

June 24 2015

You Honor Nikki R Haley,

I am writing to you today with mixed feelings. Earlier in the day, I was ready to roast you for “desecrating” a symbol of my family’s heritage, but now, I am torn.

My ancestors never owned slaves though they lived in Texas, Tennessee, and Kansas. Many members of my family were brave soldiers in Confederate Army. One of which, was my great Grandfather, Sam Garner, who enlisted at the age of 16 and in his Texas Trail Boss memoirs wrote, “I went into the Confederate Army and “fit, bled and died” for the great cause that was lost.”

While the flag of the South- the battle flag of Virginia- has been maligned, there are those of us that hold it dear as our collective family experience. It is with profound sadness that I have seen it usurped by groups, both black and white, that have morphed it in to something else.

This brings us to today. As I listened to your speech, I was first brought to anger. How dare you and others that have no claim to it demean that flag? The flag that my ancestors, for good or bad, laid their lives on the line. The flag that represented a proud people, that even though beaten in war, picked themselves up from the ashes of Sherman’s destruction to rise again as a shining jewel. A flag, admittedly that has also been used by groups to promote hate and division.

My original missive was not going to be conciliatory but accusatory. I felt that your speech, a complete 180 from speeches in the past, was driven more by politics than by true inner sentiment. I was offended that you would capitulate to a vocal minority. A minority that has a selective memory for history, as whites were not the only ones who owned slaves- and in fact, one of the original slave owners in the colonies was a black man named Anthony Johnson in 1655.