

*Below is an editorial by Donald V. Adderton that ran in the **Delta Democrat Times** in August. Although three months have passed, the message is still valid.*



Let the Rebel flag rest

Children, as is their uncanny fashion, often reduce life's more complex issues down to a more common understanding. Even without uttering a word, youngsters can convey meaning to a situation that adults can neither explain nor solve.

Although it has been several months, the picture of Pascagoula pupils from Arlington Elementary School touring Beauvoir in Biloxi remains vivid. The children were at the Jefferson Davis home and museum to learn about a Confederate submarine sunk in Charleston Harbor during a Civil War battle off South Carolina. From that learning experience sprang a poignant photograph of a black youngster — standing with a white classmate — wearing a Beauvoir sticker on her face depicting Confederate President Jefferson Davis between the U.S. flag and the Rebel battle flag.

It is a portrait that speaks volumes of how far this state and nation have come in terms of race relations, and how utterly ridiculous the argument against flying the Confederate battle flag has become. The precious innocence of childhood is one of life's purest joys. Sadly, for many children that positive exuberance is soon debased by the prejudice of adulthood.

Nonetheless, the so-called black leadership — testifying from a platform of repugnance — would have you believe every person of color has an abomination toward the very staff which the red, blue and white-starred Confederate banner flies upon. "Banish the battle flag from all segments of society," their scratched record drones. It makes no matter to these zealots that the ensign is an integral part of American history. "Kick the red cloth to the curb and burn it," they scream.

These critics continue to conjure up dusty, overworked delineations of slavery, bigotry, white supremacy, Jim Crow, discrimination and violence. Sort of like the pot calling kettle black. Where is the hatred here?

So-called racial symbolism aside, the Confederate battle flag is not responsible for rampant black-on-black crime and incarceration. The answer will not be found upon a flag pole, but in a mirror. The red cloth is not the reason that some minorities do not thrive in this nation's ever-increasing technological society. As a scapegoat or chump to blame human foibles on, the battle flag is just all-too-convenient.

The skirmish continues in South Carolina over the battle flag even though that state's lawmakers caved in from pressure from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and removed the Confederate banner from atop the capitol dome. It now flies over the Confederate memorial on the South Carolina capitol grounds, but the NAACP is mounting an offensive to expunge the red cloth from its perch there, too.

And in adjacent Georgia, the civil rights organization is attacking over the ensign being incorporated into the fabric of that state's flag.

Closer to home, Gov. Ronnie Musgrove has convened a 17-member commission, headed by former Gov. Bill Winter, to make recommendations for a new state flag. Nonetheless, the final outcome will be a legislative one. But I wonder whether the pain and anguish will be erased with a new state flag.

It appears so-called political correctness knows no bounds as it relates to Confederate regalia. Because last week the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans ruled that Ole Miss has every right to ban the waving of the Rebel flag at its football games. Richard Barrett, a lawyer representing the Nationalist Movement, a white supremacist group, said an appeal is planned because he says Ole Miss' stance violates the First Amendment. Perhaps the U.S. Supreme Court will decide the Rebel flag issue once and for all.

Even if the majority acquiesced to these thug leaders, don't think for a moment that the battle flag impasse would end. The NAACP will see to that, because the civil rights organization wants the Rebel flag out of sight, and certainly out of mind. As far as these battle flag critics are concerned — they're spelling racial relief, G-O-N-E.

And as the imbroglio continues to heat up in Mississippi — with the NAACP stoking the fires — over the Confederate battle flag, we should remember those young school children who view the Civil War and Rebel banner as history lessons, not as modern symbols of racism and bigotry.