# Dukes of Hazzard Neutralized; Let the Healing Begin



When Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina called for the removing of the Confederate flag from the grounds of the state Capitol earlier this week, I was impressed with how she went about it. She presented a thoughtful and compelling case, and acknowledged those who disagreed with her without demonizing them. It was the mark of a good leader, which is something we're not used to seeing in politics these days.

The act, of course, was done in response to the murder of nine people in Charleston by a racist monster who clearly had an affinity for the flag and its dark, historical connotations. Though there's no logical argument to support the notion that the flag was somehow to blame for the actions of the killer (the timing of the announcement was less about principle and more about optics), the topic of the appropriateness of government buildings proudly displaying such a controversial symbol was certainly one worth revisiting.

As someone who has spent little time in the South, I admit that I've never fully understood the various interpretations of the Confederate flag. Like many, it strikes me as a divisive relic that is representative of a culture of racial oppression. That being said, when my vacationing family ate at a **black-owned** restaurant in South Carolina last year, I noticed a confederate flag hanging on one of the walls. And when I recounted that story on Twitter the other day, I received a reply from young black man who sent me a photograph of himself wearing a t-shirt with the flag on it. His message

to me: *"You never lived there so you wouldn't understand."*

I told him he was probably right; I don't completely understand.

Luckily, I don't *have* to completely understand it. As we saw with Haley's announcement (as she was flanked by leaders from both political parties), a state is fully capable of listening to their citizens and deciding what symbols should be displayed on their government buildings. Haley made a good decision in my opinion; the right decision. But like many cultural milestones reached in this nauseating era of political correctness, the act spawned some silly, self-congratulatory nonsense as well.

Calling for the removal of the Confederate flag, as a response to the Charleston shooting, effectively tethered the object to the actions of the killer. The flag morphed from an offensive symbol into something that actually *makes* someone racist.

This compelled a number of major retailers (including Walmart, Amazon, and eBay) to address the problem by disallowing the sale of merchandise related to the flag in their stores and on their websites (something they have every right to do as private-sector companies). Almost immediately, jokes began spreading across social media about *Dukes of Hazzard* memorabilia being outlawed. Within hours, something pretty close to that happened.

It was reported Tuesday night that *Warner Brothers* has stopped sanctioning the manufacturing of products related to the General Lee, the iconic car from the 1980's television show that featured a Confederate flag on its roof.

So there you have it folks… The Dukes have been neutralized. Of course, the next logical step will be to rename their car *The Conscientious Objector,* have it run on solar power instead of gasoline, and replace the stars and bars on its roof with a large "Coexist" bumper sticker. Let the racial healing begin.

Now, I certainly have no desire to ever own a Confederate flag (I do find it offensive), or relive my youth by buying the same kind of plastic General Lee car I played with as a child. Still, I can't help but look at this little exercise (which in itself isn't particularly consequential) and find it highly symptomatic of an irrational, unserious time in our history when we just can't figure out how to react to serious issues.

On what planet is the scrubbing of 1980's pop-culture imagery from society a logical response to nine Americans being massacred by a racist terrorist? If this were the key to dealing with racially-motivated hate and violence in the U.S., how could we possibly stand by as a society and let Quentin Tarantino make another movie where the n-word is used dozens and dozens of times? Is that somehow less racially offensive than the General Lee? Is it less hurtful?

For that matter, how could we tolerate the Nazi imagery still shown in re-runs of Hogan's Heroes, t-shirts with Che Guevara's image still sold in shopping malls, and old Lynyrd Skynyrd albums still sold online? And speaking of albums, what about offensive song lyrics? Should they be removed from usic? Are we back to that old debate?
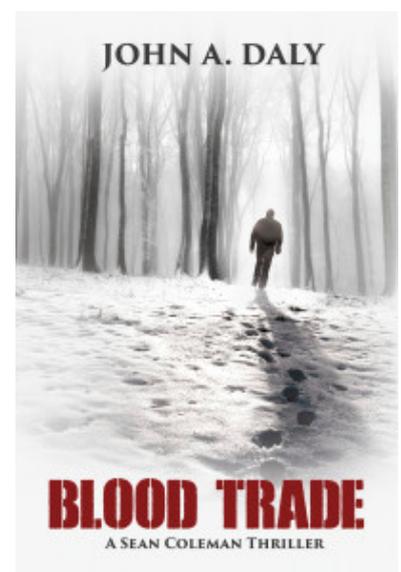


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The good news is that, as of now, it's the free market that is behind this drive (not the government). The bad news is that ridding our culture of all of these things wouldn't do a single thing to detour someone like the Charleston killer from becoming what he became, and doing what he did.

By focusing efforts on the Confederate flag, I fear that we have lost sight of that. People always want a quick, easy fix to deeply rooted problems. They want a mantra that they can shout out loud or hold up on a sign. And once that mantra is heard, they wipe their hands, pat themselves on the back, and *call it a day* without the real problem ever being solved.

Is this about honoring the victims of hate and violence in this country, and dealing with the problem…or is this about satisfying our own sense of self-worth?

I wish people would ask themselves that question from time to time.