



GEORGIA NAACP

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Statement on the Confederate Flags and Rebel Imagery in Public Spaces

Lingering Vestiges of Hate Block Serious Discussions that May Lead to Real Truth and Reconciliation

Images are powerful. Images shade our perceptions, code our implicit biases, and help us interpret the environment. The Confederate Flag (Stars and Bars) and monuments are powerful images. These images evokes different messages to different people. In the wake of the massacre of 9 churchgoers murdered because they were Black by a confederate flag wearing racist thug bent on a self-confessed mission of “starting a race war”, the chats of heritage or hate resound through the country. When does an image become so associated with a heinous act and actors that it loses any prior nobler relevance?

I want to be clear. I do not believe that every American who has displayed the Confederate flag endorses slavery as an economic and social order, treason as a solution, and bigotry as a value system. Yet, to many people of all hues and backgrounds; it now symbolizes America’s original sin. Albeit, there are sincere patriots reading this message who will continue to insist that the Confederate flag is only a remembrance of the valor of their ancestors. That may be a truth that particular individual. However, an honest person cannot deny the larger social implications and ugly connotations the flag and rebel imagery convey.

Unfortunately for those who believe the flag represents something honorable it was your silence and not the NAACP’s very vocal opposition that brings us to this point in our history. Over the decades, the Confederate flag’s appropriation by traitors, Nazis, the Klan, and bigots has provoked very little noticeable protest from the honorable folks who claim a deep and abiding "respect" for Southern heritage. In short, you should have demanded that the exponents of white supremacy stop using the Confederate flag a long time ago in their so-called Christian zeal to exact racialized terrorism on their neighbors. It was the primary symbol of reign of domestic terrorism during Jim Crow that was the impetus for the birth of the NAACP. The truth is more folks were lynched under the Confederate flag than died under the United State flag on September 11th.

To the southern patriot, your symbol of heritage was ruined because you did not demand that Jesse Helms, David Dukes, and the uptown Klan in business suits known as the White Citizens Council stop appropriating it for their hate. Your silence gave consent. It cannot be denied that the Charleston massacre has left the Confederate flag standing irrevocably for the most brutal and criminal aspects of that heritage — and it is more deeply irreconcilable with American patriotism than ever.

It’s time for the Confederate flag and the glorification of rebel culture that fought to maintain slavery and Jim Crow as an economic and social order to surrender. If we want closure on a 150 year old chapter in American history; we must unite under the American flag as true patriots. It’s time to unite America. As such, replace the Stars and Bars with the Stars and Stripes!