

The public hearings, personal and written communications to the Commission, and conferences with representatives of several organizations confirmed the Commission's original supposition that the Mississippi flag controversy is a significant and complex issue for which there is no simple or easy resolution.

From the time of its establishment the Commission's single purpose has been to seek a solution that will recognize and honor the genuine feelings of the contesting parties and positions and present to the people of Mississippi an alternative that will unify our beloved state and allow us to devote our energy and talents to the continued development of Mississippi's fullest potential.

Mississippi is at one of those rare moments in history when what we do today, the decisions we make now, will have major repercussions for many years to come. Mississippi has made great economic progress and has enjoyed enormous success in race relations and in developing our human and natural resources. We must keep our focus on the future, but we need not, we must not, forget the past.

The display of banners, flags, and emblems is an ancient tradition that dates from the early Roman Empire. Native Americans who inhabited Mississippi for several centuries before European settlement devised a complex arrangement of symbols and emblems which they used in peace and in war. Flags, which signify dominion and political allegiance, are especially powerful symbols that stir deep emotions and sometimes controversy.

The controversy over Mississippi's 1894 flag is caused by the inclusion of the Confederate, or Beauregard, battle flag in the canton corner. In the collective memory of white southerners the failure of their forbears to win the independence of the Confederate States of America is known as the Lost Cause and the battle flag is the most enduring symbol of that cause. In the receding memories of the old Confederate veterans, who adopted it as their official insignia, the battle flag was the soldier's banner, not the colors of the Confederacy. The old veterans, and their sons and grandsons, hoped the battle flag could escape the bitterness and controversy that attached to slavery, secession and Civil War. Born in battle and bravery, the battle flag was the banner that rallied their comrades during the fearsome disarray of combat, when men were disoriented and death was all about. The modern defenders of the battle flag can not understand how anyone could be offended by such a noble emblem.

To black Mississippians the Confederate battle flag is not only a symbol

of the Lost Cause, it is the emblem of slavery carried by soldiers in a war to maintain slavery, and a reminder that their freedom was won only because the cause was lost. The Confederate battle flag stirs deep resentment in black Mississippians in whose recent memory the flag is the icon of hooded night riders, the Ku Klux Klan, and other hate groups that murdered their sons and fathers and grandfathers and displayed the Rebel flag as a symbol of their commitment to white supremacy. To black Mississippians the impassioned defense of the Confederate flag is a veiled threat that reminds them of just how fragile freedom is, and of how tenuous are their recent gains. And they can not but wonder why anyone would want a state flag that divides rather than unifies its people.

As the battle flag was becoming increasingly associated with the advocates of white supremacy and racial violence, historical organizations and southern heritage groups did not or were unable to distinguish the historical character of the flag and insulate it from the political agenda of its modern bearers.

The Commission understands that war can bring out the best in mankind and acknowledges that the Confederate battle flag may symbolize the southern soldier's uncommon courage and his devotion to duty, impulses that transcended the causes of the Civil War and a heritage worthy of respect.

The Commission also acknowledges that the Confederate battle flag may symbolize the virulent and violent opposition to civil and human rights and that the martyrs of the Civil Rights Movement are also heroes worthy of respect and are a part of our noble heritage.

While cognizant of the deep passions and complexity of the flag controversy, the Commission also understands that to many Mississippians, perhaps a majority, the state flag is not a vital or compelling concern. But the interests of all Mississippians and our state will be best served by finding a just and fair resolution to the continued controversy that threatens the great progress of recent years. Therefore, based on months of discussion and deliberation, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

1. (a) the enactment of legislation designating the 1894 flag as the "Historical Flag of the State of Mississippi" and authorizing its permanent display on the Capitol Plaza between the Sillers and Gartin Buildings, and its display wherever the historical flags of Mississippi are flown; and, as a civil alternate

to the official state flag, extending to it the full protection of the state's flag desecration statute; and further authorizing its display by any private, civic, historical, heritage, business or social organization that chooses to do so.

(b) included in this legislation shall be a provision declaring that no statues, monuments or memorials erected on public property of the State or any of its political subdivisions shall be relocated, removed, or altered and that no street, bridge, park, school, county, building, or any object dedicated in memory of or named for any historic figure or event shall be renamed or rededicated except upon the passage of legislation that has received a two-thirds vote of the state legislature.

2. (a) the enactment of legislation adopting an official state flag, which shall be displayed by all governmental entities

(b) the design of which is as follows: the field shall consist of three bars; the top being blue, the middle white, the bottom red; the canton shall be red with twenty stars arranged as follows: a circle of thirteen stars, representing the thirteen original states; within the circle of thirteen stars will be seven stars representing the nation-states that have held dominion over Mississippi arranged as follows: a circle of six stars representing the Indian Nations, France, Spain, England, the Confederate States of America and the United States of America; within the circle of six stars shall be a star representing the State of Mississippi; together the twenty stars represent the number of states in the Union when Mississippi was admitted as a co-equal member of the Union of States. The colors shall be Old Glory Red signifying the courage and sacrifice displayed by Mississippians in defense of the Nation and in the endeavor to bring equality and justice to all the citizens of the state; Old Glory Blue symbolizing loyalty and perseverance; and white which stands for purity and virtue.

3. The passage of a legislative resolution providing for a referendum on the question of a state flag as follows:

(a) A vote to designate the 1894 flag as the "Historical Flag of the State of Mississippi" and the adoption of an official state flag as described in paragraph 2.(b)

(b) A vote to designate the 1894 flag the official state flag of Mississippi