

Standing on the Wrong Side of History

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

Someone once said, “You cannot sit on the lid of progress. If you do, you will be blown to bits.” This statement has never been more obvious than it is today with seemingly revolutionary changes taking place across the U.S.

After 150 years, many White Southerners are finally understanding that the Confederate flag is a vicious slap in the face to Black people everywhere. It might have taken the brutal murders of nine innocent Black South Carolinians and their remarkably forgiving Christian family members, but the Confederate flag finally came down from the statehouse grounds in South Carolina. (This particular symbol of White supremacist Southern culture and heritage was not placed there until 1962, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on desegregation of schools was being put into place. It was a disrespectful middle finger aimed at Black people and White liberal Northerners.)

However, those White Southerners that are stuck in the past are not happy that increasing numbers of people, after scores of decades, can finally see the light. (Then again, not everyone sees the light. As the old saying goes, “those that cannot see the light, must feel the heat.” Some White Southerners are simply looking out for their best political and economic interests.)

Even museums are waging battles over where the Confederate flag should be placed. For example, at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond Virginia, some White Southerners are against working with the American Civil War Center, which among other things, looks at the Civil War from a Black perspective. The two institutions work together on paper and the Internet to form The American Civil War Museum.

However, speaking of the Museum of the Confederacy, B. Frank Earnest, a former commander of the Virginia division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, is not feeling the love. “People donated [to the Museum] believing that this was going to be a memorial to the Confederacy, and the Confederate soldier *and the cause for which he fought*.” (Emphasis added. *The Buffalo News*, p. A4, July 2, 2015, “Even museums wage battles over fate of the Confederate flag,” by Sheryl Gay Stolberg, from *The New York Times*.) That real cause for which they fought, of

course, despite euphemistic talk about “states’ rights,” was the defense of the right of Southerners to own slaves.

It is fascinating to listen to mindless rationalizations in laughable attempts to defend the Confederacy. The Confederacy existed to promote treason and armed revolt against the U.S. Yet it is hard to imagine that if militant Blacks were to secede from the U.S. and lead an armed struggle, the powers that be would name schools and military bases after their leaders.

Like defenders of the Confederate flag, opponents of same-sex marriage are on the wrong side of history. The genie is out of the bottle, and for good reason. The Supreme Court has ruled. Consenting adults should be able to engage in any kind of arrangement they wish, as long as they are not hurting anyone else.

However, opponents will not ride quietly into the good night. Some Christian businesses still insist upon the right to discriminate against same-sex couples, and some judges in the South are still attempting to deny same-sex couples the right to marry.

In Suffolk County, New York, the first openly gay Republican candidate for that county legislature, Amos Goodman, was denied permission to run on the Conservative Party line because he made comments online applauding the Supreme Court decision ruling that same-sex marriage is constitutional.

Other New Yorkers on the wrong side of history include Whites from the town of Lancaster, near Buffalo. On March 16th, the school board voted to retire the racially offensive name “Redskins” from their sports teams. However, defenders of the term have threatened board members, made anti-Semitic comments about one board member, etc. Some have resorted to selling T-shirts with the words “Change It Back.” (It’s kind of like “the South shall rise again!”)

According to some conservative scholars, the phrase “on the wrong side of history” came from Marxists. That should not matter even to those that are opposed to Marxism. Those on the wrong side of history should one day have to explain to their children why they did not have the common sense or the common decency to see the light. And intelligent people must reject their rationalizations. Enlightened people should not let them get away with trying to retreat into

historical and cultural relativism or engage in bizarre revisionist history. This goes for those that supported slavery, Jim Crow, apartheid, LGBT rights, and so forth.

Those that are still trying to reverse progress should especially have their feet held to the fire. In the words of columnist Donn Esmonde of *The Buffalo News*, “Whether it’s the [Redskins] nickname, or the “Stars and Bars” flag, there’s a deeper truth that can’t be ignored. Trying to turn back the clock merely leaves you stuck in the past.” (“Confederate flags fall, but ‘Redskins’ camp is still stuck,” p. D4, July 12, 2015.) And those that live in the past, rather than using it as a guidepost, will certainly threaten present and future generations.