



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 6, 2019

Published in the August 5, 2019 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 35, No. 15

The Racist American Flag?

“Resolved, that the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field, representing a new constellation.”

That sentence written 242 years ago is causing a cultural clash that the Second Continental Congress that approved it likely could never have anticipated.

First, let’s rehearse the controversy. Here’s a summary of the events as reported by The New American’s Raven Clabough:



Colin Kaepernick has used his influence with Nike to have the company’s American flag-themed shoe called the “Betsy Ross” pulled from production just days before they were to be sold to the public, prompting an immediate backlash.

Citing sources close to the story, the *Wall Street Journal* reports that the Air Max 1 USA was slated to go on sale this week in celebration of the Fourth of July. “The heel of the shoe featured a U.S. flag with 13 white stars in a circle, a design created during the American Revolution and commonly referred to as the Betsy Ross flag,” *WSJ* reports.

And while Nike is claiming that it has declined to release the sneaker because it featured an “old version of the American flag,” the real reason the sneaker has been recalled, according to the *WSJ*, is because Kaepernick reportedly told Nike that the shoes were “offensive,” prompting the company to recall the shoe and demand that retailers return their stock.

“After images of the shoe were posted online, Mr. Kaepernick, a Nike endorser, reached out to company officials saying that he and others felt the Betsy Ross flag is an offensive symbol because of its connection to an era of slavery, the people said,” reports the *WSJ*. “Some users on social media responded to posts about the shoe with similar concerns. Mr. Kaepernick declined to comment.”

So, Colin Kaepernick, a failed football player-turned-anti-American icon, didn’t want to be associated with a company — Nike — that would sell a shoe with a flag connected “to an era of slavery.”

As soon as Nike communicated its capitulation to Kaepernick’s claim, the progressive posse charged to the sound of the guns, taking shots at the flag and those who would allow themselves to fly it or defend it.

While we could reprint reams of ridiculous accusations about the Betsy Ross/13-star flag, for the purposes of this brief article, one such statement will suffice:

“The Betsy Ross flag is not ‘the American flag,’ and as I’m sure you’re aware, it’s been appropriated as a symbol of white nationalism,” tweeted Elizabeth Spiers, blogger and former founding editor of the disgraced Gawker.com.

Spiers doubled down on her historical hysterics, adding, “Would you approve of a Confederate flag



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 6, 2019

Published in the August 5, 2019 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 35, No. 15

sneaker? Or do you consider that an American flag too?”

Leaving the fight over the so-called Confederate flag for another day, let’s examine the true history of the flag that so many are finding so offensive.

In order to appreciate the absurdity of the words of Kaepernick and the reaction to those words by the Nike Corporation, one must know something of the history of that famous flag.

Then, once the genuine genesis of that flag is learned, one quickly realizes that Kaepernick, Nike, and the entire claque of commentators associating the flag in question with slavery and white supremacy are churning out anti-American agitprop as part of what Richard Weaver described decades ago as “the propaganda of ignorance.”

Betsy Ross: Did She or Didn’t She?

Many well-meaning Americans who’ve taken to their keyboards to defend the flag being battered by the Left are repeating the well-known story featuring General George Washington and a Philadelphia seamstress, Betsy Ross. Here’s the basic outline of that version of the origins of the 13-star flag.

As the story goes, General Washington wanted a flag that would represent the union of the 13 states and could be flown by every regiment in the newly mustered Continental Army. Washington learned about Ross from her cousin, who suggested to the future father of his country that Ross could give the general exactly what he wanted.

Ross, née Elizabeth Griscom, was the daughter of a Quaker carpenter and was herself an accomplished seamstress. She and her first husband, John, operated a profitable upholstery shop out of the house the couple rented in Philadelphia. The Rosses were well known for making cartridges and flags for the Continental Army.

The tale that’s been taught to nearly every American child for well over 100 years is that after her conversation with General Washington, Betsy Ross presented the would-be president with a flag with 13 stripes, alternating red and white, with a blue field in the upper left corner with 13 five-pointed stars. Although other nearly identical flags were being flown and many more were being offered for use by the American armed forces as the official flag, Washington, it is said, preferred the banner sewed by Betsy Ross, and the rest is history. Well, maybe.

The undeniable truth is that there is no contemporary evidence that such a meeting between these two future American icons ever took place. That of itself is not proof that Ross didn’t sew the historic symbol, though. It could have been that no one at the time thought it historically or even bureaucratically relevant to record the name of the seamstress who designed and/or sewed the standard that was eventually adopted as the flag of the union of states.

What is certain, however, is that the version of the story that has been taught as truth for years was the work of Ross’s grandson William J. Canby. In 1870, as the country was approaching its centennial, Canby wrote an essay wherein he claimed that his grandmother “made with her hands the first flag” of the newly independent United States. In this paper that Canby presented to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, he says the story was told to him by his aunt in 1857, some 20 years after the death of Betsy Ross.

That’s it. That story was told and re-told in American schools and homes for nearly 150 years, having



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 6, 2019

Published in the August 5, 2019 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 35, No. 15

been given a boost by the centennial celebration and then again during the bicentennial, by which time Betsy Ross had become not only an American heroine, but an example of women playing central parts in the history of our country.

Brief History of American Flags

In order to give a little depth to the known history of the American flag(s), here's a short summary of that symbol and its use in the Colonies and later the states of America.

First, the flag that many progressives are painting as a symbol of hate was itself the result of the evolution of many British and Anglo-American flags. It was not, pardon the pun, created whole cloth by Betsy Ross or any other identifiable person.

As early as 1704, the ships of the English East India Company sailed under a flag with 13 red and white stripes with the cross of St. George in the canton (a square in the upper right-hand corner).

While that is not strictly an American flag, it was without a doubt a flag known to Americans, particularly given the role the East India Company played in the history of the British Colonies in America.

The first known use of stripes in an American flag was on the ensign carried by the Philadelphia Troop of Light Horse, which that unit began flying in 1775.

Historian Harlan Horner, in an article recounting the reliable history of the 13-star flag, suggests that it is quite likely that the flag flown by the Philadelphia Troop of Light Horse was the banner that directly inspired the design of the flag General George Washington ordered raised above the camp at Cambridge, Massachusetts on January 2, 1776.

The design of this second flag should sound very familiar. It consisted of 13 alternating red and white stripes with the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew filling the field in the corner.

That flag unfurled over the troops of the Continental Army's first camp is noteworthy as it was the first to represent a union of the 13 Colonies, being flown some six months prior to their declaration of independence from Great Britain.

It is known by many names: the Union Flag, the Grand Union Flag, the Great Union Flag, and, most frequently, the Cambridge Flag. There is no disputing the fact that this banner, regardless of the name it's called, was the immediate predecessor of the one eventually adopted by the Second Continental Congress as *the* flag of the United States.

At the time of the adoption of the 13-star flag, there were some who claimed that the idea for the red and white stripes came from George Washington's coat of arms, but, as with the Betsy Ross story, this rarely recounted claim, too, is questionable.

And we're back to the resolution approved on June 14, 1777 by the representatives of the states in the Second Continental Congress and the flag that that body dubbed the flag of the United States.

Indoctrination as Education

Those who have made themselves signatories to the declaration that the 13-star flag, the first official flag of the United States, is a symbol of slavery, subjection, and supremacy of the white race are either misled or misinformed dupes, parrots of the progressive party line, or people whose purpose is to



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 6, 2019

Published in the August 5, 2019 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 35, No. 15

propagate an untrue, unsubstantiated, and unsupportable adaptation of the history of the United States. While such subterfuge doesn't rise to the level of treason, it is certainly a crime against our culture and against the thousands of Americans whose blood was spilled on battlefields where that original flag was flying.

Look back a few paragraphs and notice a common thread in the official flag and the Cambridge Flag that came just before it. That thread is union — the union of 13 small colonies clinging to the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and clinging to the liberty that Americans rightly regarded as their inheritance as sons and daughters of the Almighty. Not one of the men and women alive in 1776 was unaware of the blight of slavery — an immoral institution that was found throughout the several states — and not one of them would have thought the then-new symbol of their union to be a banner promoting one man's enslavement of another.

In fact, had such a suggestion percolated to the surface of the collective conscience in the 1770s, there is no way that the 13-star flag would have received the approval of Congress, many members of which were Quakers and thus zealous abolitionists.

As a side note, an article appeared after Nike nixed the sale of the shoes with the "Betsy Ross flag" claiming that Betsy Ross herself was a Quaker and an abolitionist. While it is true that Betsy Ross was raised in a devout Quaker home, when she married John Ross, an Anglican, she was expelled from the Society of Friends (the official name of the Quakers).

That isn't to say that a woman raised by pious Quakers would have abandoned the truths taught to her by parents, people who certainly would have considered slavery a sin and an abomination not to be tolerated by followers of Christ.

Truthfully, it can be said that the flag of the United States, the one that Kaepernick and his comrades consider a vile reminder of slavery, is credited in popular history as being sewn by an abolitionist!

As with all other planks of the progressive platform, the truth is irrelevant. What matters is moving the needle. The ranks of those regurgitating the ridiculous claims made by Kaepernick are filled front to back with people whose greatest accomplishment would be, not the abolition of slavery that still exists, including in countries where Nikes are manufactured, but the abolition of Western Culture.

As noted historian Niall Ferguson explained in his book *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, "The biggest threat to Western Civilization is posed not by other civilizations, but by our own pusillanimity — and by the historical ignorance that feeds it."

There it is. How often do you read stories of men and women on the conservative end of the political spectrum spewing hate in the face of high-school kids or sucker punching people who don't share their perverse positions?

Ferguson not only points to the violence of some in our society as the sole source of its enervation, but he lays part of the blame on the embarrassing state of education in this country and the rest of the West.

This cultural illness could be fatal to freedom, and the sad fact is that it was diagnosed decades ago by those who could see the symptoms developing.

In a pamphlet published in July 1959 called "Education and the Individual," Richard Weaver warned, "If there is one single condition necessary to the survival of truth and of values in our civilization, it is that



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 6, 2019

Published in the August 5, 2019 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 35, No. 15

the educational system be left independent enough to espouse these truths and values regardless of the political winds of doctrine of the moment.”

Again, that was written in 1959!

Weaver wasn’t finished. Later in that same essay he writes, “Where education is under the control of collectivist fanatics, not only is the individual’s loyalty to truth despised, but the objective findings of science may be thus perverted to serve the ends of a political ideology.”

To my mind, there is no more apt description of the disregard for truth and disrespect for the dignity of generations of noble men and women who not only rejected slavery, but believed themselves to be fighting for a new country where that cursed practice would be abolished.

Remember, although the Constitution ratified in 1788 did not demand the end of slavery in those states where it persisted, it did contain a clause calling for the end of the import of human beings who would be bought and sold as property.

With all of the foregoing in mind, I think it appropriate to conclude by talking about the Constitution, because if we apply Colin Kaepernick’s qualification for the repugnance of the 13-star flag, we would come to the conclusion that the Constitution itself must be burned on the pyres of the progressives.

Read again the rationale for the recall of the shoe featuring the 13-star flag, as reported by the *Wall Street Journal*: “After images of the shoe were posted online, Mr. Kaepernick, a Nike endorser, reached out to company officials saying that he and others felt the Betsy Ross flag is an offensive symbol because of its connection to an era of slavery.”

That flag became the official banner of the United States in June 1777. The Declaration of Independence was less than a year old, so it has to go. The Constitution came about a decade later, during what was indisputably “an era of slavery,” assuming that phrase means a time when there were slaves in the United States.

I say in the United States because there are many countries where slavery is still practiced, unlike the country so despised by Kaepernick, Nike, and others, where that pernicious practice was completely abolished over 150 years ago.

Finally whether Betsy Ross really sewed that 13-star flag isn’t historically significant. And, despite his desperate efforts to make it otherwise, Colin Kaepernick will not be historically significant, either.

There is something serious, however, in what Kaepernick and those who share his shameful opinion of the flag — and by association, the throngs of Americans who opposed slavery, yet proudly flew that flag as a symbol of unity and freedom — are trying to accomplish.

If we allow the legacy of the 13-star flag to be destroyed, the cultural assassins will soon turn their sights on the Constitution and the liberties protected by that precious parchment. We cannot sit idly by as our education system slouches toward some socialist sewer where America will be taught not as the “city on a hill,” but as a slave-owning society memorable only for its malignancy, and where its virtues and valor are no longer remembered.

Photo of 13-star American flag: Willard/iStock/Getty Images Plus

This article originally appeared in the August 5, 2019 print edition of The New American.



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 6, 2019

Published in the August 5, 2019 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 35, No. 15

Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



Subscribe

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.