

FORUM

RACE, THE SOUTH AND THE CONFEDERACY

U.S. and local governments should stop honoring Confederate traitors



George Curry
Guest Columnist

Can you imagine waving a flag that honors Benedict Arnold, a name synonymous with treason?

How about traveling to work and back on Aldrich Ames Boulevard, a tribute to the CIA mole who secretly worked for the Russians?

Should we erect a statue of Robert Hanssen, the FBI computer and wiretapping expert who spent most of his career spying for the Soviet Union and Russia, in the hallway of the Capitol in Washington, D.C.?

Do you favor naming public schools attended mostly by Jews after Fritz Kuhn to honor the German who lived in the U.S. and was in charge of the famous U.S. Nazi group, the German-American Bund?

If you are repulsed by the thought of honoring those traitors, you should be equally indignant at the thought of erecting statues and naming streets and schools after Confederate traitors.

Make no mistake about it: Those who declared war on the Union were traitors, defined as "a person who is not loyal to his or her own country, friends, etc."

Eleven Southern states broke from the Union for the same reason.

Writing in his book, "The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South," Drew Gilpin Faust observed, "leaders of the secession movement across the South cited slavery as the most compelling reason for southern independence."

Alexander Stephens, in what became known as the Cornerstone Speech, said on March 21, 1861 in Savannah, Ga., "The new constitution has put at rest, forever, all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institution - African slavery as it exists amongst us - the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution."

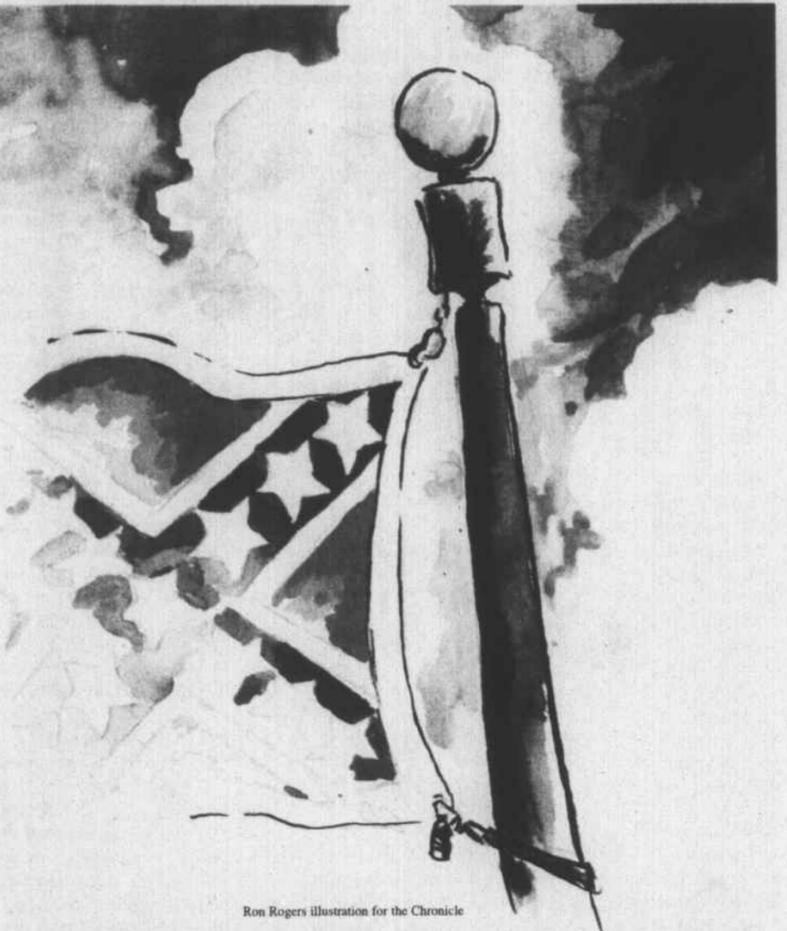
He explained, "[The Confederate] 'its cornerstone rests upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery - subordination to the superior race - is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.'"

These historical facts notwithstanding, a majority of Americans - 57 percent - view the Confederate flag as a symbol of Southern pride rather than racism, according to a recent CNN poll.

It gets more interesting when the numbers are broken down by race. Of Whites polled, only 25 percent view the Confederate flag as a symbol of racism. However, 72 percent of Blacks associate the flag with racism.

It is time to bring down the Confederate flag of hate, but we shouldn't stop there. We should remove the monuments and tributes to the Civil War traitors from public buildings and streets. If Robert J. Bentley, the Republican governor of Alabama, can voluntarily remove four Confederate flags from the Capitol grounds in Montgomery and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) can recommend that a statue of Kentucky-born Jefferson Davis be removed from the state Capitol, it is time to remove the tributes to Confederate leaders from the U.S. Capitol.

Visitors to the Capitol are greeted by towering statues of 11 former Confederate leaders, including Confederate President Jefferson Davis, Vice President Alexander H. Stephens and Gen. Robert E. Lee.



Ron Rogers illustration for the Chronicle

Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), a civil rights icon, said it's time for the statues to be removed.

He told the Associated Press, "Young children, school children, walk by these statues, and those of us who serve in the Congress, we have to get our own house in order ... We have to have a cleansing in this place."

There is still cleansing to be done at the state level.

Despite the removal the Confederate flags from the Capitol grounds in Alabama, for example, the state annually celebrates Confederate Memorial Day, Jefferson Davis' birthday, and honors Robert E. Lee on the same day it observes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday.

A large statue of Jefferson Davis on the Capitol grounds overlooks Dexter Avenue, where Dr. King pastored his first church. The Confederate Monument is still on the grounds and a star still marks the spot where Jefferson Davis took the oath as president of the Confederate states.

Mississippi also combines the birthdays of Dr. King and Robert E. Lee,

observes Confederate Memorial Day on the last Monday of April and combines national observance of Memorial Day with Jefferson Davis' birthday as a state holiday.

In addition to Alabama and Mississippi, Confederate Memorial Day is also observed as a state holiday in Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

Let the cleansing begin. Like Maj. General William T. Sherman, let's march though Dixie and the rest of the nation until we rid the United States of tributes to traitors.

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McCrory is talk but no action on Confederate flag license plates



Chris Fitzsimon
Guest Columnist

plates had increased since McCrory's remarks and that DMV sold out of them more than a week earlier.

A M C C R O R Y Administration spokesman says more plates are being made and should be available in 30 days and that DMV is currently taking pre-orders for them. So much for the governor standing up and ending a symbol of racism and hate manufactured by the state he leads.

McCrory says the General Assembly must act to end the sale of the plates. Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger says McCrory can do it with an executive order. Meanwhile, as the two leaders conveniently call on the other to do something, nothing is done and more confederate plates are being sold and more are being made.

McCrory may honestly believe he doesn't have the authority to stop issuing the plates, but if that's true, he doesn't seem too bothered by the inaction of Berger and other legislative leaders.

McCrory had held more than a dozen media events since he first spoke out about the Confederate plates. He has cut ribbons at businesses and called on lawmakers to approve his

proposals for bonds for transportation and infrastructure. He has not mentioned the Confederate flag plates.

Maybe he is waiting for the General Assembly to act on its own, but that's

to make sure it passed, even reportedly making an emotional appeal to state House Republicans at a closed caucus meeting.

Haley knew that removing the flag was the right thing to do, and she

Adams issued a statement Thursday praising the South Carolina legislature and calling on McCrory and the North Carolina General Assembly to discontinue the license plates bearing the Confederate

on official license plates made and sold by the state of North Carolina.

McCrory is in charge, and it is up to him. The millions of people he represents who see that flag as a symbol of hate deserve a governor who not only says the right thing about it, but follows up and actually does the right thing.

No one believes that removing the flag will solve the problem of racism that still plagues our state and our society. But symbols are important; the confederate flag needs to go. There's no place for it on public buildings or public grounds or public license plates.

Let's see if McCrory is up to it or if he is just full of talk.

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Illustration NC Policy Watch

hardly what a leader would do.

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley signed legislation Thursday [July 9] to remove the Confederate battle flag from the state Capitol grounds, and it was removed Friday morning. Haley demanded the legislation after the Charleston shootings and worked hard

made it happen.

McCrory says that ending the Confederate license plates is the right thing to do but isn't sure he can make it happen and doesn't seem inclined to use the weight of his office to force the General Assembly to act.

North Carolina Congresswoman Alma

flag. [That statement can be seen on the Opinion page of The Chronicle in this issue.]

And she's right. Somebody needs to stop issuing the plates and stop making them and cancel the orders. A Confederate flag should not fly on the capitol grounds of South Carolina and should not be