

School Tells Kids to Remove American Flags on 9/11

Sometimes good intentions have unintended consequences. Just ask the principal of Woodruff High School in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Principal Aaron Fulmer made national headlines this week after he directed students to remove American flags from their pickup trucks on Sept. 11.

The patriotic teenagers had mounted large American flags in their truck beds—in violation of a long-standing school policy.

The policy, which has been in place for more than 20 years, bans anything that creates a disturbance on campus or draws an unusual amount of attention to itself.

“A bumper sticker is not going to do that from a distance, but a pole flag is,” Superintendent Rallie Liston told me in a telephone interview. “The American flag was never an issue for us. It was never anti-American flag. It was just no pole flags—period.”

Liston said the original rule was created to prevent students from showing up at school with Confederate flags.

“It was inflammatory,” the superintendent told me. “Finally, we reached a point where we said no more pole flags.”

American-flag bumper stickers are fine. So are American-flag T-shirts. But students simply cannot fly American flags in their pickup trucks. Such behavior is impermissible.

As the superintendent explained, it prevents someone from showing up with something offensive.

“If it’s an American flag—everybody is excited about it,” he

said. "But what if it's the Nazi flag or another flag you might not be congruent with?"

As you might imagine, the school's decision has led to lots of protests and name-calling. A group of parents even stood outside the school waving American flags.

Superintendent Liston says all the anti-American accusations are just as far from the truth as can be.

"These are the most God-fearing, flag-waving, patriotic people you will ever find," he said. "They are God and Country."

But he said that with the growing fears over the Islamic State as well as the 9/11 commemoration—he realized a bit of hindsight was necessary.

"We dropped the ball with 9/11," he told me matter-of-factly. "In hindsight we apologize to any veteran or service person for this happening. That was not our intent. It was just a rule that has been consistently enforced."

In the meantime, he said there's a good chance that next year the school will host a special program commemorating 9/11.

"I don't want to ever get in the position where we take the American flag down again," Liston told me.

Superintendent Liston seems like a true Southern gentleman—and I believe his apology is sincere.

As we say in the South—you know when somebody's cooking your grits. And Superintendent Liston was not cooking my grits.

Nevertheless, it's deeply troubling when any public school suppresses the patriotism of American teenagers.

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on Twitter. His latest book is God Less America.