

## ***Flying the Confederate Flag***

On July 9, 2015, Governor Nikki Haley signed a bill requiring the Confederate flag to be removed from the South Carolina State House grounds. The flag and the pole on which it was flown were both removed the following day. Leading up to this removal was heated debate concerning whether or not the Confederate flag should be taken down. Similar discussions occurred across the United States in places where Confederate flags or other Confederate symbols were on display, ranging from governmental properties and university campuses to NASCAR venues and popular television series.

Prior to the flag's official removal from the front of the South Carolina State House, police arrested activist Brittany Newsome for climbing the flagpole and removing the flag herself. The activist explained her act of defiance, stating, "because it was the right thing to do and it was time for somebody to step up. Do the right thing. We have to bury hate; it's been too long." South Carolina Representative Jenny Anderson Horne, an ancestor of former Confederate President Jefferson Davis, argued that the Confederate flag should no longer fly in front of the State House. She chastised her colleagues in an emotional speech, stating, "I cannot believe that we do not have the heart in this body to do something meaningful—such as take a symbol of hate off these grounds on Friday."

On the other hand, Confederate sympathizers contend that the flag is a symbol of historical pride, not of hatred. They claim that efforts to remove the flag are a misplaced reaction to photos of Dylann Roof posing with a Confederate flag. Roof had been recently charged with the racially motivated killing of nine black people in a Charleston church. South Carolina State Senator Lee Bright noted that symbols have been misused throughout history. Bright said, for example, that he believed the Ku Klux Klan abused the symbol of the cross, but there has not been a push to remove all crosses. Similarly, Kenneth Thrasher, the lieutenant commander of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans, urged decision makers not to act in haste because, "The flag didn't kill anybody. It was a deranged young man who did."



### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Do you believe that flying a Confederate flag is ethically prohibited? Why or why not?
2. In what ways is displaying a Confederate flag similar or different to displaying other types of flags? A tribal flag? A national flag? A corporate flag? A sports team flag? A rainbow flag?
3. Should retailers bow to public pressure to discontinue sales of controversial items even if they are not illegal, such as toy guns, fur coats, or Native American headdresses?
4. Is it possible to make an objective decision in the case of the Confederate flag? How might you come to a decision that is both reasonable and defensible?
5. Can you think of an example of another situation in which there were two views that were strongly opposed to each other? How was the situation resolved? Do you think the ethically ideal decision was reached? Why or why not?

**Resources:**

Confederate Descendant's Scathing Address In S.C. Flag Debate

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/07/09/421451676/watch-confederates-descendants-scathing-address-in-s-c-flag-debate>

Activist Arrested For Removing Confederate Flag At South Carolina Statehouse

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2015/06/27/activist-removed-confederate-flag-at-south-carolina/>

Flag Supporters React With a Mix of Compromise, Caution and Outright Defiance

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/24/us/politics/supporters-of-confederate-battle-flag-watch-as-symbol-is-stripped-from-public-eye.html>

Bright will fight the 'Stalinist purge' of the Confederate flag

<http://www.goupstate.com/article/20150622/ARTICLES/150629916>

A Guide to Moral Decision Making

<http://www.ethicsweb.ca/guide/>

Ethical Decision Making and Moral Behavior

<http://www.uri.edu/research/lrc/scholl/webnotes/Ethics.htm>

Thinking Ethically: A Framework for Moral Decision Making

<http://www.scu.edu/ethics/publications/iie/v7n1/thinking.html>

*Ethics, theory and practice*

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/ethics-theory-and-practice/oclc/10998696>

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