

## The Confederate Flag: A Controversial Symbol

Why display the flag?

- Used as a learning tool in an effort to understand the past
  - What occurred and how that affects us today
  - Critically and reflectively discussing positionality
- Display of heritage

Why would you not display the flag?

- The leader of the confederacy openly said, “Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition.”
  - Stephens, 1861 (see reference below for URL to entire speech)
- The Confederates built an explicitly white-supremacist, pro-slavery, and antidemocratic nation-state, dedicated to the principle that all men are not created equal (McCurry, 2020)
- The classroom is supposed to be a safe space, which it cannot be if a symbol of hate is on display
- Displaying the flag is the equivalent of being “race-blind”
  - Says, “We must remember all histories!” just as people say, “We don’t see race as a difference!”
- When describing the utilization of the flag, people routinely downplay the significance of the flag (say it is ‘heritage’) → Holyfield, Moltz, & Bradley (2009)

- **Heritage** as defined by Merriam-Webster: something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor
- Talbert and Patterson (2020): findings imply that prioritizing whites' views in discussions of Confederate monuments offers an inadequate depiction of public opinion by race-ethnicity
- Nazi-ism is a part of Germany's past but displaying the swastika or other Nazi symbols could earn a person up to three years in jail
  - The subject is *encouraged to be taught*, but not to be *displayed*
  - Wildman, 2017
- Displaying confederate flags or statues of confederate leaders is for the purpose of glorification
- The symbolism of the flag is one of hate, segregation, white supremacy, and intolerance
- Despite widespread denials that Southern symbols reflect racism, racial prejudice is strongly associated with support for such symbols (Strother, Piston, & Ogorzalek, 2017)
- There is nothing wrong with teaching about the subject, however, it is not necessary to display the flag – if you want to show it, show it on the board for a few minutes
  - Do not subject students to prolonged exposure
- There needs to be a decentering of whiteness, whereby the white experience is at the forefront of all history – history is told by the winners (Schramm-Pate & Lussier, 2003)
  - This point of view decenters other people's points of view and is an act of knowledge gatekeeping

## References

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