



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on August 2, 2020

Michigan Inn Removes Norwegian Flag That Some Thought Was Confederate Flag

The owners of a Michigan bed-and-breakfast took down the Norwegian flag outside their business because people were mistaking it for the Confederate flag and accusing them of promoting racism.

Greg and Kjersten Offenbecker own the Nordic Pineapple, a mansion built in St. Johns in 1861 by Oliver Spaulding, a brevetted brigadier general in the Union army. Kjersten Offenbecker's "grandfather was born in Norway, and the bed and breakfast's name is, in part, inspired by her family history," reported the [Lansing State Journal](#).



Since opening the inn in 2018, the Offenbeckers have flown the flags of the United States and Norway on the building's front pillars. This caused no controversy at first, but recently people have begun mistaking the Norwegian flag for the Confederate flag because of superficial resemblances. Both feature blue crosses inside white crosses on a red background, but that is where the similarities end. The Norwegian flag's cross looks like a Christian cross standing on its crossbar, while the Confederate flag's cross is shaped like an X and contains stars.

"The couple said it never occurred to them that people would mistake the Norwegian flag as anything else, but last week, after they received the latest in what Kjersten Offenbecker called 'at least a dozen hateful emails,' and twice as many comments they took the flag down," wrote the *Journal*.

"I don't see it because I grew up with the Norwegian Flag," Kjersten Offenbecker told the paper. "To me they are two distinct flags."

"It bugs me as far as the stupidity of people," said Greg Offenbecker. "Even if the flag is blowing in the wind or laying limp, there are no stars on it. They look nothing alike."

Initially, the Offenbeckers simply explained that they were flying the Norwegian flag to those who thought it was the Confederate flag. Sometimes they invited the mistaken person to take another look at it.

In the post-George Floyd era, however, they began receiving "cruel emails and phone calls," according to Lansing's [WILX-TV](#).

"What we're getting is so much more negative now," Kjersten Offenbecker told the station. "It's not just, 'hey you're flying the Confederate flag.' It's, 'you should be ashamed to fly the Confederate flag. You're a bigot because you fly the Confederate flag.'"

Although they had not been threatened, the Offenbeckers decided to take down the Norwegian flag to protect their family and their business.



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"We started to have this concern that it was deterring people away from coming to our bed and breakfast," Kjersten Offenbecker told WILX. "That they would see it and make this judgment."

When Norway's flag came down, so did America's.

"I was saying leave it up and she was pretty dead set on taking it down," Greg Offenbecker told the *Journal*. "I said, 'If you take down one, take down both.'"

In a Facebook post announcing the move, Kjersten Offenbecker wrote that they were "heartbroken" to have to take down the flags. "I urge people to slow down and see the world through less jaded glasses. When we think of the worst before we have all the facts, we lose sight of all of [the] good that[']s out there that we should find."

Indeed, if one knew the facts, not only would he not confuse the Norwegian and Confederate flags, but he would never suspect the Offenbeckers of being racists considering they have two adopted black children. "We have tried to teach them not to judge on first glance or outward appearances," Kjersten Offenbecker explained on Facebook.

But those attitudes are so 2019. In today's world, everyone — even people who sympathize with the Floyd protesters, as the Offenbeckers do — is to be judged solely on the basis of appearance.

After the Offenbeckers' story became [international news](#), they received so many positive responses that they are reconsidering their decision. "Just as we struggled with the decision to remove them, we struggle with the decision to put them back up," Kjersten Offenbecker wrote in another Facebook post.

They want to do so in such a way that people will not think they are flying the Confederate flag and contributing to racism. That could be a tall order because, as the saying goes, you can't fix stupid.

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