

Heritage or Hate?

By Robert Francis (Chickamauga Cherokee)

September 25, 2015

Violence Ignites Debate



The Bible Study Massacre, June 17, 2015 at the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, shocked the country. Knowledge of the alleged shooter Dylann Storm Roof's proclivity toward displaying the Southern Cross Flag ignited debate over official display of this flag on state and federal properties.

On July 7, 2015, The United States House of Representatives voted to ban the display of the Southern Cross flag in federal cemeteries. On July 10, 2015, the Southern

Cross flag was ceremonially removed from the South Carolina Capital, where it had flown since 1961. Some stores and vendors who have sold the Southern Cross flag or Southern Cross paraphernalia in the past have elected to stop distribution.

Those who still sell the Southern Cross flag have cashed in as supporters of the flag, even many who have never owned or displayed the flag in the past, now want one.



At first, while listening to the debate from both sides, I was reluctant to enter into it. Even so, I began working on this paper early in July. What I have to share in this paper comes with a personal price of thinking or pondering over things I would rather not think about or would rather ignore, as they involve the opening of wounds, old wounds and not so old wounds, as well as frank admissions or confessions of actions and attitudes of my own which I would certainly rather forget or sweep under the carpet.

In regard to the Southern Cross flag, I have heard people say, "It is heritage, not hate." I have heard people say, "It has nothing to do with racism; it is just about Southern pride." Well, I understand heritage. I also understand that collective memory may be short and is often selective. The Civil War is not ancient history. It was not so long ago that the conflict between northern and southern states tore this continent apart. Just as with any family whose roots are deep in the soil of this land, and the roots of my people are *very* deep, my family still carries, in our hearts and minds, stories from the Civil War.

Stories of my Ancestors from the Civil War

Two of my great-great grandfathers enlisted in the United States Army during the Civil War. My great-great grandfather Thomas LaRue's family lived in Illinois at the time. He and one brother joined the Union Army while another brother went south to enlist with a Confederate unit. All three survived the war, yet there was never a reconciliation between the two brothers who fought for the United States and their brother who fought for the Confederate States.



Thomas LaRue

My great-great grandfather John Lutes, from Bollinger County, Missouri, also joined the Union Army and was killed in action. His family, staunch Confederate sympathizers, were so ashamed of this, that in the family history passed down, John Lutes is said to have died from cholera before the Civil War began. The real story surfaced when my eldest sister, doing genealogical research, found John Lutes' war record online.

Another of my great-great grandfathers, Jesse Graves, fought for the Confederacy. Jesse Graves' family were slaveholders, living in northern Alabama. During the Civil War, he was a Private in Company K, 39th Alabama Regiment (Infantry). He was shot in the leg in 1863 at the battle of Champions Hill or Baker Run in Mississippi. After he was wounded, he and others of his company were hiding in the woods, behind enemy lines, with Union soldiers all around. After several days, a dog wandered through their camp. They killed the dog and ate him raw, since a fire would have given away their position. Jesse Graves being the most severely wounded and most in need of nutrition, was given the dog's raw liver to eat. In later years he said that was the best meal he'd ever had. Not getting prompt



Jesse Graves

medical attention probably saved Jesse Graves' leg, as maggots kept the rotting flesh eaten away until the healing process could begin.



Polly Murry

Just prior to the Civil War, my great-great grandparents Jacob and Mary Anne "Polly" Murry moved from Madison County, Missouri across the state to Newton County, Missouri, somewhere near Neosho. This is where my great grandfather E.A. Murry was born in 1860. However, as the Civil War progressed, the conflict grew very hot in Newton County, so the family moved back across the state

to Madison County as war refugees.

My great-great grandparents Miles and Leaney Francis lived in Bollinger County, Missouri at the time of Civil War. Miles was originally from Virginia and Leaney from Tennessee. They moved from Tennessee to Bollinger County, Missouri prior to 1840. During the Civil War, one of their older sons, Baxter Francis, joined the Union Army.

Miles' and Leaney's son and my great grandfather George Francis told the following Civil War story to my father Doyle Francis who told the story to me: Early one morning while Miles was out doing chores, a scavenging party of four soldiers burst into the house demanding to be fed and intending to take what food and provisions were to be had. George Francis was eight years old at the time. "They were being rough with Mom," George said, "when Dad, returning from doing chores, happened to see them through the window." In those days, Miles Francis always carried a gun whenever he went out of the house. Seeing the soldiers, he slipped quietly away without being noticed and quickly aroused the neighbors. He and the neighbor men, well armed, burst through the door of the house, surprising and disarming the four soldiers. At gunpoint, the soldiers were marched out of the house, first to the shed, where each was given a shovel, then through the woods and down into a sheltered valley. In telling the story to my father, George said, "On the way through the woods, one of the soldiers knelt down to pray. Dad prodded him with his gun and said, 'You should have thought of that before. Now, get up and walk.'" In the valley, the soldiers were ordered to dig their own graves, before being shot and buried. In the story, it was never told whether these were Union or Confederate soldiers; this is understandable considering that animosities continued long after the Civil War was officially over. However, it was stressed that these were soldiers, a regular scavenging party. In March of 1864, Leaney's and Miles' son Baxter died. That same month, Leaney gave birth to another son who lived only 19 days. I don't know whether or not her baby's death was caused by abuse Leaney received at the hands of the soldiers. Leaney also died at a relatively young age.

My great-great-great grandfather William "Dusty Bill" Warren of Johnson County, Arkansas actively avoided conscription during the Civil War, avowing that both sides were in the wrong and resorting, at times, to hiding out in caves. Far from being a pacifist, Dusty Bill Warren was evidently quite willing to resort to violence in order to maintain his chosen neutrality. Long after the Civil War was over and even after he was ordained as a United Baptist minister in 1873, Dusty Bill was noted for always wearing a gun belt with two revolvers and for carrying a rifle which he left propped against the pulpit while he preached.



Dusty Bill Warren

Problems of “Racial Ambivalence”

My appearance has always been what some might term “racially ambivalent”. I never thought much about it until my teen years, when I finally gave up on brushing down or otherwise controlling my very curly hair. This was the 1970s, when all kinds of people were wearing Afros. However, mine was obviously no Afro permanent; it was a natural. And so, the people of our very “race” conscious southeastern Missouri community began to remark on what they saw as evidence of African ancestry. Without going into any great detail, I will simply say that the disparaging and dehumanizing word n****, along with other similar epithets has been used in reference to me more times than I care to calculate. That “n” word has a way of getting under a person’s skin, of internalizing itself, to the extent that I even started thinking it of myself when viewing my reflection in a mirror. Friends as well as enemies made comments, even teachers and family members. I once sat in a Sunday School class in which cousins from both sides of my family argued about which side of the family my evident African ancestry originated. Privately, I asked my mother, “Do we have any black ancestry?”

“We have lots of Indian ancestry,” my mother said. “Some of your ancestors from both sides used to call themselves ‘Black Dutch’ when anyone would ask, but no, there’s no tradition of Black African ancestry. You look Indian and just happen to have curly hair.” But, what did my father say? Once while telling a story about an occurrence during a wheat threshing at a farm belonging to a family referred to as the “N**** Allens”, my father recalled, “They weren’t any darker than we were; thy just had curly hair.” He then sheepishly glanced my way and laughed.

Well, *of course* there was “no tradition of black ancestry” in our family. I descend largely, on both sides of the family, from Chickamauga Cherokees. The Chickamauga Confederacy, beginning with a split from the Cherokee Nation in 1775, was not only a multi-tribal but a multi “racial” defense movement against American expansionism and imperialism. The Chickamaugas took in Indians from many tribes, refugees and expatriates, as well as those of Scots-Irish, German, English and African ancestry. It was other people who called us Chickamaugas back then; we called ourselves Ani-Yvwiya (Real People), and all were equally Ani-Yvwiya. Depending on the mix, in later years as our country was overrun, some could and did pass for white as the situation demanded. Others explained their coppery complexions away by calling themselves “Black Dutch” or “Black Irish” or even by claiming to be “Part Spanish”. But the bottom line is, Chickamauga Cherokees and Chickamauga descendants have African ancestry as well as European and American Indian ancestry. It does not make us any less Chickamauga, but it is a fact of life; we have many relatives. My family, on both sides, also has Renape and Monacan ancestry from Virginia, and Virginia is a place where, early on, not all but many Indian people began taking in and intermarrying with people of African ancestry - freed blacks as well as escaped slaves. I have been told that on the direct Francis line we have ancestry going back to the Gingaskins, a Renape tribe from the eastern side of

Chesapeake Bay. The Gingaskin Tribe (Accomac Tribe) was the first tribe ever to have their tribal status and reservation terminated by the British government. Why did this happen? It was because their white neighbors were of the opinion that since the Gingaskins had intermarried with freed blacks, they could no longer be Indian.

I don't think my mother knew any of this, and if my grandparents knew it, they weren't talking. After all, my grandparents came out of the era of the Eugenics Movement. It was OK to be "Part Indian" so long as it wasn't a very big part and so long as the person did not identify as Indian or as a member of a particular tribe. Basically, if you could convince people you were no more than 1/16 Indian by blood, you could claim white status and privilege. African ancestry was another matter altogether, for here the notorious One-Drop-of-Blood Rule came into play, which basically said that if a person has any known or discernible African ancestry that person is "colored" and nothing but "colored" along with all their descendants. The closest I ever came to having real insight into my appearance passed along by a previous generation was when an aged cousin of my father took me aside and said, "Robert, you look like the old-time Francisces; be proud of your hair." As I think back, these words are very meaningful, but at the time, they were just confusing.



The Author, Age 17

My talk with my mother did nothing to ease my mind, nor did it make the name calling go away. I would pretty much just smile and take it when it came from a friend or a cousin, and there was not much I could do or say when it was from my father or my grandmother or a teacher. But, I was not about to be called n***** by just any peckerwood at school. I didn't pick fights, but I learned to finish them quickly and without getting caught. "What happened to him? Why's he rolling around on the floor?" a teacher might ask.

"I don't know," I'd answer. "Looks like his knee gave way." That tends to happen when the pointed toe of a cowboy boot attempts to force itself behind a kneecap at high velocity.

Moving beyond our community, I came to suspect those who did not know me or my family often assumed I was black. There were hate-stares in restaurants and clerks who would follow me in stores. Also, police officers seemed to treat me differently than they normally treated my friends and treated my friends differently when I was riding with them. I couldn't understand it, but sometimes I could sense hate on the part of an officer, as when I was pulled over for a very minor infraction by the Chief of Police in a small Missouri Bootheel town and threatened with jail, clearly an attempt to cause panic which would have resulted in my actual

arrest or worse. Other times I could sense their fear, as when I was riding with two friends in an old van that belonged to one of them and two Missouri State Troopers pulled us over for no reason. One trooper knelt behind his car door and kept a rifle pointed at my head as the other approached the van demanding to see everyone's identification. Irrational fear, a badge of authority and a loaded firearm: That is a dangerous combination.

Attempting to Claim White Privilege

I have said all that just to say this: When I went to the School of the Ozarks (now the College of the Ozarks) in January 1978, I came with a load of internalized prejudice, bigotry and racism, and I came wanting people to think of me as a white person. So, when I was told I had to have a curtain on my window, I bought what is commonly called a Confederate flag, the elongated Southern Cross flag, and hung that up. A few days later, I got a visit from Ray, a young black man, a fellow student from the Missouri Bootheel who had taken it upon himself to befriend me shortly after my arrival at college. After the pleasantries were out of the way, he got down to business, "Why do you have *that* flag in your window?" he asked.

"It's my heritage," I said. "It has nothing to do with prejudice or racism or anything like that. My great-great grandpa fought for the Confederacy during the War Between the States (That's just how I said it.). He was wounded during the war but survived, so that flag is part of my heritage."

After that, the subject was changed; we visited awhile, exchanged some jokes and what not, but later, as Ray got up to leave, with a twinkle in his eye he said, "See you later, *colored child*." So much for being accepted as white.

Well, the flag didn't stay in my window for long. Within another day or two, I received a visit from the Resident Assistant who said, "That flag has to come down. The administration does not want potential donors to the college to see it; it doesn't fit with the image of the School of the Ozarks."

"So," I asked, "Is there a specific rule I'm breaking? Is there a rule against using a flag as a curtain in a dorm room?"

"Well no," the R.A. replied, "but the flag has to come down."

Crossing my arms, I said, "Until you can show me a specific rule I'm breaking, the flag stays up."

So, just because of me, within two days a new rule was passed at the School of the Ozarks. Henceforth, no flag could be used as a window curtain. Along with my Southern Cross Flag, a 1776 American flag, two or three modern American flags and, I think, a flag from El Salvador were also removed. Shortly after that, I gave up trying to be accepted as a white person. It's hard now to look back and

recall that I ever even wanted that.

Anyone who says “Heritage not Hate” needs to know the heritage.

My claim that the elongated Southern Cross flag was part of my heritage was based on the assumption that my great-great grandfather, Jesse Graves of Company K, 39th Alabama Regiment had fought under that flag. Some years later, taking it upon myself to learn more of the history of the Civil War and of the



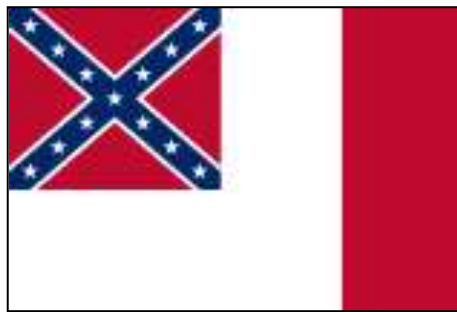
flags used during the Civil War, I was dismayed to find that Jesse Graves would *not* have fought under the elongated Southern Cross flag during the Civil War. What follows is a crash-course history lesson on the flags of Civil War.

The first official Confederate States of America national flag was designed with a field of blue containing a circle of white stars in the upper corner, a red horizontal bar at the top, a white bar in the middle and another red bar across the bottom. As it served as



the official CSA flag from May 1861 until March 1863, the number of stars changed along with the number of states included in the Confederacy, but this and only this flag may be referred to properly as The Stars and Bars.

The second official Confederate States of America national flag was called The Stainless Banner. This flag was designed as a pure white banner with the square Southern Cross design (red field, saltire of blue bordered with white and emblazoned with five-pointed stars corresponding to the number of Confederate States) in the upper corner.



The Stainless Banner was the official CSA flag from May 1863 until March 1865.

On March 4, 1865, The Stainless Banner was replaced with The Bloodstained Banner as the official Confederate

States of America national flag. The Bloodstained Banner was basically The Stainless Banner with the addition of a vertical red bar at the far end.



These were the official national flags of the Confederacy. However, many and various battle flags were used, the first of these being the Bonnie Blue Flag used by those firing on Fort Sumter. This was a solid blue flag with a large, white five-point star



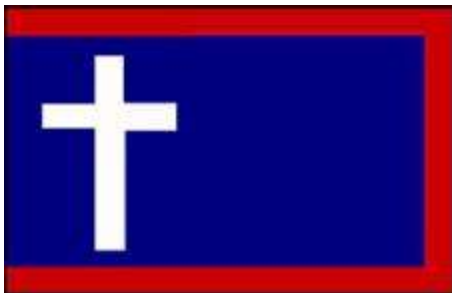
in the center.

The square Southern Cross flag with its red field and star-embazoned blue saltire was the official battle flag of the Army of Northern Virginia. This flag gradually gained status as the *unofficial* CSA battle flag, but only for those states east of the Mississippi River.



The Army of Trans-Mississippi Battle Flag was of similar design to the Army of Northern Virginia Battle Flag but with a blue field rather than red and a red saltire rather than blue. This flag was used by some Confederate forces west of the Mississippi River.

The elongated Southern Cross, most commonly and erroneously referred to today as “The Confederate Flag” or even as “The Stars and Bars” served, during the Civil War, only as the battle flag of the Army of Tennessee. Nearly every state had their own battle flag; some had more than one.



The Confederate Army of Missouri, under General Price, fought under a blue flag bordered with red on three sides and with a white Christian cross on one end. The Fourth

Missouri Infantry, from the Springfield area, fought under a red flag bordered with yellow on three sides and emblazoned with a yellow



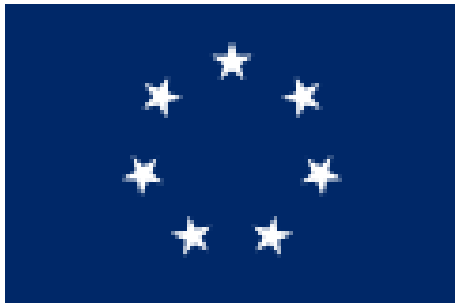
crescent moon and stars. The Missouri Partisan Rangers under William Quantrill, otherwise known as Missouri irregulars or guerrillas, most commonly fought under a black flag with a white Q in the upper corner. However, the

Missouri irregulars possessed one special flag, made by Miss Annie Fickle, that was black with the red letters QUANTRELL across it.

Although his name was misspelled, William Quantrill was said to have been particularly fond of this flag.



During the Civil War, Callaway County, Missouri seceded both from the United States and the State of Missouri, setting themselves up as The Kingdom of Callaway. The Kingdom of Callaway flag has a purple ground with a blue saltire emblazoned with red stars. The shape of the county or “kingdom” is in the center along with a crown. As the story goes, the Callawegians, as they are called to this day, made fake cannons from tree trunks and black



paint. Seeing this artillery set up and ready for battle, Union troops marching up from Jefferson City decided it would be best to allow The Kingdom of Callaway to remain uninvaded until the close of the war.

The first official Confederate States of America Naval Jack was a blue flag with a circle of white

stars. This flag was used by the Confederate Navy from 1861 to 1863. From 1863 to 1865 the official Navy Jack of the Confederate States of America closely resembled the Battle Flag of the Army of Tennessee, being basically an elongated Southern Cross. However, the blue of the saltire was of a lighter shade.



The Meaning of the Second CSA Flag According to its Designer

So what was the conflict of the Civil War about? As a teenage student flying the Southern Cross flag in my dorm window at the School of the Ozarks, I may have said, “It wasn’t about slavery. It was about states’ rights.” That assertion seems a bit strange to me now as I ponder that before the Civil War the slave-holding states were most willing to violate the states’ rights of non-slave-holding states through insistence on passage and enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act.

William Thompson was the designer of The Stainless Banner, the second official Confederate States of America Flag. The quote from William Thompson, just below, explains the meaning of the flag and the reason for the Civil War conflict as he understood it. This is from the book *Our Flag* by George Preble.

Our idea is simply to combine the present battle flag with a pure white standard sheet; our southern cross, blue, on a red field, to take the place on the white flag that is occupied by the blue union in the old United States flag or the St. George’s cross in the British flag. As a people, we are fighting to maintain the heaven ordained supremacy of the white man

over the inferior or colored race; a white flag would thus be emblematical of our cause. Upon a red field would stand forth our southern cross, gemmed with the stars of our confederation, all combined, preserving in beautiful contrast the red, white and blue. Such a flag would be chaste, beautiful and significant, while it would be easily made of silk or bunting, and would be readily distinguished from the flags of other nations.

While we consider the flag which has been adopted by the senate as a very decided improvement of the old United States flag, we still think the battle flag on a pure white field would be more appropriate and handsome. Such a flag would be a suitable emblem of our young confederacy, and sustained by the brave hearts and strong arms of the south, it would soon take rank among the proudest ensigns of the nations, and be hailed by the civilized world as THE WHITE MAN'S FLAG.

- William Thompson

According to the designer of this flag, a flag officially adopted by the Legislature of the Confederate States of America, the fight was, "to maintain the heaven ordained supremacy of the white man over the inferior or colored race." There it is, the heritage stated very candidly: a fight for white supremacy. Is it heritage, not hate? Or, is it a heritage of hate?

Why the Battle Flag?

In 1961, as enforced racial segregation was being threatened by the Civil Rights Movement, it was not the official Confederate States of America flag that was raised over the capital building in Charleston, South Carolina, to be brought down only just this year in the face of protest and controversy. Rather, it was the unofficial battle flag of the Confederacy. Why the battle flag? Could it be the war is still going on?



There are those who have said, "The North won the war, but the South won the peace." What peace? It seems to me that with the founding of the Ku Klux Klan



on Christmas Eve in 1865, the war was on again, African Americans were systematically stripped of newly acquired civil rights and the long era of American apartheid (The correct pronunciation is Apart-Hate.) began. Certainly, the hearts and minds of the American people, both north and south, white and even some non-white, were won over to an ante-bellum southern point of view with romanticizing novels and

later with blockbuster movies such as *The Birth of a Nation* and *Gone With the Wind*. But, there were more than just books and movies. There were schools burned, churches burned, houses burned, sometimes entire neighborhoods torched to the ground, or as in Tulsa, Oklahoma, fire-bombed from the air. And then there were the thousands of lynchings, and not just in the deep South, as the Ku Klux Klan became just as militant in some northern states like Kansas, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. Since the founding of the Ku Klux Klan, the Southern Cross flag has been and continues to be associated with lynchings and other violence against black people. And today, young black men in America are incarcerated and enslaved within the prison-industrial complex at concentration-camp levels. I am no sociologist, but I cannot believe African Americans are worse law breakers than any other ethnic population on earth, as would be indicated by the percentage of the population in prison.



So, is the elongated Southern Cross the official flag of the Ku Klux Klan? Actually, it is not. The official flag of the Ku Klux Klan is the American Flag, the Stars and Stripes. And, why wouldn't it be? For what freedoms were these United States of America really founded? Prior to the American Revolution, the British planned construction of a series of forts to protect

Indian lands from illegal colonial encroachment, forts to be paid for by the colonists themselves through a tea tax. That's why the colonists dressed like Indians at the Boston Tea Party; it was to protest protection of Indians and Indian lands from themselves and at their expense.



Also, by 1772, all slaves in England had been freed, and the handwriting was on the wall for slaveholders in the British Colonies. The American Revolution was fought to ensure the continued freedom of rich white men to steal land from Indians and to keep Indians and Africans enslaved. The Revolution was fought to ensure the freedom of perpetual white supremacy. Even so, during the Revolutionary War, many Indians and even some African Americans fought on the side of the rebelling colonists. The Lene Lenape or Delaware Tribe was promised statehood and seats in the American Legislature in return for their valuable assistance in the war. Well, there *is* a state named Delaware, but the Lene Lenape were forceably removed to the West. When I hear someone proclaim, "We must return to the principles upon which this country was founded," my skin crawls. I know one of those founding principles, maybe the primary principle, was and is white supremacy. Even the Declaration of Independence contains racist language. America has yet to honestly deal with this earlier and original heritage of hate. Until it is dealt with, it will continue to haunt us. And, yes of course, the official flag of the Ku Klux Klan is the American Flag, but the elongated Southern Cross is the unofficial battle flag of white supremacy, as the war goes on.



The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War



Stand Watie

The Cherokee Nation in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) was divided during the Civil War with some, primarily the traditional Keetoowahs, siding with the United States while others, some of whom were slaveholders, sided with the Confederacy. This was a very bloody conflict as Cherokee fought Cherokee until the Union side was defeated within the Cherokee Nation. The



most famous Cherokee leader of the Civil War is Stand Watie. Before the war, he had become a wealthy slaveholder, and he is noted for having been the last Confederate general to surrender. I understand the Confederacy to have made promises to the Cherokee Nation to the effect that, if they fought on the side of the Confederacy, after the war they would be granted statehood and seats in the legislature. Hmm. Does that sound familiar? What was it that Gomer Pyle used to say? "Fool me once, your fault. Fool me twice, my fault." The



Confederacy presented Stand Watie and his Cherokee Mounted Rifles with a battle flag of their own, Designed by a white

man, not by a Cherokee, the battle flag is based on the design of the Stars and Bars flag but with five additional red stars in the blue field and the words CHEROKEE BRAVES, in red, across the central white bar. Many Cherokees, even today, are quite proud of this flag. I have often wondered why it doesn't say CHEROKEE MOUNTED RIFLES, after all, that's what they were. CHEROKEE BRAVES seems somehow... condescending to me. Funny thing about Stand Watie: He seems to have been another curly-headed Indian who wanted to be a white man, and not just a white man but a white supremacist. I've been told the Cherokee Nation after the Civil War even had their own chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.

Bates County, Missouri - distinct in more than one way

Bates County, Missouri, the western Missouri county in which I now reside, has the distinction of having been the most thoroughly burned county under Order Number 11.

Order Number 11 was an order given on August 25, 1863 by Brigadier General Ewing of Kansas to depopulate Bates County and parts of Jackson County, Cass County and Vernon County - all being Missouri counties along the border with Kansas. People in the designated areas were given 15 days to remove from their residences. After that time, troops moved in to forcefully remove or kill any who remained, to either confiscate or destroy hay and grain stores and ultimately to burn the buildings. Only one building remained standing in Bates County after Order Number 11 was executed; it was a house made of stone. The purpose of Order Number 11 was to create a buffer zone between the parts of Missouri and Kansas where hostilities had started before the Civil War, and to hopefully curtail the guerrilla activities of the Missouri Partisan Rangers or Missouri irregulars who were making raids into Kansas under the command of William Quantrill.



Bates County Missouri also has the distinction of being the site of the first Civil War battle in which African American troops fought.



Having marched from Fort Scott, in Kansas, on October 29, 1862, in The Battle of Island Mound, 240 soldiers and 12 officers of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry engaged about 130 mounted Missouri guerrilla fighters. This was before the

Emancipation Proclamation, before permission was given for blacks to be mustered into federal armed service, so at the time of their first battle the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry was not yet part of the United States Army, but they fought, according to Missouri irregular Bill Turman, they “fought like tigers.” And, they won their battle. Some of those forming up the ranks of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry had escaped from slavery in Missouri. Others came up from Indian Territory. Still others came down from Canada or all the way up from the West Indies to join in the fight. In January 1863, the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry was officially mustered into the United States Army. Throughout the Civil War, they fought in 16 battles and numerous skirmishes. They even fought against the Mounted Cherokee Rifles a time or two. The site of The Battle of Island Mound is now a State Historic Site.



So, what sort of memorial do you imagine standing in the courthouse square in Bates County, Missouri, the most thoroughly burned county under Order Number 11, the most thoroughly destroyed and depopulated county in the entire country during the Civil War? There is a plaque commemorating Order Number 11, as there should be, but there is also a statue of a soldier, a black soldier, an African American soldier representing the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry, a statue of a soldier who did his best to fight for freedom, hoping it would someday be freedom for all, not just freedom for one “race” of people to dominate others. Now, isn’t that something?

How It Is Today

In recent years, but certainly not this year, I have heard some say that we have gotten beyond racism in America. That is not my experience.

It seems to me, things haven’t changed much. I still get hate stares in restaurants and stores. I don’t know whether people who give such looks think I’m black or Indian or Hispanic or what. But hey, about 12 or 13 years ago I received a hand-scrawled letter explaining how I could not possibly be a real Indian, since I am not enrolled with any federally recognized tribe. The anonymous party went on to write, “And that fuzz over your ears is neither Indian nor European.” After reading it aloud to my wife Janet, I laughed and said, “Wow, I’m glad someone finally cleared that up!”



The Author Today

When she is with me, Janet notices the hate stares more than I do. Over the

years, I've learned to ignore most of it or just shut it out. Most people who live in Bates County, Missouri, where we have lived for the past 20 years, know who I am by now and accept me and my family. I'm Robert to some, Mr. Francis to others, and that "Big Old Indian" to most of the rest. I often travel long distances. About once each month, I drive all the way across the state of Missouri, at night. Over the years, I have learned where it is safe for me to stop for gasoline, food or coffee and where maybe it's not so safe for someone like me to stop. I still often get tailgated and bright-lighted by police at night and pulled over sometimes for concocted reasons. When it happens, most usually far from home, I just try to stay calm. I can only imagine what I might experience if my complexion was just a few shades darker. Please don't misread me; I am not saying that all police are bad. I have been treated with what I would call professional respect by many police officers. I can even remember a couple of instances in which I have been both relieved and grateful for the help a police officer was there to give.

In 1989, when our family was moving from Ohio back to Missouri and our homemade trailer broke down crossing the bridge over the Ohio River between Louisville, Kentucky and New Albany, Indiana, the police officer who found us in such a predicament gave much needed and appreciated assistance. He focused on preventing an accident while contacting a wrecker service. He was very kind, very understanding, throughout the crisis.

There are police officers who are friends of mine and who I hold in high esteem. My, but that sounds very like what I have heard from some white people, who, by saying they have black or American Indian or Hispanic friends, hope to preclude themselves from accusations of prejudice. Well, I cannot honestly say I have no prejudice against police officers. When the police car pulled in behind us that evening on the Ohio River bridge, my expectation was that things were about to get worse and not better. Even so, I understand that police officers are human beings with difficult and dangerous jobs and with loved ones who worry about them and depend on them. I have no doubt but that many take very seriously their sworn obligation to protect and serve. Police officers aren't all bad, but some seem to be. And I think, for every bad



police officer, there are others covering for him, sort of like Andy Taylor always did for Barney Fife. Does that make *them* bad too? To me, being a good police officer includes a willingness to police all without partiality to any, and that would include fellow police officers. This may be the most difficult task of all. When Officer Alex Stone of Clatskanie, Oregon spoke with a superior about the town's Chief of Police having referred to African Americans as monkeys, he was discouraged from filing a complaint, even threatened with retaliation. He filed a complaint anyway, the Chief of Police took early retirement and retaliation against Officer Stone and his family has ensued. To this day, attitudes of white

supremacy are demonstratively rampant and protected within many police departments throughout the United States. This is a systemic problem. The Black Lives Matter and Cop Watch movements are trying to shed light on this, hoping for positive change, even as others are determined to maintain the white supremacist status quo. But, I digress from my original topic, even if this *is* all related.

What About the Flag?

The freedom to fly the Southern Cross Battle Flag on state and federal property is being taken away. I don't know, but



maybe this will mark a change for the country. Who knows; maybe the freedom to shoot and kill unarmed black people with impunity will also be taken away. There is some hope for this in a few places such as South Carolina and Ohio. Hopefully, if it happens in those places, given some time, places such as

Florida and Missouri will follow suit.

Some assert that not flying the Southern Cross flag in federal cemeteries is disrespectful to Confederate Civil War Veterans. That is certainly something to consider. In much of Europe, it is illegal to fly or display the Nazi flag. I suppose that is disrespectful to Nazi Veterans of World War II. Curiously, Neo-Nazis in Europe often fly or display the Southern Cross flag as a way of communicating their white-supremacist ideology.



Some seem to think their freedom to fly or otherwise display the Southern Cross flag even on their own property, on the bumper of their pickup truck or while marching down the street during a white-supremacist rally may shortly be taken away. I don't see any signs of that happening. And Mississippi will probably even hold onto their state flag with the Southern Cross in the corner for a few years or a few decades yet, a flag that is representative of some of Mississippi's citizens while extremely offensive to others.

Those who continue to fly or exhibit the Southern Cross flag should be mindful that assumptions will be made about them based on the exhibition of this flag, just as I am sure assumptions were made about me all those years ago as I flew the flag in my window at the School of the Ozarks. It is possible, I think, for most people to grow and develop in their understandings. In any event, I think it only

proper that those who are claiming to uphold a heritage should endeavor to honestly educate themselves about that heritage.

A Few Good Sources

Informative Books

Black Indian Slave Narratives edited by Patrick Mingos, John F. Blair, Publisher 2004.
This book offers first-hand accounts from Indians who were enslaved as well as from slaves “owned” by Indians.

Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong by James W. Loewen, The New Press 1995. This book provides a critique of the most popular U.S. history textbooks used in American schools and provides a well-researched and documented outline of U.S. history. *Lies Across America* is another good book by Loewen.

One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race by Scott L. Malcomson, Farrar Straus Giroux 2000.

Pocahontas's People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia Through the Centuries by Helen C. Rountree. This book outlines a four-century history of an indigenous people's struggle against impossible odds to retain their unique identity. Among other things, the book gives an excellent account of the Eugenics Movement as it played itself out in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the early 20th Century.

Helpful Websites

Abolition of Slavery Timeline

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abolition_of_slavery_timeline

Confederate Flags

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flags_of_the_Confederate_States_of_America

Kingdom of Callaway Flag

<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/us-mo-cw.html>

Missouri Confederate Flags

<http://www.rulen.com/moflag/>

New neo nazi flag

<http://www.morbidoptimism.com/politics/confederate-battle-flag-new-nazi-flag/>

The Meaning of the Confederate Flag

<http://www.mic.com/articles/121082/here-s-the-racist-meaning-of-the-confederate-flag-in-the-words-of-the-man-who-designed-it>

Officer reports Police Chief's Racist Tirade

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2015/09/08/1419344/-Oregon-police-chief-goes-on-racist-tirade-calling-African-Americans-monkeys-supports-Confederacy?detail=email#>

