

Anarchism and Confederate-Flag Culture

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One Man's Journey from Southern Heritage to Libertarian Socialism

If you are someone who displays a Confederate flag out of overt racism, this text is not for you. In fact, we will fight you in the streets.

If, however, you are someone who insists that he is not racist, but you have at some point in your life displayed a Confederate Flag out of a general sense of rebellion against the government, the boss, parents, pompous Yankee liberals, or just against modern society in general, then this text is addressed to you. Especially, if you are a working class southerner who flies the Cross of St. Andrew as an in-your-face act of protest against the mass production of national "culture," a McDonaldized product that has the effect of smothering and burying authentic local cultures that (some feel) are symbolized by the Confederate flag... especially, then, this brief sketch of one man's odyssey from the glorification of southern heritage to an appreciation of anarchist ideas and values, may have something to say to you.

As a child I was raised by the school, television, church, and my parents, in roughly that order of importance. All of these authorities told me what it was appropriate for me to think, do and feel at any given moment. I was supposed to love and obey a God who never bothered to show his face to me, and in a similar vein I was supposed to love and obey a familial father who didn't have time for me, either. Parents and teachers were to be respected, and for children who failed in that endeavor the "policeman would come and get you" (which proved to be all too true.)

But at least I had the television... Mr. TV was my buddy, my fellow sufferer in the face of all this authority. Mr. TV was the coolest kid on the block, the guy who knew his way around the social pit-falls of school, the ultimate arbiter of what was cool and what was, gasp, "lame" (can you imagine a crueller, more horrible expression?)

The problem was, it was all a bunch of lies, and I knew it. (Or at least, once I got old enough to think for myself, I knew it.) The meaning-of-it-all that the church offered meant, in fact, nothing at all. It was illogical, but served the purpose of telling me to be a good servant, because I would get my reward after I was dead from an invisible person in the sky. (I don't think the unlikelihood of THAT little scenario requires too much commentary.) The school, with its sports programs and detention halls, which claimed to be opening my mind to the mysteries of the universe and the joys of great art, was in fact training to me to become a cog in the great corporate machine. And my parents were too much in the thrall of this corporate religion themselves, to do anything but reinforce it.

Even my best friend, the TV, turned against me. He began to say that if I was born a white southerner, then I was to blame for all the racial ills of mankind. That's right, I, little ole southern white boy, had done it all, from the Grecian slave societies of antiquity to the Boston busing riots, from the rape of Nanking to the Holocaust, all the racial ills of mankind could be laid at my doorstep. By this point in time the church (and my parents) had stuffed me so full of irrational guilt that I was inclined to believe it... but somehow, it just didn't add up.

So I took a big horn from a bottle of (Kentucky) bourbon, hung a Confederate flag in the window, and told the world to kiss my ass. I was through apologizing for being born...

Here is the summary version: the American corporate titans that control the TV, newspapers, and grammar school textbooks have declared all things southern to be racist, and all things racist to be southern, in order to confuse the issue and evade their own responsibilities. They portray slavery as having been a purely southern institution, instead of as a single component of a universally oppressive white/Anglo economic system (that happened to find its worst excesses in the cotton fields of the southern United States in the 1800's).

By painting slavery and racism as a uniquely southern phenomenon, the CEO's manage to divert attention from the racist legacy that remains. When they falsely imply that racism is uniquely southern, and then correctly add that the racial situation in the south now mirrors that of the rest of the country, they declare the problem solved. Implicitly this has the effect of encouraging such reactionary nonsense as charges of "reverse discrimination."

In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The problem of white supremacy in America is anything but resolved. In fact, police officers all over America target people of color for searches and beatings, while the nation's jails, prisons and housing projects are littered with the dark-skinned human refuse of the ultimate soulless commodity system, the great American labor market. In the 1850's most blacks were subject to whips and chains, but a small portion were relatively "free". In modern society, most people of color are impoverished or imprisoned, while a similarly small portion are middle-class, or relatively "well-off". Very little has changed, other than the means of the enslavement.

These facts are what the "racism is a southern thing" myth is intended to obscure. Blacks, Latinos, and to a lesser extent, working-class southern whites are all harmed by this myth. It is time to place the responsibility for American racism and poverty squarely where it belongs, at the doorstep of the business class, and at the foot of the American flag (and all other Anglo-nationalist flags) which provide the business class with aid and comfort.

So, burn your Confederate flag — give it a respectful ceremony if you must, but really, get rid of it — and join the anarchist movement as we set out to combat,

defeat and replace the racist, classist, patriarchal society that bores us with political speeches, numbs us with television, scares us with the superstitions of religion, hypnotizes us with the banalities of commercial advertising, and threatens us with the state-religion of patriotism. We are the “rebels” of the modern corporate-techno-nightmare age, and our ultimate goal is to replace the businesses, government and churches with a society of free equals, in which all live at peace with nature and each other.

Join us as we set out to build a new world, a world in which every man, woman and, yes, child is viewed and treated as a valuable part of the great whole of larger humanity, instead of as a competitor for money, sex, and power. Join us as we set out to build a world based on sharing and mutual respect, where local idiosyncrasies (that are supportive of human dignity) are respected, even celebrated. Join us, and be proud of the human being that you are, the community in which you live, and the planet on which you stand.

Down with McDonalds, Wal-Mart, ADM and the rest of the corporations! Up with your neighbors, and yourself!

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September, in the year of our store, 2003

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