



# A Flag for All of Us

## Dear Fellow Mississippians:

Last month, the South Carolina legislature set aside party differences and voted to remove a Confederate battle flag from the capitol grounds in Columbia. This was not the official state flag, nor had it flown gallantly over the statehouse since the Civil War. Rather, it was run up the pole in 1961 as a symbol of resistance to the civil rights movement.

This action by one of the most Southern of states should resonate in Mississippi. In 1860, South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union. Twenty days later, Mississippi became the second. The time has come for Mississippi to follow South Carolina again, only now in another direction.

The Rebel flag was never meant to fly over state capitols. It was a battle flag, usually carried by a color sergeant at the head of a regiment. With its bright red background and blue “Southern Cross,” it was designed to be seen through the smoke of battle and to serve as a rallying point. After General Lee surrendered, he said, “It’s time to furl the flag, boys.” The ones that were not surrendered were packed away as souvenirs, or, later, relegated to museums.

Thirty years later, in 1894, Mississippi redesigned its state flag and included the Rebel emblem in its canton. Of the eleven former Confederate states, only Georgia and Mississippi incorporated the emblem into their state flags. Georgia removed it in 2001. Mississippi retains it.

Symbols are important. A casual glance at one can invoke a hundred images. For 2000 years, the cross has been the most cherished symbol in the Christian world. But the image of a cross set aflame makes us cringe. Black Mississippians look at the Rebel flag and do the same. To them, it’s a symbol of a war fought to preserve slavery and to advance white supremacy.

General Lee also understood the power of symbols. He opposed the construction of monuments on battlefields. He advised Southerners to “obliterate the marks of civil strife and to commit to oblivion the feelings it engendered.”

The Rebel flag meant one thing to Lee and his men 150 years ago. Today, to many, it stands for something far different.

It is simply not fair, or honorable, to ask black Mississippians to attend schools, compete in athletic events, work in the public sector, serve in the National Guard, and go about their normal lives with a state flag that glorifies a war fought to keep their ancestors enslaved.

It’s time for Mississippi to fly a flag for all its people.

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Reuben Anderson  
Ace Atkins  
Glen Ballard  
Jim Barksdale  
Mike Bianco  
Ross Bjork  
Jimmy Buffett  
Hodding Carter, III  
Maude Schuyler Clay  
Langdon Clay  
Rick Cleveland  
John Cohen  
Johnnie Cooks  
John Currence  
Bill Dunlap  
John T. Edge

Ralph Eubanks  
John Evans  
Beth Ann Fennelly  
William Ferris  
Boo Ferriss  
Ann Fisher-Wirth  
Richard Ford  
Tom Franklin  
Morgan Freeman  
Hugh Freeze  
John Grisham  
Matthew Guinn  
Bailey Howell  
Ben Howland  
Lisa Howorth  
Richard Howorth

Alan Huffman  
Greg Iles  
Deborah Johnson  
Dan Jones  
Andy Kennedy  
Robert Khayat  
Jamie Kornegay  
Archie Manning  
Jonathan Miles  
Mary Miller  
Bill Minor  
Dan Mullen  
Andy Mullins  
Ronnie Musgrove  
Chris Offutt  
Charles Overby

Rob Pearigen  
Jack Pendarvis  
Julia Reed  
Jack Reed, Sr.  
Michael Farris Smith  
Kathryn Stockett  
Scott Stricklin  
Tate Taylor  
Wright Thompson  
Jesmyn Ward  
Brad Watson  
Larry Wells  
Neil White  
Curtis Wilkie  
William Winter  
Steve Yarbrough