



HERITAGE NOT HATE

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If only it were as simple as that title proclaims. But in the debate over the use of the Confederate flag, nothing is simple and there is no win-win situation.

I see them all of the time. This is North Carolina, a confederate state during the civil war and one that held its fair share of slaves. As a state, we are historically conservative, where tobacco and NASCAR have always been two of the pillars of life.

The term "redneck" is used so much and we all know the reference that it makes: those good ol' boys down at the track or out in Montgomery County, always working on their old, beat up trucks or going hunting. Stereotypical? Definitely. But these are the people that we see most often proudly wearing the old Confederate Jack [flag].

It is visible on bumper stickers, T-shirts, tattoos, cigarette lighters, wallets, bandanas, and even flying high over South Carolina's state capital building. It is everywhere, an enduring symbol of states' rights and southern culture. Well this is all well and good, but there is more to it than that.

It is also an enduring symbol of hate, oppression, and division, three ideals that our great nation has stood against from its very birth. In our name, the word "united" brings all of us together under one flag. In our Declaration, we break the bonds of oppression and set our citizens free. And in our Constitution we have given hatred no quarter.



The swastika has been completely phased out in both the United States and Germany. Never mind the fact that it is originally a Sanskrit symbol meaning good luck or well being, it has become associated as the symbol of the Nazi party and the hatred and destruction that they spread throughout Europe. "Skinhead" is another stereotype that is commonly used to describe Neo-Nazis, those misled youths that spread hatred simply because they want to be hardcore. But these individuals are not tolerated. Would you sit next to that young man in class? Would you talk to him?

The point is simple: there is no place for symbols of hate in our society and that is the way we want to keep it. The Confederate Jack is offensive. I cringe when I see it. I can only imagine the feelings of African-Americans, our

friends and coworkers, our fellow students and teachers, when they lay eyes on it.

Race is a touchy subject and there may never be a happy medium. But one thing is for sure: by ignoring it, we are just prolonging the problem and more people are less happy. It is not the government that can regulate our behavior and take the Confederate flag off of T-shirts. That is up to us.

It is about time to stop looking back to our heritage to make excuses. Let's start looking to our peers in order to solve these problems. All you southerners out there, why not just wear a different shirt next time? Or take that "The South Will Rise Again" bumper sticker off your truck? If no one is wearing the rebel shirts, there will be no market for it. Then, maybe we can begin to create new heritage, one that does not manifest itself in hate but, rather in peace, equality, and love.