



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on April 28, 2019

## Flag Flap: Does New Jersey Hate Mississippi?

It is hardly an act of war, but the decision of New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, a Democrat, to remove the state flag of Mississippi from Liberty State Park is certainly a major insult. Liberty State Park is a 1,200-acre preserve in Jersey City that overlooks Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty (which is across the harbor from New York City), and the park has flown all 50 state's flags for several years.



A portion of the Mississippi state flag (shown), adopted in 1894, uses the Confederate “battle flag,” which has generated much controversy in recent years.

Murphy explained his action in a terse statement. “New Jersey’s strength is rooted in our diverse communities. The Confederate symbol displayed on the Mississippi state flag is reprehensible and does not reflect our values of inclusivity and equality.”

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Murphy thanked state Senator Sandra Cunningham, also a Democrat, for bringing the flag’s emblem to his “attention.”

Cunningham said that the flag “symbolized an era of hate, violence, and division.”

The response of Mississippi’s Republican governor, Phil Bryant, was reserved, issuing his own statement that he was “disappointed in Gov. Murphy’s actions. As I have repeatedly said, the voters of Mississippi should decide what the state flag is or is not.”

Which is what the voters did in 2001. In a referendum, voters were offered two flags to choose from, and 64 percent opted to keep the flag with the battle flag emblem — sometimes known as “the southern cross.”

It is anticipated that more such provocative actions will be taken as we approach the 2020 elections, as many Democratic Party strategists routinely attempt to generate such racially charged controversies. They apparently hope that such controversies will increase African-American voter turnout, which would help the Democrats, as around 90 percent of black voters pull the Democratic Party lever.

One might remember the TV commercials that warned blacks they need to get out and vote for Democrats up and down the ballot, because otherwise “another black church” will burn. Or the ad that insinuated that Texas Governor George W. Bush, a Republican, was somehow responsible for the gruesome murder of a black man — who was dragged about three miles behind a vehicle in Texas — all because Bush did not back “hate crime” legislation. It is not clear what “hate crime” legislation would have done to stop the horrific crime — after all the man who perpetrated the murder was executed. Would a hate crime law have prevented that murder? Would it prevent any crime?

Senator Cunningham publicly thanked the New Jersey governor “for his commitment to tolerance and equality and for the decision to remove this hateful symbol from Liberty State Park. Hate has no home in New Jersey.”



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Actually, the action of Governor Murphy, in response to Senator Cunningham's urging that another state's flag be the only one removed from Liberty State Park, can logically be described as an act of hate — against Mississippi, another American state.

It is true that some groups like the Ku Klux Klan began to use the "battle flag" in their hate-filled racist meetings in the 1960s, but even then, as observers at the time noted — and there is photographic evidence to support these observations — that more American flags were used at Klan rallies than battle flags.

Was the battle flag created as a "hate symbol," or somehow a way to support slavery? Hardly. The flag is a variation of the national flag of Scotland. The Scots and the Scots-Irish, known for their fighting spirit provided the ancestry of a substantial number of southerners. (See former Senator Jim Webb's excellent book on this subject, *Born Fighting*.) Even today, southerners provide a larger percentage of U.S. military personnel than other parts of the country.

At the first great battle of the Civil War, fought near the Bull Run River and Manassas Junction, in northern Virginia, the two sides' armies became confused at times, because the flag of the United States (the stars and stripes) and the flag of the Confederate States (the stars and bars) resembled each other greatly — especially with all the dust and gunpowder obscuring the battlefield. Because of this, the Confederacy eventually used a variation of the Scottish flag — St. Andrew's Cross — as their "battle flag."

Sometimes known as "the southern cross," it was never the official flag of the Confederate States of America. But, with the demise of the Confederacy, it *was* the flag many of the soldiers (only about 5 percent of which owned any slaves at all) fought under. After the war, instead of using the political flags of the defeated southern republic, southerners adopted an attachment to the "battle flag" as a way to honor their fathers, brothers, uncles, sons, and cousins who had fought so long and hard for their cause.

The average Confederate soldier was not fighting for slavery, but simply to defend his home and family from northern invaders. One can question the wisdom of the decision of the political leaders in the South that led the way to secession, but the battle flag was always about the soldiers — not a defense of slavery, secession, or even states' rights.

To pick one state's flag, out of all the flags of all the states in the federal union today, to be taken down in shame, is the very definition of "hate," even though Senator Cunningham claims that "hate" has no home in New Jersey. Every state has something in its history that it should not be proud of — New Jersey is hardly an exception to that — but is it "love" to pick on a sister state? Or is it hate?

*Photo of Mississippi state flag: Oleksii Liskonih/iStock/Getty Images Plus*



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