Symbols of white supremacy do not belong in public places in our city. We have been trying to remove the most visible of these symbols and have been met with fierce resistance from counter protestors and apathy from our city council. We want to take this time to enumerate exactly why now is the time to relocate the Confederate monument to Soldiers Rest, regardless of the cost.

-The decision to place the monument in front of the courthouse was purely political. After the end of Reconstruction, Jim Crow-era politics ushered in a new wave of anti-Black legislation aimed at keeping Black people from voting, marrying white people, riding in public transportation with white people, and rising to political office. Placing a monument in front of the courthouse was a visible reminder to Black people that they were still not accepted as equals. While the cemetery was sought as a potential place for the monument, it was not central enough to remind Black citizens that 40 years after they'd gained their freedom, they still were not considered equals.

-The dedication speech made at the unveiling of the monument reads, in part: Their civilization differs from ours in one essential that creates an impassable barrier. They look upon a Negro as a white man with a colored skin and believe education to be the one thing needful. We of the south know better. No other people know him so well or love him so well, but nowhere here is he accorded social equality. When the highest representative of Northern civilization invites the highest representative of negro civilization to sit at his table as his social equal, he digs a gulf between us too wide and deep for us to go to them or for them to come to us. Into the form of man God breathed the breath of eternal life and he became a living soul, so separate from the manlike forms around them that when the children of Adam, sons of God by virtue of that miraculous inspiration, saw that the daughters of men were fair and married them, he sent a deluge that destroyed the mongrel race. We are the sons of God. Let no second deluge be brought upon the world on our account.

Not only were these horrendous words read at the dedication of the monument in 1903, the base of the monument cemented these words to the cause with the inscription, “Unveiled with appropriate ceremonies April 25, 1903.”

Confederate monuments have no place in front of government buildings or in the public downtown areas of cities. They are not tools for us to learn from. They are symbols of oppression. As the Florence City Council and Mayor, you need to publicly state why this monument to white supremacy has no place at our courthouse, and speak to the moral issue. Also, state why you will not move a monument that represents white supremacy and oppression. We need you to clearly and publicly denounce the White Supremacist language used in the 1903 dedication speech.

Your apathy and inaction have led to violent confrontations that will continue to escalate as Counter protestors continue to gather and harass citizens demanding relocation with chants of “KKK All the Way” and parades of Confederate flags. We understand what they law says. Hiding behind the laws of a state that once legalized slavery and public segregation is not good enough. We are better than this.