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Attorney Rallies Rebel Support

MCCUTCHEN VOWS TO FIGHT MASCOT, FIGHT SONG CHANGE

By Chad Hunter
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To a crowd of Southside High School supporters, a Fort Smith attorney vowed Friday night to fight the removal of the school's Rebel mascot and "Dixie" fight song "to the bitter end."

"I don't want our symbols changed," attorney and 1981 Southside graduate Joey McCutchen said. "I know it's part of who I am. Our students don't see it as a racial symbol and never have."

McCutchen hosted what he called "Rally

for the Rebels" just days before the School Board plans to vote whether to retire the long-standing mascot and fight song. On June 23, the school district's Committee of the Whole, a smaller version of the full School Board, unanimously agreed to push forward the vote for official adoption this coming Monday. The committee recommended banning the use of "Dixie" as Southside's fight song for the upcoming 2015-16 year, and the Rebel mascot for the 2016-17 year.

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Fort Smith attorney Joey McCutchen speaks Friday evening during a "Rally for the Rebels" at Southside High School.

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RALLY: Southside Graduate Opposes 'Erasing 50 Years Of Heritage To Be Politically Corre

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The move, according to a statement from the school district, came after "giving great consideration to the continuing impact of perceived symbols of racism on the community, state and nation."

Twins and 1991 Southside graduates Keith and Kevin Bibbs oppose the change.

"I'm here to support my Rebels," Keith Bibbs said Friday night. "You're talking about erasing 50 years

of heritage to be politically correct. Why change it now?"

Friday night's rally was first set to take place on the Southside High School football field but was moved to a nearby walkway in the shade. The event attracted more than 100 people of all ages.

With a Confederate flag in hand, Caleb McClure of Greenwood showed his support for the Rebels because, "I'm tired of all the political bull."

crowd that the School Board's decision "was made without our consent."

"Open up this process and let us be heard," he said. "Let the people vote on it."

On Thursday, McCutchen filed a lawsuit on behalf of Fort Smith resident Curtis Sorrells against members of the School Board, citing violation of the open meetings provision of the Arkansas Freedom of Infor-

The lawsuit contends that the publicized agenda for the June 23 School Board Committee of the Whole meeting called only for a closed meeting for discussion of Superintendent Benny Gooden's yearly performance.

"The purpose of the notice was to lead members of the public and media into believing that the meeting was solely to discuss a personnel issue and that the meeting would not be open to the public."



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Kyle Parks, right, and other flag-bearer show up for a rally at Southside High School in East