

OPINIONS

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A Different Perspective:
Ike Bailey



How important is the Confederate flag?

The Confederate Flag seems to be a major source of contempt for the majority of people in the African-American community. At the same time, it seems to represent a source of pride for a majority of Southern white-Americans. I cannot speak intelligently on the latter view, but I have a few views on the former.

First of all, I am constantly told by supporters of the flag that slavery was not the central issue of the Civil War. Granted, there were many reasons for the war. It can be reasoned that the war was an economic one, that it was fought for freedom of choice, that it was fought because of pride. It can even be reasoned that slavery was brought up as an issue in this war simply as a military tactic, as the

North's way of trying to undermine the morale of the confederate soldiers, making them look like "bad guys" for defending such an institution.

I, and the majority of the African-American race, have yet to be convinced that slavery was not the central issue. After all, would there have been such a war if slavery had not existed? With this being realized, how can anyone not understand the contempt that an African-American would have towards a symbol of such an institution.

It has been referred to as Southern Pride. Well, I am sure that there are millions of southern African-Americans who are not filled with pride when in the presence of

that flag. It is supposed to represent great Southern heritage.

The only heritage this symbol reminds an entire race of people of is the worst stage in their history that they had to endure. It reminds us of the pure hate that has been shown towards us since we arrived

What if the Confederacy had won? Would I be here now?

in this country, and most of us arrived against our will.

It reminds us of the fact that our ancestors were chained and whipped as if they were animals. It reminds us of the belief that J.D. Adler, the grand dragon of the KKK, and his many followers hold, that we are now nothing more than

"obsolete farm machinery."

How can any African-American be expected to want or respect a symbol that represents the killing of over 100 million of his brothers and sisters? Should we just accept it now simply because we are over a hundred years removed from sla-

very? What if the Confederacy had won? Would I be here now, trying to further my educa-

tion, or would I be out in Mr. Charlie's field with the shackles on my feet, afraid of being whipped again? Or would my parent's generation, or their parent's generation been the last one to endure such hell?

In my mind, the Confederate flag can breed nothing more than

hate, contempt, and fear. Why is it considered with such pride in the eyes of so many people? Does it have anything to do with the fact that that institution killed off a few thousand or more Negroes before it was all said and done?

I did not write this article to get rid of the bumper stickers, the t-shirts, and the flags hanging out of windows. I don't believe we should ever get to the point that we are not allowed to speak our minds or exercise freedom of choice.

But I also recognize the fact that the flying of that flag over my home state of South Carolina shows an utter lack of respect for an entire community. Besides a lack of respect, I believe it says much more about that state, and this country as a whole.

CHAOS by Brian Shuster



"Well Mr. Wilkins, we were able to save your life, but I'm afraid we had to give you a heart from a duck...and a duck's kidneys...and, well, look, I've got to be honest..."

Rosie Molinary



I want to be a millionaire.

His letter came the other day. The last few words stood out to me—"I am so proud of you." I sat for a moment, surprised. And then remembering the many years of childhood we spent together, I felt a wave of guilt come over me.

It was in sixth grade that the real sadness started in his life. He called a couple of days after Christmas to say his dad had been murdered, a drug deal gone bad. A few years later, the call came when his mom was getting abused by his step-father. He whispered to me, hoping they'd forget he was home.

In high school, the phone calls stopped. Instead, I would open the door at some late hour and he would be standing there with a grim look on his face, waiting for some sort of love. Those days, he spent a lot

of nights on our couch and ate a lot of dinners with us for holidays. We'd wash dishes afterwards and he'd always look at me and say earnestly, "Isn't dad great" or "Doesn't mom's new haircut look nice?" I'd smile, the horrible phone call from sixth grade replaying faintly in the back of my mind.

Our junior year was worse for him. His mom divorced and began her search for self. He'd come over at night and frown, blaming himself for his mother's unhappiness.

"She's been raising me since she was fifteen. Of course she hasn't had a chance to find herself."

I could only sit and shake my head no; words would have betrayed the incredible feeling of sad-

ness I had inside of me.

Our senior year looked up for him. Applications off to Harvard, Yale, and Williams; calls were coming in from every admissions office possible as they desperately tried to win this bright student and state champion wrestler. It seemed he would be able to run away from all the sadness of his childhood and adolescence.

This time when he showed up at our door the look on his face seemed etched in cold gray marble. I pulled him inside and listened as he mumbled over and over again about his mom joining the army and leaving within the month.

"She's renting me an apartment until I leave for school in August. She needed to do something for herself. She won't be at

my graduation. She just needs to move on."

He was doing everything he could to forgive her, to excuse her, to justify why he would suddenly be all alone. I sat, in silence, unsure of what I could do except offer my family to him for the final months before he left for college.

She left; off to basic training and then Japan. He avoided the apartment as much as possible and slowly moved himself into our house.

In August, I took off for Davidson with two carloads of unnecessary trinkets and he headed for Williams with a suitcase, a comforter, \$150 in cash, a few things my mom pushed on him that he didn't want to take, and the address of a ship somewhere on the other

side of the world.

This summer, we talked for an extended period. Practically brother and sister, we had always shared so much pride in each other. I had begun to wonder, however, what his real big picture was, where he was headed with all of his dreams.

"I want to be a millionaire." My stomach turned at that idea and I challenged him.

His response was in the letter: "When you're six years old and you're laying in bed wondering if the electricity will be cut back on in the morning or if you're going to eat or if your shoes are going to fall apart in gym because they're looking pretty bad; then you decide

Open your mind and go country.

Ken May

This past weekend I did something I thought I'd never do in my entire life. I mean, we're talking one of those hell-freeze-over kind of things. A few months ago, such an action would have certainly merited wearing a paper bag over my sorry head for the remainder of the semester. Yes, I confess. I attended a Travis Tritt concert. God have mercy or strike me down where I stand.

For the uninitiated, Travis Tritt is one of the biggest stars of country music. Now, I know what you're saying: that nasal twang, those sappy lyrics, and, of course, the horrible steel guitar. That's exactly what I was saying not too long ago. In fact, there was almost nothing I hated more than listening to country music. Until one weekend roadtrip.

My friend and I were heading to Pittsburgh, about a six hour drive from home. He was driving and, of course, the only thing he listened to was country ... the entire trip. You can imagine my vehement

protestations. Let's change the channel. Let's take turns picking the music. How about some peace and quiet? No go. He wasn't budging. So, I suffered every darn mile of road we covered.

But then a funny thing happened. On the way home, I noticed myself singing the words to an unknown tune. Lord help me! It was a country song. What was happening to me? Was I being brainwashed by the legions of country fans across the nation? Yes, indeed. And by the time I realized what was happening, it was too late. I had lost all free will. I was a country junkie.

Of course, it doesn't stop there. Country music has a way of growing on you. First you can sing along to a few songs. Then you buy a CD or two. The next thing you know, all the stations in your car are preset to the Rebel, KIX 96, and Young Country.

Finally, you find yourself at Blockbuster Pavilion for a Travis Tritt concert. Someone once said

the road to hell is a slippery one. How true!

Anyway, my point in all this: Don't close your mind to things you don't know about or haven't tried. Look at me. Once a hated foe; now a tried and true hick, redneck, or whatever. Something you may not have ever heard about could become the passion of your life. There are so many undiscovered gems out there awaiting each one of us. And wouldn't it really be a tragedy if we passed by something wonderful because we were never willing to give it a second chance.

So, my advice is to keep your eyes, your ears, and most importantly, your mind open. Talk to somebody new. Try something you'd never think of doing. Don't change the channel when you hear a country song. Now, I'm not trying to brainwash you into another country fan or anything like that. But it would be nice to have someone to go to the next Travis Tritt concert with!