

The Flag

The flag --- it has been part of our history, our heritage for decades. As the national banner, it flew over a country that legally condoned slavery. It flew over the ships bringing slaves from Africa. The KKK and other extremists consistently misuse our flag. It is at every event the KKK has. It flew over the separatist Freeman compound in Montana. It has been the flag of segregation for generations here in Kansas. Because of this history, and its misuse by a very small number of people, the naacp has labeled it as a "racist emblem". They say it should not be allowed on government properties. The reason it is labeled as racist has nothing to do with the many good people who are proud of the flag. It has nothing to do with the intent of those who fly it for honorable reasons. Why does the naacp label this banner as a racist emblem when only a few dishonor it?

The Missouri naacp states: "For anyone to imply or even suggest that a symbol that was used to terrorize, threaten, intimidate, bully and frighten individuals can somehow retain any value in our society is absurd."

This flag, of course is our U.S. Stars and Stripes. Designed in 1777, it flew over legal slavery in the north and south until 1865. Eighty-eight years. It was the flag flown by the northern slaver ships from New England, bringing human cargo to the U.S. until 1861. The Stars and Stripes flew over a segregated Kansas (a northern state), until 1954 when the Supreme Court ruled that Topeka, Kansas schools had to be integrated. The Stars and Stripes flew over a segregated US

military until 1952, eighty-two years after the War Between the States! The U.S. flag is required to be carried by the KKK at every event by their own directives.

Because it flew over slavery; because it is misused by a relatively small group of extremists; the Stars and Stripes should be hauled-down and banned from government buildings! *If you follow the naacp illogic for banning the Confederate Battle Flag, this is what they would have for the US flag too!*

Having taught secondary, undergraduate, and graduate history for a number of years, this completely irrational line of thought is not surprising. National polls have shown that the lack of knowledge of history causes faulty logic such as this. For example,

- A USA Today report on 10 May 2002 said ***Only 10% of high school students were proficient in American history according to a national test.*** Only 1% were “advanced”, or “superior”.
- A 28 June 2000 AP article states 80% of seniors at fifty-five top colleges and universities, including Harvard and Princeton, received a “D” or “F” on *a high school level* history test. 99% could identify “Beavis and Butthead” characters but 40% could not even choose, given multiple-choice selections, which half-century the War Between the States was fought in.

Here’s what this means: we have a nation of functionally illiterate citizens in extremely important facets of American history! How does this directly impact us today?

- * It means we have high school graduates who have no foundation upon which to base critical reasoning of events or facts related to the history of our country. College doesn't seem to improve their knowledge.
- * The overwhelming majority of Americans know little, if any American history. In other words, most people don't know their facts regarding history, especially about the flags that are subject to discussion this evening.
- * Most distressing, it means that people accept the shallow and totally illogical criticisms of symbols without knowing the factual reasons. *They reason on pure emotion, not facts!*
- * Judging on emotions leads to stereotyping. Stereotyping leads to hypocrisy, lack of tolerance for other people's diversity, and finally to hate. This is exactly what is happening with the naacp's treatment of the Battle Flag for no other reason than emotional stereotyping. If you don't like something, just label "racist" no matter if the facts support it, or not. The naacp even goes further. It labels anyone or thing that it doesn't like as "Nazi". For example, naacp Chairman Julian Bond said: "[Republicans'] idea of equal rights is the American flag and the Confederate swastika [sic] flying side-by-side." Really? Irresponsible, historically ignorant and provocative hate language is all this is. Get this --- the head of the naacp implies half of our country are Nazis because they don't think the way he does. Who is the real Nazi?

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The Confederacy used numerous battle flags. The best known is the Southern Cross “Battle Flag”. There were many others that Confederate soldiers served under and that flew over state capitols. As an example, the current flags of Texas, South Carolina and Virginia are identical, or virtually identical, to the ones carried by Confederate soldiers in battle. This is indisputable fact. However, according to the naacp’s criteria, they are racist symbols for no other fact than they flew over Southern states and were used by the Confederacy.

The Southern Cross Battle Flag was not the national flag. The National flag was known as the “Stars and Bars”. The Battle Flag was exactly what the name says --- a battle flag used in battle. In fact, American soldiers carried flags into battle until the beginning of the 20th century in order to assist commanders in locating their troops in the smoke and confusion of battle. Long range weapons and machineguns changed this and flags were no longer carried when tactics changed from massed, linear formations at the beginning of the 20th Century.

The Battle Flag was specifically designed after the national flag of the Confederacy was accidently mistaken for a US flag at First Manassas in July 1861. The records are public regarding its design. It had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with racism or slavery --- anymore than the US Stars and Stripes design did. In an attempt to disconnect the issue of slavery and secession, states such as Arkansas changed their constitutions to prohibit slavery!

The Battle Flag was strictly a military flag carried in battle by soldiers. Soldiers who share tremendous hardships form bonds that many who have never served cannot understand. Their symbols, such as the flags they fought under, that were shot and torn in battle, that went where they went, became sacred mementoes that represented the deaths of close friends and comrades. These flags, just as our flags today in the military, are respected, even considered sacred, --- tokens of the valor and courage of those who went before us. We protect our flags today, just as in the past, with armed soldiers in what is known as the “color guard” when they are carried in public, so important is their meaning to our military units.

The Battle Flags, therefore, are manifestations of the sacrifices soldiers made in mortal combat. The flags went into battle with the soldiers, were present when the soldiers were wounded or died. They represented the very soul of the unit as they were often lovingly made by wives and sweethearts. They are symbols of our ancestors’ valor and courage. Any attempts to change this meaning by others is strongly condemned by the Sons of Confederate Veterans!

Our U.S. military units today carry copies of the flags carried into combat by our predecessors. They are a strong symbolic ties to our past traditions representing the sacrifices of those who went before us. Thus is the Battle Flag for the descendents of Confederate soldiers. We are proud of our ancestors and the flag that was their symbol in battle. I am proud of our US Stars and Stripes that members of my family have fought under since 1777. It too, is my heritage, my culture, despite it being “offensive” to others. Because the U.S. flag is, as the

naacp falsely reasons, a “racist symbol” since it flew over legalized slavery and segregation in states like Kansas, doesn’t make me any less proud of it.

Culture is an important facet in our lives and who we are. Lewis Diuguid, a black KC Star columnist, stated that people have a right to be proud of their cultures. Southerners have a unique culture. This fact is recognized by sociologists and is evident to those who have lived in the South. This culture is strongly tied to the war that devastated the South and left the people, both black and white along with the economy, completely ruined and destitute.

An important part of Southern culture is remembering the past and sacrifices made by our ancestors. We are no more celebrating racism and slavery than do other Americans the genocide of the American Indians, the lynching of approximately eighty-two blacks in New York City (a northern city!) in July 1863, or the imprisonment of Nisei Japanese-Americans in WWII --- all of which occurred under the U.S. flag. We are no more celebrating slavery and racism any more than New Yorkers who fly the U.S. flag over the site recently excavated of the remains of hundreds of black slaves in New York City celebrate slavery. We are no more celebrating racism with our symbol, than the flying of the US flag over the state house in Topeka where racism was officially sanctioned until as recently as 1954.

Ironically, the naacp totally discounts the thousands of blacks who fought for the South, not because they supported slavery, but because these Southern blacks didn’t like what the North was doing. Men like John Noland, scout for the

partisan guerilla, Quantrill, were black. Noland fought for the South like many other blacks because they were his people. Many people don't know this. Many want to ignore it --- it doesn't fit their stereotypes. Many are in denial due to ignorance. However, the facts are clear as black professor, Dr. Edward C. Smith of American University, points out. It makes those with a shallow knowledge of the war very uncomfortable. There were many like Noland. The official records compiled by the US government cite the war crimes by the US military against thousands of Southern blacks they were supposedly freeing. Will the naacp call for the removal of the US flag because of these actions? I'll bet not!

Dr. Smith and other distinguished black historians agree that thousands of blacks served under the Battle Flag. This makes the Battle Flag their flag too! The naacp doesn't speak for these descendents of Confederate soldiers such as a local black member of our SCV camp, Mr. Tyrone Williams. Instead, the naacp stereotypes, generalizes, and grossly exaggerates. Mr. Ken Page, Springfield, Missouri naacp is guilty of this when he states: "We, along with the NAACP and many Americans, believe that the Confederate flag has become more than an historic battle standard; for millions of Americans it is a symbol of slavery and segregation,..."

Let's look at the truth, not Mr. Page's rhetoric. The truth is that a national Lou Harris poll found that 82% of all Americans found no offense in the Confederate Battle Flag. That's roughly eight in ten. The "millions" Mr. Page talks about are outnumbered eight to two and *even naacp members are divided on*

this issue. He says “many” are offended, we say “many more” are not! The former President of the Asheville, N.C. naacp, states: “Protection of Confederate symbols is THE civil rights issue of the new millennium, and this debate is long overdue. We must address this issue with peaceful, non-violent means like debate, before agitation over the flag gets out of hand.” Mr. Gilbert Hammond, President of the Junction City, Kansas naacp stated: “What ever happened to the idea of fighting crack dealers for the souls of our children? While we are losing our streets to the purveyors of crack and meth and pornography, our leaders are too busy chasing down the remnants of the old Confederacy,…” Friend, and retired Army officer, Scott Price, of Abilene, Kansas, finally had enough and quit the naacp over its insistence on attacking the Battle Flag to the exclusion of more serious problems.

Cultural Cleansing, Illegitimacy and Government Endorsement

Cultural cleansing can take several forms. For the Taliban, it is destruction of centuries-old artifacts. For Bosnian Serbs, it was the elimination of their neighboring Muslims. For the naacp, it’s the eradication of all Confederate symbols. The Battle Flag is only the beginning. Not true they say! The records state otherwise.

Georgia Representative and naacp member Tyrone Brooks submitted this wording in a legislative bill: “It is the intent of the General Assembly that **no symbol** identified with a nation or entity that has ever prosecuted a war against our beloved country ever be a part of our state....” He is, of course, talking about

Confederate symbols. Brooks is only echoing the sentiments of the former naacp Director Kweisi Mfume, who admitted that the Confederate flag is only just the beginning of their efforts and plan to close battlefields, end reenacting and destroy Southern monuments. In a letter dated 12 January 2000, he states: "As such, our principal objection and litigate (sic) efforts until now had been directed to the Confederate flag use as an official symbol...In the near future, efforts will be aimed at the removal of racist names, mascots, monuments; and ending the glorification of Confederate soldiers through what is termed reenacting. We also feel there could be better use of State and Federal resources by the closing of museums and battlefields, which are dedicated to the preservation of slavery." Beauregard-Vernon chapter of the naacp, President Piper, in an effort to stop an educational Civil War program in Louisiana, said the Confederate Battle Flag is a racist symbol and many who honor it are also racists. He stated that it is a "primary symbol" for white supremacists and is an "affront to a majority of America." Wow! There's educated diversity and tolerance in action! Mr. Piper's gross generalizations are based on what facts? None! It is strictly an emotionally charged and biased assault based on other people's views that he hates.

Ward Connerly, a former NAACP member who left over such acrimony and extremist pronouncements, and became chairman of the American Civil Rights Institute, stated "the shakedown by the NAACP" is based on the vilification of Confederate heritage symbols. It's how they raise funds. It's the money, not the facts that are important!

Americans should be exceedingly leery of the naacp radicals that will not stop at just the removal of the flag. Their goal, as their leaders have stated, is the removal of *all* Confederate monuments and symbols. Like the Taliban, they use the most specious rationales to attack and destroy other people's culture. There's one good term to describe the naacp view: bigoted HYPOCRISY.

I despise political correctness. In 2002, the local BOE tried to fire me for *asking* if my son could wear his historical t-shirt with small Confederate flags. I was told I was fired for this! Yep, my school principal, James VanMaanen, labeled me a "redneck racist" just for asking the question. We sued in Federal Court, the BOE requested to settle, and the generous taxpayers of Leavenworth paid the bill for anti-Southern bigotry. This issue is very close to my heart. I spent 29 years wearing the Army uniform. My service was for people like the naacp to have freedom. It should be used responsibly, not to provoke hate through stereotypes.

While the naacp lets a few extremists who misuse our symbol define it as "racist", we prefer to look at it as we do the Stars and Stripes. A few extremists who misuse the US flag do not give it its real meaning. The naacp needs to apply their criteria fairly, something they refuse to do, thereby practicing the bigotry they claim to be against! If tolerance only works one way, it's not real diversity

The naacp's inability to back off their unreasonable hate rhetoric loses reasonable, educated supporters such as former naacp member and columnist, Earl Ofari Hutchinson, who states: "With yet another boycott call of South Carolina, NAACP leaders can claim that they are striking a mortal blow against racist

oppression. And since much of the public and media thinks that only rabid, unreconstructed race baiters defend flying the Confederate flag, they'll be applauded. But the flag fight won't save black farms, improve abominable schools, stop racial profiling, fight the crime and drug plague, or help poor, malnourished mothers. The NAACP has no obsession with these fights.”

The US government has endorsed Confederate soldiers as “American” soldiers as part of the post-war reconciliation in four separate congressional acts. The hundreds of thousands of Confederate headstones in Federal cemeteries where Confederates are buried are proof of this official endorsement. The naacp wants to turn back the clock of reconciliation and destroy this magnanimous gesture through stereotypical hate.

Southerners are proud Americans. They serve in our armed forces today at a much higher proportion than people of any other region in the U.S. Patriotism is part and parcel of Southern culture. The actions by the Congress to ameliorate the bad feelings from the war resulted in the government’s official endorsement of Confederate soldiers as “American” soldiers. Black and white Confederate soldiers lie side-by-side in military cemeteries around the country, under US government supplied headstones. Some lie where I served at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (a northern state) under Confederate headstones provided by the government.

Our counterpart organization, the Sons of Union veterans, explicitly recognizes the Battle Flag as an historical and cultural symbol. Like us, they

oppose its use by extremists and racists, but in the end, they are strongly behind our use in honoring our soldier-ancestors, even in public places.

The naacp's goal to remove all symbols and monuments of our culture is an attack on who we are as Southerners of all ethnic persuasions. This cultural cleansing is a slippery slope --- a short slide from demanding removal of Confederate monuments on government properties to demanding removal of those on private property, a naacp goal. This policy of incrementalism can be seen perfectly in South Carolina where the Battle Flag was removed from the State House with the approval of the majority of black legislators. Compromise and respect for alternative view was not forthcoming from the naacp that declared a boycott of South Carolina, hurting many black-owned businesses while seeing a 7% increase in tourism in the first year.

Naacp member Carol Moseley-Braun is taken to task in John M. Coski's new book on this subject. He states: "Just because someone views the flag as a symbol of racism does not give him the ethical right to assume that someone who displays it is a racist. To make such a judgment is an exercise in prejudice."

In the words of our Chief of Heritage Defense in a letter to the naacp: "Slavery was wrong. Your cultural persecution of us is wrong. And the cosmic arithmetic still applies: two wrongs still do not make a right. If, and when, the NAACP searches its heart and decides to set aside this unworthy course of action, we will extend to you the hand of friendship ... until then we will oppose your oppressive actions and policies to the limits that our energies and resources will allow. For our

forefathers, for ourselves and for our children, we have absolutely no other choice."