Past Current Events Project

Topic: Should the Confederate flag be allowed to be flown publically?

Part 1) Current laws

* + 1. A compromise in 2000 had the flag moved from the Capitol dome to across the street. A monument to African-Americans was also added.
    2. In 2014, California put a law into effect that banned the display of the flag on public lands. Employees of the government also cannot sell or display the flag unless it’s an image in a book, digital medium, or state museums that have historical or educational value. To uphold the First Amendment, citizens not employed by the government are not held to these standards.
    3. California legislature passed Assembly Joint Resolution 26, urging Congress to ban the flag from being displayed on federal property or used as a symbol for states.

Part 2) My opinion

The Confederate battle flag is a hate symbol, symbolizing a divided country and a side that advocated for slavery and racial discrimination. It is not a symbol of southern pride, nor did it ever symbolize that during or directly after the Civil War.

Part 3) Supporting Evidence

a) After the war, the flag was typically flown only to commemorate fallen soldiers. The resurgence was in the Civil Rights movement of the 20th century, when pro-segregation Dixiecrats began using it and it gained popularity.

b) In Germany, neo-Nazis have adopted the Confederate flag. This is because the flying of the swastika is banned, so they turned to the Confederate flag because they felt it represented their white supremacist principles.

c) One of the strongest supporters of the Confederate flag is the Ku Klux Klan. Some members even add a swastika to the flag to further the symbolism of white supremacy.

Part 4) Counterpoints

a) “It’s a symbol of southern pride.” The flag was flown by several units, most notably that of Robert E. Lee. After the war ended, Lee himself stopped flying the flag and said “I think it wiser moreover not to keep open the sores of war.” It was not flown at his funeral.

b) “The war wasn’t over slavery, it was over states’ rights.” The rights southern states wanted were typically focused around their right to maintain a slavery-based economy. Georgia named slavery in the second sentence of its declaration of independence.

c) “Some Confederate soldiers were black.” While a portion of the Confederate Army was African-American, they were not willing volunteers. Most were slaves forced into serving by their masters, or fighting because they believed it would earn them freedom.