Statehouse grounds, in part because photographs of Roof in a purported manifesto showed him holding Confederate flags. The 2,500-word manifesto also contained hate-filled writings.

Less than two miles from the church, someone vandalized a Confederate monument, spray-painting "Black Lives Matter" on the statue. City workers used a tarp to cover up the graffiti, police said.

Photos on local news websites from before the tarp was put up showed the graffiti in bright red paint, along with the message "This is the problem — RACIST."

Around the country, pastors asked people to pray for Charleston.

Associated Press contributors include David Goldman, Emily Masters, Allen Breed, Josh Replogle and John Mone.



In partnership with MEDCOST

July community health seminars, screenings and events

Visit WakeHealth.edu/BestHealth for class descriptions and other events. Events are FREE of charge and require registration, unless otherwise noted.

<p>WEDNESDAY, JULY 1 Elder Law Basics \ 2 to 3 pm Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Country Club, 4610 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem</p> <p>FRIDAY, JULY 10 Searching the Grocery Store for Summer Dinner Ideas 10 to 11 am Lowe's Foods, 2501 Lewisville-Clemmons Road, Clemmons</p> <p>SATURDAY, JULY 11 Lighten Up Your Summer Sides 1 to 2:30 pm Brenner FIT in the William G. White Jr. Family YMCA, 775 West End Blvd., Winston-Salem</p> <p>MONDAY, JULY 13 Ultimate Ab Workout \ 4 to 5 pm Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Country Club, 4610 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem</p> <p>TUESDAY, JULY 14 Blood Pressure Screening 3 to 4 pm Defeating Stress through Nutrition 4 to 5 pm Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Clemmons, 2311 Lewisville-Clemmons Road, Clemmons</p>	<p>WEDNESDAY, JULY 15 Arthritis: Ways to Strengthen Joints \ 4 to 5 pm Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Clemmons, 2311 Lewisville-Clemmons Road, Clemmons</p> <p>THURSDAY, JULY 16 Misconceptions about Nutritional Supplements \ 5 to 6 pm Piedmont Plaza I, Kitty Hawk Room, 1920 W. First St., Winston-Salem</p> <p>SATURDAY, JULY 18 Zumba \ 10 to 11 am Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Country Club, 4610 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem</p> <p>MONDAY, JULY 20 Heart Health Screening Noon to 2 pm Piedmont Plaza I, Kitty Hawk Room, 1920 W. First St., Winston-Salem</p> <p>WEDNESDAY, JULY 22 Blood Pressure Screening 3 to 4 pm Resistance Bands \ 4 to 5 pm Wake Forest Baptist Health Davie Medical Center, Plaza 1, Cardiac Classroom, Highway 801 N, I-40 (Exit 180), Bermuda Run</p> <p>THURSDAY, JULY 30 Dizziness, Vertigo and Balance Disorders \ 5 to 6 pm Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Country Club, 4610 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem</p>
---	--

To register, call or visit:
336-713-BEST (2378) \ WakeHealth.edu/BestHealth