



Church Leaders: Evil Flag Must Go

July 17, 2015 –Almost 100 people crowded onto the Capitol St. sidewalk in front of the governor’s mansion July 16, pleading their case for the removal of the confederate emblem in the Mississippi state flag.

“We’re here to pray that God will soften the hearts of our state leaders and help them find the courage to change something that they know is wrong,” said Bishop Ronnie Crudup St., of Jackson’s New Horizon International Church. “The change will come. That’s not even our issue. We just want the change to come soon.”

The crowd gathered as the MSNAACP joined Mississippi faith leaders for a prayer vigil and teach-in in honor of the recent murders at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC, and to call on the Mississippi governor and lieutenant governor to act to remove the confederate symbol from the state flag. Multiple political leaders have said the flag, which represents a hostile, terror-driven society, triggers too much passion for all Mississippians to unite under, and should be replaced with a different symbol. However, Republican Gov. Phil Bryant and Republican Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves have both refused to act upon calls to change it.

Bryant has refused to call a special session to hold a vote on changing the flag.

The flag was first adopted as the battle flag for Gen. Robert E. Lee’s Confederate Army of North Virginia, during Lee’s fight to keep the enslavement of African-Americans legal in the U.S. After the Confederate army lost the Civil War through economic collapse, disease, desertion and repeated trouncing by the Union Army, the symbol became a source of Southern pride, and as a remembrance of the pro-slavery traitors who seceded from the Union.

Those same pro-slavery traitors who seceded from the Union, however, produced prideful descendants who carried on their ancestors’ racist, segregationist cause, allowing murderous racism and segregation to claim the former confederate states in the aftermath of the Civil War. White terrorists determined to keep the South segregated and keep black people politically and economically powerless adopted Lee’s North Virginia Army flag as their emblem. The flag also became the symbol of the States’ Rights Democratic Party, or “Dixiecrats,” that formed in 1948 to oppose civil-rights platforms championed by the more civilized Democratic Party. In addition, segregationist whites in political power moved to incorporate the Confederate battle emblem into the Mississippi state flag in 1894.

Today the flag remains the signature emblem of white supremacist groups, and political parties pushing segregationist or apartheid philosophies. The now infamous Charleston shooter, Dylann Storm Roof, held

the flag in a widely-circulated photograph in the months preceding his deadly rampage, prompting many political figures to publicly disown the emblem and its evil significance.

Bryant and Reeves, both of whom are white, refuse to part with it, however. Bryant said he supports the flag because it was adopted by a majority of white voters in a 2001 referendum. Most blacks voted against the flag in that same 2001 referendum vote, however, and the flag remains the divisive figure it was designed to be.

“We came up in a time of integration,” said New Dimensions Ministries Pastor Thomas Jenkins. “My family was living closer to the (white) schools in 1966, so my father made a decision that we would integrate the school. But after that decision was made and we signed the papers people came to our house and asked us not to go to the school, told us they would build us (blacks) a better school, but my father refused. A few days after school opened the sheriff, at the time, called our house and warned my father that ‘your house is going to be burned sometime tonight but I cannot offer you any protection.’”

The Rankin County Sheriff in 1966 was T.H. Shivers, a one-term sheriff serving 1964 to 1968. There is no way to tell if his single-term status had anything to do with his willingness to tip off victims, or any perceived ineffectiveness he had at preventing fire-bombings.

According to Jenkins, segregationist terrorists did indeed arrive to firebomb the property that night, although the idiots unwittingly launched the fire bomb through the window of the wrong house.

“What happened was my brother, who lived in front of us, actually got bombed. They threw a fire bomb through his front window, but everybody got out and everyone was fine. They shot the car up, but nobody got hurt,” Jenkins said. “But the flag was a symbol during that time. They would have that flag on the front of their car and you would see it as they passed by you and you knew what they stood for. You knew where their allegiance lay. That flag was ever-present back in those days.”

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Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors. For more information about the Mississippi NAACP or news stories, call 601-353-8452 or log on to www.naacpms.org. Like us on Facebook by searching Mississippi NAACP and follow us on Twitter @MSNAACP.