

Listen Up, Gyrenes!

It's a common misconception that the Civil War was waged over slavery. The fact is there were southerners who opposed the evil practice of slavery and northerners who didn't. Abe Lincoln's primary motive was the preservation of the Union, even if he had to suspend habeas corpus to do it, and even if it cost the lives of 600,000 Americans.

Slavery was of little concern to Lincoln. That's why the Emancipation Proclamation proclaims "all persons held as slaves within the rebellious states are, and henceforward, shall be free." That meant that the status of slaves residing in the border states remained unchanged. What's more, the Proclamation wasn't even issued until January 1, 1863, which was nearly two years after a Confederate commander, P.G.T. Beauregard, triggered the bloodiest war in American history by firing on Fort Sumter.

The reason I'm bringing up this ancient history isn't because I'm growing nostalgic for mint juleps on the veranda, but because I just found out about a young man who was denied the opportunity to enlist in the U.S. Marines because he had a tattoo of the Confederate flag on his arm.

Now, I can understand why the Marines wouldn't want someone decorated with a gang tat or a swastika in the barracks, but making the Corps a Confederate flag-free zone just strikes me as asinine.

The argument is that there are other Marines who would take umbrage at the tattoo and would regard it as racially provocative. No doubt the Corps includes many men whose great-great-great-grandfathers were slaves. The assumption, therefore, is that the only people who'd adorn themselves with the Stars and Bars are racists. Well, even though I'm not a southerner, I'm ready to believe that most people who sport

the flag are merely paying tribute to their own great-great-great-grandfathers, men who fought and often died fighting for their belief in states rights, and who felt a greater love for and loyalty to Mississippi, Georgia and South Carolina, than they did to Washington, D.C. They were also fighting to protect their homes, their wives and their children, from the likes of Gen. Sherman and the various gangs of marauders who laid waste to everything and everyone below the Mason-Dixon Line.

In short, most southerners were not slave owners and neither were they Satan's spawn.

All my life, I've thought that the Marines were the tough guys who, against impossible odds, fought our country's battles from the Halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli. Now they suddenly appear to be terrified of the way they'll be perceived from the lecture halls of Harvard and the editorial boardroom of the New York Times.

Personally, it strikes me as a very sad day when the motto of the Marines goes from semper fi to semper P.C.

Just for the record, I don't like tattoos. For the life of me, I don't understand why people would put art on their bodies that they'd never think of displaying on their walls. Still, if a guy can't have a Confederate flag on his bicep, why is it okay to have an American flag? After all, slavery only existed under the one flag from 1861-1863, but it had existed under the Stars and Stripes for 85 years, ever since 1776.

Inasmuch as anyone enlisting in the Marines knows that he is quite likely going to be taking orders from black NCOs, it figures that only a racist who is also a masochist would even consider entering the ranks of the few and the proud.

Racists, as we all know, join the Aryan Nation, the KKK and the Democratic party. Patriots join the Marines.