

Don't Furl the Flag!

I have, on occasion, been called upon to defend our use of the Confederate flags and other Confederate symbolism. I make no apologies for their use. The following article, which appeared in *The Charleston News and Courier* on April 27, 1979, explains our position as good as any. It was written by W. Earl Douglas in response to a movement that was then underway to ban the official use of the Confederate Battle Flag. Some argued that the flag offended blacks, reminding them of slavery. Mr. Douglas, himself a black man, first addressed the heartburn that the proposed ban brought to the descendants of Confederate soldiers, such as myself. He then proceeded to set forth his own position in the following words.

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Don't Furl the Flag

by W. Earl Douglas

Alas, it has also brought heartburn to this black writer, who cannot buy the socialist philosophy of the Garrisons and Sumner's of yesterday or today, and would rather wave a Confederate battle flag as a symbol of striving for independence than a food stamp or welfare check, which symbolize the hell of defeat more pronounced than that received in any war.

I cannot be convinced that Southern independence meant only the perpetuation of slavery, because history of the truthful kind tells me otherwise. The Constitution of the Provisional Government of the Confederacy forbade the importation of slaves. How then was slavery the motivating force behind the thrust for Southern independence? How did black and white slave owners exist side by side in this region, which was painted by abolitionists as one of black and white hostility? Why were there always more free Negroes in the slave South than in the so-called free North of the abolitionists? Such questions remain unanswered . . . Whites and blacks were partners in the destiny of the South and not (as the Uncle Tom's Cabin mentality of the abolitionists would have had us believe) only as master and slave.

Today over a century since that much heralded emancipation, it is here in the land of

the unfurled Confederate battle flag where Negro progress stands above that achieved in any other region of the country. For it is here, in the heartland of the old Confederacy, where over 70 percent of all black-owned housing is to be found and where this nation's only viable black economic middle class exists—the Southern black farmer.

. . . The real tragedy of the Confederate battle flag is that Southerners, white and black, have permitted it to be driven between them like a wedge, separating them from a common goal. The racism so evident in this controversy is not the flying of the flag but that we've permitted it to be designated as pro-white and anti-black. I am reminded that it was my grandfather and grandmother who kept the home fires burning while the Confederacy waged its war. Which is why I cannot view loyalty to the South or the desire for independence as being monopolized by either race.

. . . If hate had been the prevailing emotion between the races, then it is a safe bet that the Confederacy never would have been born. Fortunately, there was love, understanding and compassion. And the two greatest lies ever perpetrated by history [are] that the South instigated the war and that it was fought by the North for the purpose of freeing slaves. The Negro was merely used as the excuse for that war, while the real reason for it is reflected in every area of our lives, where the tentacles of government form the bars of a new slavery.

No! Don't furl that Confederate battle flag. Let it wave all across the South to remind Americans that there exists here a yearning for liberty, freedom and independence that will not be denied. Let it fly as a testimonial to real men and real women who would rather work and fight than shed tears and beg for government charity. Finally, let it act as a cohesive force, drawing all Southerners together in the cause of freedom.”

The Confederate flag stands for individual and state's rights, for volunteerism, and for Constitutional government. It stands for self-determination and freedom, for decency and the Judeo-Christian ethic. It stands for the old paths and the ancient landmarks of our American forefathers. It stands for those traditional American values that the United States (sic) and its flag are increasingly standing against. The battle flag stands for the morality and decency of men like, Lee, Jackson, Stuart, Kirby-Smith, and Davis. Long may these principles survive and long may that flag wave.

Del Wray, Pastor