

Republican Perspective
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The Ministry of Truth

On June 17, 2015, an apparent white supremacist murdered nine parishioners at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Among his possessions, police found images of him posing with the Confederate flag.

The Confederate flag flew on the grounds of the South Carolina State House (their legislature). There had been an on-going debate over this, which was re-fueled by the church tragedy. The opposition to the flag was based on its representation of slavery. Those opposed to the flag said it was offensive.

In the wake of the church massacre, the legislature responded by voting to remove the flag from State House grounds. Hard to argue with that. Those having business in a government building should not be confronted by what they reasonably believe to be an offensive symbol of repression.

What followed, however, has been a frenzy of Confederate flag banning which has become, in effect, an erasing of history. Here are examples:

- Reruns of the *Dukes of Hazzard* have been canceled because the Dodge Charger used in the series displays a Confederate flag painted on its roof.
- Retailers Amazon and Walmart have pulled Confederate flag merchandise. Apple has removed from its app store Civil War themed games in which the Confederate flag inevitably appears.
- The dean of the Congressionally-chartered Washington National Cathedral plans to remove two stained glass window panes. The two panes feature Generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, and also show the Confederate flag.
- The National Park Service has directed that items which feature stand-alone depictions of the Confederate flag be removed from the Gettysburg National Military Park and Visitor Center.
- The Commonwealth of Virginia DMV is recalling approximately 1,700 personalized license plates bearing the logo of the Sons of Confederate Veterans---which of course features the Confederate flag. The organization's purpose begins "to encourage the preservation of history..." Members include President Harry Truman, who issued Executive Order 9981 integrating the U.S.

armed forces.

- The House of Representatives voted to ban Confederate flags on the gravesites of southern soldiers in the federal cemeteries at Vicksburg and Andersonville.

The *Dukes of Hazzard* and Apple bannings seem silly and trivial. After all, those wishing not to see the Confederate flag could simply change the channel or not play those particular video games. Apparently it's important to retailers and media providers not to appear insensitive but instead to be at the forefront of the anti-Confederate-flag parade. So the customers do not get a change-the-channel option. Because of the rush to be on the purity bandwagon, classics such as *Gone With the Wind* and *The Red Badge of Courage* also may soon be banished from view.

But the bannings at the National Cathedral, Gettysburg, Virginia's DMV, and the Confederate gravesites differ from those by entities in the private sector. These four constitute government-sponsored erasures of our national history. Newsflash: The Civil War actually happened---it was in all the papers. Eradicating the symbol of the South will not change history. These official erasures provide an eerie glimpse of George Orwell's Ministry of Truth.