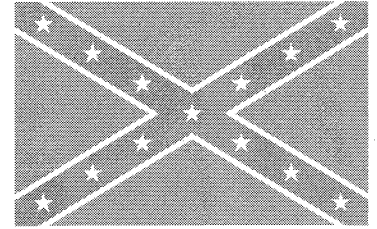


The Confederate Flag

Confused as to why so many Americans are defending the confederate flag, monuments, and statues right now? Here is a quick Q&A, with questions from a hypothetical person with misconceptions and answers from the perspective of an AP U.S. History Teacher.



Q: What did the Confederacy stand for?

A: Rather than interpreting, let's go directly to the words of the Confederacy's Vice President, Alexander Stephens. In his "Cornerstone Speech" on March 21, 1861, he stated "The Constitution... rested upon the equality of races. This was an error. Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone 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."

Q: But people keep saying heritage, not hate! They think the purpose of the flags and monuments are to honor confederate soldiers, right?

A: After the Civil War ended in 1865, the confederate flag symbol wasn't used much. In 1948, the Confederate flag re-emerged as a potent political symbol. That is when a short lived "States' Rights Democratic Party" (segregationists often called "Dixiecrats") staged a walkout of white Southerners from the Democratic National Convention to protest President Harry S. Truman's push for civil rights.

In 1954 the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* ordered the desegregation of public primary schools. Hardcore Southern segregationists in opposition used the Confederate battle flag as a symbol of resistance against civil rights protections for African Americans.

During the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, when Martin Luther King, Jr. and John Lewis were marching on Washington to get the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Act (1965) passed, leaders in the south felt compelled to fly confederate flags to exhibit their displeasure with black people fighting for basic human rights.

It's important to note that the Republican and Democratic parties switched platforms, so that the Republicans are now the conservative party and the Democrats are the more progressive party.

Q: But if we take down confederate statues and monuments, how will we teach about and remember the past?

A: Monuments and statues pose little educational relevance, whereas museums, the rightful place for Confederate paraphernalia, can provide more educational opportunities for citizens to learn about our country's history. Relocating them in museums also allows us to avoid celebrating and honoring people who believed that tens of millions of black Americans should be legal property.

Q: What if the Confederate flag symbol means something different to me?

A: Individuals aren't able to change the meaning of symbols that have been defined by history. Your personal interpretation forfeits any meaning once you display it publicly. It takes on the meaning it earned when a failed regime killed hundreds of thousands of Americans in an attempt to keep black people enslaved forever.

Q: But my uncle posted a meme that said the Civil War/Confederacy was about state's rights and not slavery?

A: A state's right to what?

Q: Everyone is offended about everything these days. Should we take everything down that offends anyone?

A: The Confederacy literally existed to go against the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the idea that black people are human beings that deserve to live freely. If that doesn't upset or offend you, you are un-American.

Q: Taking these down goes against the First Amendment and freedom of speech.

A: No. Anyone can do whatever they want on their private property, on their social media, etc. Taking these down in public, or having private corporations like NASCAR ban them on their properties, has literally nothing to do with the Bill of Rights.

Q: How can people claim to be patriotic while supporting a flag that stood for a group of insurgent failures who tried to permanently destroy America and killed 300,000 Americans in the process?

A: No clue.

Q: If I make a confederate flag my profile picture, or put a confederate bumper sticker on my car, what am I declaring to my friends, family, and the world?

A: That you support the Confederacy. To recap, the Confederacy stands for: slavery, white supremacy and treason.

PRIVILEGE is having history rewritten so that you don't have to acknowledge uncomfortable facts.

RACISM is perpetuated by people who refuse to learn or acknowledge this reality. You have a choice.

'Liberal' literally means:

1. willing to respect or accept behavior or opinions different from one's own; open to new ideas.
2. relating to or denoting a political and social philosophy that promotes individual rights, civil liberties, democracy, and free enterprise.

From the Google Dictionary, provided by Oxford Languages.